

The Spirit of Marronage

Expressions of Afrikan Indigenous Self-Determination

Edited by

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Dedication

To Maroon Indigenous children and youth everywhere: this book is for you and your communities. May your lives provide ever more insights into the Spirit of Marronage.

Àşę!

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From Nana Barouda Lubafu Isieni

As an Indigenous leader, I give thanks to all those who came before, including my father, Godsmen Ellis—gone with the ancestors. I give thanks to my mother Ethel Ellis going on 95-years, and my forever friend, Dr. Hank Hill, MD, surgeon oncologist who continues to inspire, encourage, and support me throughout the years. I would also like to give thanks to all who took time to write about their experiences, as well as to those who supported them in the process.

From the Co-Editor Team

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List of Abbreviations

ADRIIP	American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
AIDO	Ateker International Development Organisation
BIPOC	Black Indigenous Peoples of Color
BQF	Black Quantum Futurism
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Conference of the Parties
COIP	Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples
CONAMUNE	Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Negras (Spanish); “National Coordination Committee of Black Women”
CONAMUNE-C	Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Negras Capítulo Carchi (Spanish), “National Coordination Committee of Black Women, Carchi Chapter”
CRC	Caribbean Reparations Commission
CSO	Community Service Organization
FOH	Front of House
GOIP	Guyana Organization of Indigenous Peoples
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IACtHR	Inter-American Court on Human Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IESOM	Ile Eko Sango/Osun ati Mil’osa (Trinidad)
IGDS	Institute for Gender and Development Studies
IPAG	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group

MAECU	Movimiento Afro-Ecuatoriano Conciencia Universitaria (Spanish); “Afro-Ecuadorian Movement in University Consciousness”
MOMUNE	Movimiento de Mujeres Negras (Spanish); Black Women’s Movement
MASL	Meters Above Sea Level
NICaR	National Infrastructure Caribbean Resilience
NFF	National Forests in Florida
NPS	National Park Service
OAS	Organization of American States
RPCV	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
UMIP	United Maroon Indigenous Peoples
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations for Population Advancement (now, the United Nations Population Fund)
UNPFII	United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues
UNPFPAD	United Nations Permanent Forum for People of African Descent
UWI	University of the West Indies
YCOIL	Yamaye Council of Indigenous Leaders

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Author Bios

Ping-Ann Addo (she/her) is a mother, wife, ethnographer, and person of faith. She is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Boston and a core faculty member in both the Critical Ethnic and Community Studies Master's program and the Native American and Indigenous Studies minor. She teaches courses on the anthropology of art; critical diaspora studies; material and expressive culture; and Indigenous film. Her book, *Creating a Nation with Cloth: Tradition, Textiles, and Tongan Women* (Berghahn Books, 2013), analyzes women's agency, nation-building, and cross-generational immigrant identity in contemporary New Zealand through the shifting form and value of traditional wealth. She has managed a community-based project on, and co-curated (with Dr. Stacy Kamehiro from UC Santa Cruz) exhibits on Polynesian barkcloth in the San Francisco Bay Area and Santa Cruz, respectively. Addo conducts ethnographic fieldwork in Boston on Caribbean immigrant carnival 'parades' as street theater and place-based resistance to urban gentrification, which she has augmented with fieldwork in Trinidad. She was story consultant on the documentary film (*More Than Mas'*, 2021) about Caribbean Carnival costume, competition, and the multiple meanings of victory in Boston. She also serves on the academic team for the United Maroon Indigenous Peoples and is an ethnographer of their emergent social movement. She is of Akan-Ghanaian and Chinese-Malaysian heritage, and Trinidadian up-bringing.

Daniela Balanzátegui is an Ecuadorian associate professor of historical and collaborative archaeology of the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Director of the Latin American Historical Archaeology in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She obtained her doctoral and master's degrees from the Department of Archaeology at Simon Fraser University (Burnaby, Canada). Her research is mainly focused on the Afro-Ecuadorian historical strategies of *Cimarronaje* (marronage) to survive enslavement, colonialism, structural racism, and gender discrimination. Since 2012, she has developed a collaborative archaeological project with Afro-Ecuadorian communities, leaders, and scholars. Her research examines material culture, ancestral territories, historical narratives, and oral traditions of African-descendant populations in the Chota Valley (Provinces of Carchi-

Imbabura) in partnership with the grassroots organization of Black women, National Coordinator of Black Women (acronym in Spanish: CONAMUNE - Carchi Chapter). Her work provides a space for ethical and respectful work in heritage management, public and community-based archaeology as an instrument for historical reparations. Daniela has published in English and Spanish with an emphasis on coauthoring with African descendant women leaders and scholars. After serving on the Blue Ribbon Commission, “Engaging Africans and their Descendants in Andean Studies,” for the Institute of Andean Studies (IAS) (2020-2021), in 2022, Daniela elected as part of the Board of Directors of the IAS. As part of the feminist collective *Arquetipa (Arqueología en Femenino)*, she led the development of the first “Code of Ethics with a Gender Focus for Ecuadorian Archaeology” (2023).

