Sharika D. Crawford, *The Last Turtlemen of the Caribbean: Waterscapes of Labor, Conservation, and Boundary Making*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. xii + 204 pp. (Paper US\$ 27.95)

In 1831, the Spanish colonial government in Cuba stated in an official document that one of the most pressing concerns it had, related to the fisheries, was the constant threat of the British from Jamaica and the Cayman Islands capturing the hawksbill turtles for a highly lucrative profit. The illegal occupation of islands and islets by turtlemen operating from temporary settlements (*rancherías*), and aided by local mariners, was endangering the sovereignty of their territory and waterscape. The fluid exploitation of marine resources in the “commons” of the Western Caribbean—including Cuba—for more than 300 years is the focus of *The Last Turtlemen of the Caribbean*, a highly recommended scholarly contribution to our understanding of maritime activities in the region.

The precise reconstruction and illuminating analysis of the fate of turtlemen and turtles in a complicated and contested political, environmental, and social arena is one of the remarkable achievements of this book. Sharika Crawford utilizes extensive documentation—a wide array of archival sources (in English and Spanish), scientific and popular magazine articles, colonial reports, and the wealth of oral histories collected and curated by the government of the Cayman Islands to explore the lives and times of the turtlemen. The result is a cogent analysis of the complex history of an activity that spanned the Western Caribbean, reaching the archipelagos and shores of Central America, and provoking a myriad of political and diplomatic conflicts that are well documented in the book.

Crawford argues that turtling in the Western Caribbean resulted in the following: (1) the establishment of a regional and global market for turtle meat and tortoiseshell; (2) the constant movement of these argonauts throughout the island chains of the region; (3) the occupation of the islands and intense human interactions by trans-Caribbean business partners, and their kith and kin; (4) the acrid national and colonial disputes over the use of the islands, islets, and waters that spilled into conflicts and disputes over the use of national and international waters, and created a threat to the sovereignty of the countries and their territories and seascapes; and (5) the eventual demise and collapse of the populations of hawksbill and green turtles that resulted in the establishment of conservation measures and led to the demise of the turtlemen as forgers of cultural, kin-based and economic linkages in the region. Ironically, they contributed to this fate by sharing their knowledge of the turtles with scientists and conservationists.

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The Last Turtlemen of the Caribbean is so well written and richly documented that it is a shame to raise any critique or theoretical concerns. However, Crawford missed a great opportunity to link the processes she discusses to recent theoretical approaches and debates related to humans and ecosystems in a historical perspective. Reading through the lens of those debates, it is evident that she has a strong grasp of key processes, such as the decline of the populations of marine turtles, the role of fishers on a regional and global scale, the conservation practices leading toward sustainability, and the expansion of resource exploitation under different forms of capital. Indeed, the analysis of capital formation and labor links this book to debates on the political economy and ecology of the Caribbean.

I tend to believe that the anthropology and history of maritime endeavors in the Caribbean is advancing; however, I must agree with Crawford's contention that the use of the waterscapes and resources by "these seemingly marginal historical actors" (p. 145) has been on the backburner of the region's scholarship. Although this is an innovative piece of research and analysis, I sorely missed some of the many references available on the complex lives of the maritime laborers of the Caribbean and their household and community strategies to cope with a diversity of economic options and vicissitudes.

The Last Turtlemen is supported by impeccable writing and thorough historiographical research and analysis. I am sure this book will encourage similar efforts in the region, focused on conch, lobsters, deep water groupers and snappers, and pelagic fishes from the standpoint of the ecological history as well as from the perspective of sovereignty and disputes over the waterscapes of the Caribbean.

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