Marco G. Meniketti, *Sugar Cane Capitalism and Environmental Transformation: An Archaeology of Colonial Nevis, West Indies*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016. xii + 262 pp. (Cloth US\$59.95)

This book, which explores the English settlement of Nevis and the environmental impact of sugarcane agriculture, is a welcome contribution to the historical archaeology of the Caribbean. It is one of only a few historical archaeological studies of Nevis, which is surprising given the island's importance as one of the first British colonial settlements in the Caribbean. The book's greatest strength may be its detailed description of Marco Meniketti's archaeological survey of a large portion of the island.

Meniketti begins by outlining a world-systems model for understanding the settlement patterns and landscape transformations that took place on Nevis between the initial English settlement of the island in 1627 and the emancipation of enslaved peoples in 1834. He identifies an early settlement phase that he characterizes as "feudal" (1627–55), an agro-industrial phase characterized by intense sugarcane agriculture that he calls "quasi-capitalist" (1655–1782), and a third phase following the French invasion of the island and a subsequent decline in sugar production. He argues that the changes to Nevis's landscape reflect the systemic shift from a feudal socioeconomic structure to a fully capitalist system. While the shift from tobacco and ginger production to intensive sugarcane cultivation in the 1650s no doubt had a significant influence on settlement patterns and changes in land use on Nevis, one could argue that those changes would be better treated as a reflection of different crop types rather than as some broad economic shift from feudalism to capitalism; there is nothing in my mind that was feudal about the character of early British colonial settlement of the Caribbean. These were company-sponsored enterprises backed by investors in Europe seeking profit from commercial production and export of exotic crops. Long-distance maritime trade, global markets, fortified urban centers, social diversity, and commercial networks were all components. Although tobacco, ginger, and other early crops were not as labor intensive or on the same scale as sugar production, the social, political, and economic structures of early Nevis were far from feudal. Moreover, much of what Meniketti refers to as early "quasi-capitalism" is what many historians of the Atlantic world would simply describe as the sugar revolution. Settlement patterns changed and landscapes were modified because of the demands of sugarcane cultivation and sugar production. Perhaps the three phases of landscape development on Nevis would be better viewed as a shift from settlement to mercantilism to free trade.

NEW WEST INDIAN GUIDE

© FREDERICK H. SMITH, 2018 | DOI:10.1163/22134360-09203051

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the prevailing CC-BY-NC license at the time of publication.

More than half of the book is dedicated to Meniketti's extensive archaeological survey and discoveries. While archaeological studies of sugar estates and settlement patterns have been conducted elsewhere in the Caribbean, especially in St. Eustatius and Jamaica, this is one of the few to explicitly embrace a landscape approach. Meniketti outlines in great detail his rigorous methods and the results of his massive island-wide survey. He locates and describes structures associated with each phase of island development. His discussion of the early settlement phase is based largely on archaeological evidence from the abandoned coastal urban center of Jamestown. The later phases are evident in his detailed analysis of sugar mills, factories, great houses, and villages located in the interior of the island. The chapter on plantation industrialization is particularly thorough. Industrial archaeologists will be pleased with his insights into steam-driven factories and his records pertaining to steam engines and other machinery associated with the shift toward mechanized sugar production. The book gives somewhat less attention to the more traditional materials of historical archaeology, such as ceramics, bottle glass, and tobacco pipes, recovered from some of the many sites identified. However, this study is very much a broad landscape-oriented perspective. While Meniketti addresses ceramics, glass, and other archaeological materials recovered from domestic quarters and village sites to shed some light on the day-to-day lives of early Nevisians, his primary interest is in using these materials to help date and define the functions of buildings and features on the landscape. His methodology is clearly outlined and he walks readers through the challenges and findings of his survey.

This book sheds important new light on settlement patterns in the British Caribbean. Meniketti's emphasis on transformations in land use offers valuable insights for historical archaeologists working in other areas of the British Atlantic world. While Caribbean historians may find some of the archaeological evidence interesting, it is Caribbean historical archaeologists who will gain the most from this book. The world systems model Meniketti develops may also be of some interest to historical archaeologists working on landscape studies in other regions of the Atlantic world.

Frederick H. Smith

Director of Archaeology, St. Nicholas Abbey, Barbados

caribbeanrum2005@gmail.com