Rachel Brunot graduated from Ohio State University with a BA in International and Global Studies. She has served a VISTA volunteer, a research assistant at U.S. Embassy Belmopan, Belize and an intern at Reimagine Appalachia. She works at the intersection of sustainable development in Belize, Peru, and Ohio, US. food security, and women’s cooperative and activist work. She has partnered with Cynthia Ellis-Topsey for research on the women’s movement in Belize. Brunot is also co-author of “Between Feminism and Partisanship: The Rise and Decline of the Women’s Movement in Belize, 1975–1993” in *Women’s History Review*, with Dr. Joel Wainwright.

Kenrich Cairo is a multifaceted professional who was born in Moengo, Suriname in 1972. He is an established dental technician and founder of Kabeti, a distinguished dental lab known for its innovation and precision in Suriname. Cairo’s expertise extends to the realm of cinema as a screenwriter. He has directed, co-directed and produced several impactful documentaries and movies, including “Dansi a Faya,” “Hidden World,” “Boni,” and “Casa Blanca.” His work has been internationally recognized at film festivals such as the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, Series Mania, Dakar Series and Locarno Film Festival. Cairo also serves as the Chairman of the board of Suriname’s national TV station, STVS, and represents Stichting Sabanapeti, a Holland-based Maroon foundation, in Suriname. Additionally, he holds the esteemed title of Jakaadi-Naa, Cultural Ambassador of the Diaspora, for the Chamba Kingdom in Ghana, further showcasing his commitment to bridging cultural divides and promoting global understanding.

Danielle Carbon-Wilson is first and foremost a native child of Guaticabon, also known as Waitukubuli or Dominica, the nature isle of the Caribbean. Moved by their love for the land and intercultural heritage, they are a shapeshifting storyteller and community organizer, colliding with ancient and modern technologies for collective liberation. They describe their practice as playful, tempestuous, and mystic. Danielle finds it hard to believe that their Afrikan-Dominican maternal granddad was not Maroon, given his energy and the quality of his commitments. Not only was he a farmer, but an outspoken man of rights, and who practiced spirituality outside of the church. He was also from Capuchin, a sugar estate located close to a large Maroon camp, on Waitukubuli.

N. Fadeke Castor is a Black feminist ethnographer and African diaspora studies scholar whose work focuses on exploring Black spiritual praxis as ways of knowing towards collective care, healing, and social transformation. She is an Associate Professor of Religion and Africana Studies at Northeastern University and is a member of the United Maroon Indigenous Peoples academic team. As an Ifá initiate (Yorùbá lineage) of Trinidadian heritage, their research and teaching interests in religion, race, performance are inspired by the confluence of Black religious expressions and liberation struggles. Her prize-winning book, *Spiritual Citizenship: Transnational Pathways from Black Power to Ifá in Trinidad* (Duke, 2017; Clifford Geertz Prize), centered the Ifá/Orisha religion in the Black radical tradition and Trinidad's Black Power revolution to illuminate decolonial practices and performances in the post-colonial Caribbean. More of their work can be found in *Cultural Anthropology*, *Fieldwork in Religion*, *Tarka*, *The Black Scholar*, *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* and the *Journal of World Popular Music*. Their next project on Afro-Indigenous spirituality and ways of knowing is being supported by a Wenner-Gren Fellowship in Anthropology and Black Experiences at the School for Advanced Research (Santa Fe, New Mexico).

Tina Dunkley is Director Emerita of the Clark Atlanta University Art Museum in Atlanta, Georgia. She holds a BFA in Painting and Sculpture from The School of Visual Arts, NY, and a MA in African American Studies from Atlanta University, (now Clark Atlanta University). In 2013, Dunkley received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women's Caucus for Art following her seminal publication, *In the Eye of the Muses: Selections from the Clark Atlanta University Art Collection*. Presently, Dunkley is co-curating an archival exhibition entitled "At the Crossroads: The Life and Work of Benny Andrews, Flannery O'Connor,

and Alice Walker” at the Rose Library of Emory University. Additionally, she is preparing to publish the second edition of *The Merikins: Forgotten Freedom Fighters in the War of 1812*, which is cited herein.

