

mits “I didn’t want this to end.” Neither will you.

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Sharika D. Crawford. *The Last Turtlemen of the Caribbean: Waterscapes of Labor, Conservation, and Boundary Making*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, www.uncpress.org, 2020. xii+204 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. US \$27.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4696-6021-9.

Turtles, particularly sea turtles, have played a significant role in the history of maritime communities the world over, and in many ways helped to enable prolonged exploration and fervent exploitative trade from the Age of Exploration into the end of the Late Modern Era. These large, slow-moving amphibians were prized by sailing crews for the large amounts of meat that could be harvested from their bodies—a taste for which spread to Europe itself, where increasing demand helped to spur multiple extirpations across various ocean biomes—along with the plentiful eggs that could be harvested from their clutch grounds. Further, the often-colourful shells, long used by Indigenous cultures, proved to be valuable trade items in and of themselves. In the case of the Caribbean, a limited turtling industry was able to continue to exploit native turtle populations until the mid-1960s when ecological, economic, and political pressures became significant enough to finally end it. It is the last century of this Caribbean turtling industry that Sharika Crawford focuses on in her consideration of how it served to shape the modern circum-Caribbean world.

Crawford finds that from the

late-nineteenth-century on, Caribbean turtlemen were often in the middle of questions, and conflicts, relating to the exercise and boundaries of national sovereignties. In particular, as the turtle populations were depleted, turtlemen, who were largely from the Cayman Islands, were forced farther afield in their hunting voyages. This brought them into conflict with nations such as Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Columbia who felt that turtles off their shores were, by right, their natural resources. Those three nations, in particular, passed laws and increased enforcement aimed at protecting those resource rights, which raised questions about where national boundaries were and should be drawn. These debates Crawford argues were important for two major reasons; the first of which was that they served to push back against British Imperial arguments relating to maritime jurisdiction. The British Empire had long pushed for limited sea-based jurisdiction for any nation, preferring that the seas be kept open for the use of all nations, with minor concessions for national defense. As British Imperial power waned, however, Caribbean nations seeking to demark their sovereignty to a greater extent placed a premium on protecting their maritime resources—seeking to prevent total depletion, and ensure themselves a fair portion of any profit they generated.

More significant for the turtlemen, these arguments around maritime resources and national boundaries meant that they helped to define the modern boundaries of the Caribbean. While much of their contribution in this shaping was incidental, rather than directly intentional, it was still notable, and for Crawford’s study, it is a core tenet in arguing for their historical significance. Understanding this significance in her eyes will help to expand the historical

understanding of the Caribbean away from a region dominated by the European-focused sugar plantations into a fully complex zone of cultural and economic exchange. Notably, the sea trades, including turtling, drew heavily from the free and freed populations—few Cayman slaves participated in the maritime trades. Much as Skip Finley notes in *Whaling Captains of Color*, these trades opened doors to economic and social prosperity that would have been otherwise largely closed to those populations, thereby enabling some amount of advancement.

The historical significance of the Cayman turtlers can also be seen in the rise of modern conservation efforts, particularly those related to sea turtles. The notable and alarming depletion of sea turtle populations by the 1960s meant that preservation of those species was folded into the first international conservation movement—preventing even greater harm to be done before the need for help was noted. While the efforts of conservationists, along with the increasing hostility of various circum-Caribbean nations aimed at protecting their remaining natural maritime resources for themselves, served to end the Cayman turtlers' industry, it is inarguable that they were able to be proactive rather than merely reactive. Thus, turtlers inadvertently can be credited in part with the preservation of the very species they primarily profited from the deaths of.

This illuminating and significant text has been assembled from a variety of sources including oral histories held at the Cayman Island National Archive, diplomatic correspondences, and the papers of Dr. Archie Carr, who was the leading sea turtle conservationist of his time. Marking the beginning of new roads for research and consideration in the history of the Caribbean world, this

text certainly would have a spot in any environmental history course, as well as those focused on Atlantic and Caribbean world histories. Pushing away from the traditional plantation-based history of the Caribbean to consider the significances of its maritime world promises to be a major step in achieving a deeper and more profound history of the region as a whole. If nothing else, it is a vital reminder that the maritime world is the often-forgotten component of histories the world over and that as historians we would be well served to rectify those omissions.

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Jesse Cromwell. *The Smugglers' World: Illicit Trade and Atlantic Communities in Eighteenth-Century Venezuela*. Williamsburg and Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and University of North Carolina Press, www.uncpress.org, 2018. 336 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index. US \$39.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1469636887. (E-book available.)

We often think of smugglers as shady people lurking on the outskirts of society, driven by greed and a certain disregard for authority. Cromwell's *The Smugglers' World* convincingly flips that stereotype on its head by demonstrating that virtually everyone in eighteenth-century Venezuela had connections to the illicit world of smuggling. Government officials, religious leaders, merchants, ship captains, sailors, waterfront workers, and every-day consumers created a vast network of illegal trade that brought in foreign manufactured goods and foodstuffs in exchange for cacao, Venezuela's cash crop. In other words, Venezuelan society and its economy could not function without