Diana J. Fox (she/her) is Professor of Anthropology, Department Chair and founding editor of the online, open access *Journal of International Women's Studies* at Bridgewater State University where she has worked since 2000. Affiliated with multiple interdisciplinary programs including Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Asian Studies, MENA, and Sustainability Studies, her feminist decolonial scholar-activism is predicated on partnerships with social movement actors on issues of gender and sexual diversity, Indigenous self-determination, women-led social movements, women's human rights and transnational feminisms. She has served as academic partner with the United Maroon Indigenous Peoples (UMIP) since 2017. Her scholar-activism seeks to push boundaries and transgress colonial and conventional divides toward liberatory realities across genders, sexualities, class, caste, and sociocultural constructions of race to build radically inclusive collaborations and transnational feminisms in the interest of equitable, sustainable cultures and ecologies. She has worked as conference chair for the World Conference on Women's Studies since 2015 and has co-directed and produced two documentary films, one on the LGBTQI+ movement in Jamaica, and on the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP) in Trinidad. She served as University Director of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Regional Coordinating Office (IGDS, RCO) at the University of the West Indies between 2022-2024.

Nana Barouda Lubafu Isieni/ Cynthia Ellis-Topsey is Ambassador at Large for the Garifuna Nation. Delivered by a Maya midwife in Belize, she was a pioneer of the first women's cooperative in Belize. She is devoted to developing the capacity to change the narrative of oppression, and campaigns for the sovereignty of Indigenous, Maroon, and Afrikan Peoples. She has helped develop a Garifuna museum, a magistrate-connected mediator family court, and founded the Godsman Celestino Ellis Center for Garifuna Culture, all in Belize. She has lectured internationally and served as a diplomat, Kellogg Foundation Leadership Fellow, and United Nations consultant. She holds degrees from the University of the West Indies and Antioch University Midwest, Ohio; has pursued postgraduate studies at the Hague; and is at law school at the University of Guyana. Ellis-Topsey also serves as co-director of a local

education outreach project in archaeology with her frequent co-author Dr. Anabel Ford of the University of California Santa Barbara.

Akilah Jaramogi is a Forester, Environmental Consultant, Cultural Activist and Ecological Jewelry Designer. Akilah is the Co-Founder and CEO of the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP) in St. Ann's, Trinidad and Tobago, and has received one of that nation's highest humanitarian honors, the Hummingbird Gold Medal Award, on behalf of her organization. She is also a member of the Cabinet-appointed National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) and serves as an Indigenous Ambassador for SHE Changes Climate, a global campaign committed to driving awareness of the crucial role of women in accelerating climate action. A proud Merikin Maroon descendant, Akilah is the Co-founder and the CEO of the Merikin Heritage Foundation. A devout Orisha and Reiki practitioner, Akilah embraces spiritual and healing pathways through her Indigenous Maroon way of life, advocating for restoring balance to both people and Mother Earth. She is known as "Iya the Forest, healer," "Earth Water Woman," and "Woman of the Hills."

Kemba Jaramogi is an award-winning environmentalist, a proud Merikin descendant, and National Youth Award Recipient from the Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs, in 2014 for her work in environmental conservation and education. She's a youth activist, previously a member of the Trinidad Youth Council 2001 - 2008, Caribbean Youth Environmental Network (2011-2015), Trinidad Chapter and World Economic Forum - Global Shapers, Port-of-Spain Chapter (2013-2019), and is currently a Shaper Alumni (2019-present to date). In 2008 Mrs. Jaramogi left Trinidad and Tobago on a scholarship to pursue her undergraduate studies at the University of East London where she graduated with Honors in the field of International Development, Third World Studies, and NGO Management 2011. She has served as the Technical Director of the FACRP since 2011, before which she served as an all-around field and technical support at FACRP. This she did starting in 1994—at age 9, after the passing of her dad, the late Tacuma Jaramogi—until 2008.

Alethia Jones holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University and serves as an academic partner with the United Maroon Indigenous Peoples. Originally from Kingston, Jamaica, she lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, where she is a Distinguished Lecturer and Director of Civic Engagement and Leadership

Development at the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Labor and Urban Studies. As a global scholar-activist, she has worked with government, academia, unions, and philanthropic organizations to advance immigrant incorporation, labor, women, and human rights. She co-authored the award-winning book, *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around: Forty Years of Movement Building with Barbara Smith*. She enjoys designing and facilitating transformative learning spaces for social justice movements. In addition, she is a certified liberation coach and a lover of traditional African and Caribbean dance. (@alethiajonesphd on IG/LinkedIn)

María Barbarita Lara is the Director of the National Coordinator of Black Women - Carchi Chapter (CONAMUNE-Carchi Chapter) and one of the founders of CONAMUNE (1999). She has a BA in Education and holds a diploma in Cultural Studies from Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar. She was a representative of the regional government of the Decentralized Autonomous Government of Mira (Carchi Province). Barbarita is one of the main members of the Ethnoeducation and School of Oral Tradition (ETOVA) programs in the Chota-Mira Valley. Barbarita Lara was a high school and preparatory teacher and served as the director of La Concepción School called “November 19th School.” Barbarita Lara is the co-director of the project *Arqueología del Cimarronaje* a collaboration between CONAMUNE-C and the Latin American Historical Archaeology Lab.

Dawn Lawrence is a professional archaeologist who has worked for multiple federal agencies across the United States throughout her 20-year career. She is currently a Heritage Program Manager with the U.S. Forest Service, responsible for the preservation and interpretation of the historic and archaeological resources in the three National Forests in Florida. A major part of her duties include the stewardship of the National Historic Landmark sites at Prospect Bluff, the location of the Negro Fort, one of the largest Maroon settlements in North America. Dawn is currently working in partnership with Maroon and Tribal descendants to recover and reinterpret the erased story of the Negro Fort community, and to recenter that narrative within the context of Florida and United States history.

Caroline Mair-Toby is the founding Executive Director for the Institute for Small Islands and an Attorney at Law at Mair and Company. She works on climate and environmental justice and Indigenous rights issues, collaborating

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J. Amadu Massally is a passionate advocate and catalyst for building bridges between the African Diaspora and Africa itself. Amadu has dedicated his life to uncovering and strengthening the ties that bind people across continents. Amadu earned a degree in Management and Accounting from the University of Massachusetts Boston, and later ventured into the corporate world of accounting at American Express and PriceWaterhouseCoopers, where he was certified as an information systems auditor. Yet, a deeper calling beckoned, and he transitioned to pursue his passion and calling: focusing primarily on descendants of Sierra Leone, Amadu embarked on a mission to trace connections and revive cultural bonds including engagement with Maroon communities in the Caribbean.

Kyle T. Mays is an Afro-Indigenous (Saginaw Chippewa) writer and scholar of Afro-Indigenous studies, urban studies, and contemporary popular culture. He is a Professor of African American Studies, American Indian Studies, and History and Chair of the Department of African American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author or co-author of five books, including, *When We Are Kin: The History and Future of Afro-Indigenous Solidarity* (Haymarket, 2026); *Rethinking the Red Power Movement with Sam Hitchmough* (Routledge, 2024); *City of Disposessions: Indigenous Peoples, African Americans, and the Creation of Modern Detroit* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022); *An Afro-Indigenous History of the United States* (Beacon Press, 2021); and *Hip Hop Beats, Indigenous Rhymes: Modernity and Hip Hop in Indigenous North America* (SUNY Press, 2018).

Keith E. McNeal is Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Houston, where he is also affiliated with the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, India Studies, and African American Studies Programs. He was a Fulbright Scholar in 2011-12 with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies-St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, and was Visiting Senior Lecturer in the Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies at UWI-St. Augustine in 2021-24. He is author of *Trance and Modernity in the Southern Caribbean: African and Hindu Popular Religions in Trinidad and Tobago* (2011, University Press of Florida Press, "New World Diasporas" Series) and currently completing *Cremating the Body Politic: Death and Diaspora in the Hindu Caribbean* (Rutgers University Press, "Critical Caribbean Studies" Series) as well as a related documentary film, *Burning Identity*. He is also completing *Queering the Citizen: Dispatches from Trinidad and Tobago*, in relation to which he is project lead and head curator of the online interactive timeline of Trinbagonian LGBTQ+ history: <https://www.queerarchivestt.org/>.

Erica Neeganagwedgin, Ph.D. is a Yamaye Indigenous Taino scholar and an Associate Professor in Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies at Western University. Her teaching and research interests include Indigenous knowledge systems and intellectual traditions, Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous history and educational policies, history of Indigenous education in North American contexts and Indigenous research methodologies.

Leah Penniman (all pronouns) is a Black Kreyol farmer, mother, soil nerd, author, and food justice activist from Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, NY. She co-founded Soul Fire Farm in 2010 with the mission to end racism in the food system and reclaim our ancestral connection to land. As Co-ED and Farm Director, Leah is part of a team that facilitates powerful food sovereignty programs, including farmer training for Black & Brown people, a subsidized farm food distribution program for communities living under food apartheid, and domestic and international organizing toward equity in the food system. Leah has been farming since 1996, and she holds an MA in Science Education and a BA in Environmental Science and International Development from Clark University. She is an African Traditional Priest (Awo/Olorisa/Manye.) Leah trained at Many Hands Organic Farm, Farm School MA, and internationally with farmers in Ghana, Haiti, and Mexico. The work of Leah and Soul Fire Farm has been recognized by the Soros Racial Justice Fellowship, Fulbright, Heinz

Prize, Pritzker Environmental Genius Award, Grist 50, and James Beard Leadership Award, among others. Her books, *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land* (2018) and *Black Earth Wisdom: Soulful Conversations with Black Environmentalists* (2023) are love songs for the land and her people.

Andrew B. Reid is a lifelong social and eco-justice advocate. He is an adjunct professor of law at the University of Denver where he teaches courses on the international and human rights law of Indigenous Peoples and environmental justice. Reid provides legal counsel for many Native nations and organizations in the Americas, including the United Maroon Indigenous Peoples and the Garifuna Nation. He is legal counsel and an expert in matters before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Reid has participated in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Meeting of Experts on Indigenous Issues, the UN Permanent Forum on Persons of African Descent, and other international conferences. He has authored publications and is a frequent presenter on international law and the rights of Indigenous nations and Peoples.

Attilah Springer is a Trinidad-born writer, communications professional and cultural worker with an interest in the intersections between culture, memory, festival arts and social justice. A 2021 UN OHCHR People of African Descent Fellow, Ms. Springer channels over twenty years of experience in culture and communications work to help facilitate movement and awareness building for grassroots and community projects, with a specific focus on Caribbean festival arts, preservation and recognition of African spiritual traditions, and on using these forms as ways to confront social justice issues among women and young people of African descent. She is a Director of Idakeda Group, a woman-led family company focused on changing communities through culture.

Marva Lisa Sandy was born in 1950 and is a single mother of one daughter. She attended St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, Cipriani Labour College, and the John Donaldson Institute in Trinidad and Tobago. Marva worked at the National Insurance Board of TNT and the Pan American Life Insurance Company. She is President of the Merikin Heritage Foundation and a committee member of the Merikin Commission. She is also one of the founding members of the United Maroon Indigenous Peoples and is a co-founder of the

Merikin Earth School for children. She also belongs to a number of other organizations and boards.

Gaanman Gloria “Mama G” Simms serves as the Paramount Queen and Spiritual Gaanman of the Maroons of Jamaica and the Diaspora; she is first woman Gaanman in Jamaica since the famed Nanny of the Maroons. She is Founder and Director of the Maroon Indigenous Women’s Circle in the Maroon community of Charles Town, in Portland, Jamaica. She works to empower women through workshops that address intergenerational trauma through Indigenous practices such as storytelling and sewing circles. She is also a visual artist and powerful motivational speaker and is frequently invited to share her message worldwide.

Bernard Wiltshire was born in Grand Bay in the Commonwealth of Dominica. He completed a Master’s at The School for Oriental and African Studies (London) and then traveled throughout Africa. A poet and literature scholar, he has worked as Assistant Professor of Black Studies at Hunter College, New York, and is a former Lecturer in History at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, Jamaica. After a mid-career bout of political activism in Dominica, he trained as a lawyer and later served as Attorney General of Dominica. His activism led him to the roles of Inaugurator of the Waitukubuli National Trail, Dominica (1990-2003) and Founding President of the 12th of July Movement (commemorating the Maroons of Dominica). His Pan Africanist vision upholds Marronage as a proud legacy and meta-culture for Black humanity as a whole.

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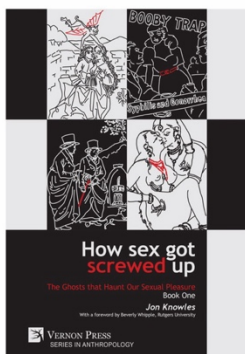
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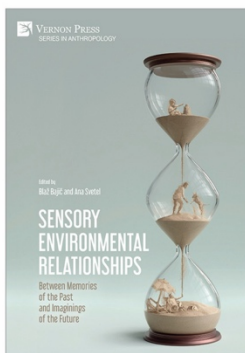
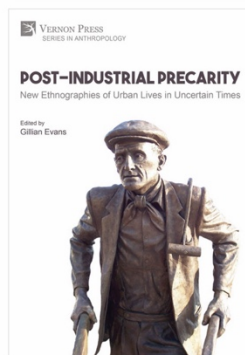
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