metaphor for the book's arguments, but the legend itself is also unpacked as a source for understanding Islam in the Indian Ocean. While other scholars have used this legend as an interesting if apocryphal anecdote, Prange investigates the textual history that underpins the modern legend. Parsing the seemingly random specifics of these texts reveals the decline of the Chera Empire in Malabar, the growing dominance of Arab traders in the Indian Ocean, and power of Sufi networks in the spread of Islam in India. Ultimately, through this story, Prange explodes the traditional narrative of the dispersal of Islam and Islamic authority from Arabia out into the Oceanic world.

The book ranges across the ocean, but Prange firmly centers it on the pepper-producing Malabar Coast of Southwest India. Indeed we learn much about social structures, political tensions, and even the urban history of ports like Calicut. Prange presents fascinating evidence that as the Nair rulers of Malabar oppressed and persecuted lower castes, they nonetheless accepted conversion to Islam and even liberated converts from many of the worst humiliations of the caste system. Even more provocatively, he makes the case that the "jihadi fanaticism" of Mappila Muslims has its roots in Hindu caste ideals rather than Islamic theology. Indeed even as this is a book about Islam, we learn a tremendous amount about how this Hindu-dominated society accommodated and got transformed by its engagement with maritime trade.

Prange carefully balances and indeed argues for keeping the tension between the global and the local: uniting the mercantile and cosmopolitan Islam of the ocean with the peculiarities and demands of specific ports. However, this is the one area where I felt the book could have been more developed. While the book extensively traces connections with Yemen and insular Southeast Asia, East Africa and mainland Southeast Asia are much less present. This fact is no doubt an artifact of the sources and the networks that Malabar was part of. It would have been helpful to see a discussion of the routes by which Malabar connected to the broader Muslim world, and whether there were mediating forces that fostered some connections and hindered others. How might Monsoon Islam appear different when viewed from Zanzibar or Chittagong, and how would it look the same?

But these are small quibbles with an enormously rich book. *Monsoon Islam* will be of great interest to readers of this journal; it is well written, deeply researched, and persuasively argued. It should be of great interest to scholars of South Asia, the Middle East, world history, and economic history, and it should be required reading in Islamic studies and Indian Ocean studies.

doi:10.1017/S0165115319000421 Johan Mathew, *Rutgers University*

Cameron B. Strang. *Frontiers of Science: Imperialism and Natural Knowledge in the Gulf South Borderlands, 1500-1850*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 376 pp. ISBN: 9781469640471. $39.95.

Gulf South borderlands history is maturing rapidly. Early twentieth-century foundational studies highlighted by works such as Verner Crane's *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (1928) approached the past in the region mainly from a Turnerian perspective with much emphasis on colonial treaties and settlers and less analysis of colonized peoples. Subsequent works with similar themes appeared intermittently for the next sixty years or so until scholars trained in New Western and Ethnohistory paradigms produced a flurry of studies in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, exemplified by Daniel H. Usner Jr.'s *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower*

Mississippi Valley Before 1783 (1992). These works had a much broader focus, addressing native and African/African American peoples as significant, independent actors who helped shape life in the region as much as those colonizing it. Cameron Strang, in *Frontiers of Science: Imperialism and Natural Knowledge in the Gulf South Borderlands, 1500-1850*, both continues this evolution and establishes a new sophistication for studying the Gulf South's history. Primarily, while building on the work of Usner and his contemporaries, Strang illustrates the expanding scope of historians researching the region while better integrating what happened there with broader themes of North American life and U.S. expansion from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Strang addresses cross-cultural patterns of engagement not as the sole focus of his work but as a means of examining the pursuit of "natural" information acquisition in North America by colonizers from Europe and the nascent United States. Pursuits of knowledge on the climate, soil, flora, and fauna of the Gulf South led Atlantic coastal "scientists", concentrated mainly in Philadelphia, to depend on both early settlers in the region and the local native and enslaved African/African American populations to acquire samples and explain natural phenomena. While the work of these peoples alternately took place through willful collaborations and hostile engagements, according to Strang, all occurred in the context of imperialism, with results typically leading to additional settler expansion. Much information gleaned from the efforts helped establish an early American scientific literature that more often than not benefitted the United States and marginalized non-white populations who often undergirded the process.

This book covers a significant period (350 years) across seven thematically-oriented chapters. In them, as well as an introduction and epilogue, Strang addresses his topic through studies of violence, exchange, narratives of science, astronomy, loyalties, identities, ethnography, slavery, geology, corpse desecration, and knowledge formation, among other factors. He strives to explain the influences of Spanish, French, English and U.S. colonists as well as native peoples of various affiliations (Seminoles receiving the most treatment) as vital to the above exercises, generally through transitory joint-efforts. A similar approach is taken with enslaved peoples in the region, though the source base is thinner in this regard and few individuals receive attention. By the book's conclusion, Strang successfully has shown that while most attempts to gain natural knowledge in the Gulf South were not coordinated, often stemmed from competition, and occasionally involved violence, over the years detectable patterns emerged for how this information could be obtained and synthesized to promote both science and territorial boundary creation.

Strang's evidence for his claims primarily comes in the form of "detailed case studies", (20) which are generally useful in validating his points. Depictions of the map produced by the Tawsa Indian Lamhatty, the astronomical studies of planter William Dunbar, and the mostly nameless and countless African American slaves who often provided the labour to acquire natural knowledge possible, demonstrate the interrelated efforts of all populations in the region. While these case studies blur together at points and predominantly focus on late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century individuals, together they provide more than enough evidence to substantiate the book's arguments.

Readers will find other aspects of the book to be thought-provoking and problematic. Some may consider the author's definition of natural knowledge overly expansive with few constraints, and thus applicable to almost anything. Others will question the heavy emphasis on later years to the detriment of content on the pre-eighteenth-century period. Many will be skeptical of the author's assertion that "Some of the early republic's most prominent men of science enthusiastically promoted the scientific achievements of Gulf South blacks" (211) based on the evidence provided. Historians of early national Florida, among others, may challenge the statement that "The

Second Seminole War was the defining moment of the Florida Seminoles' ethnogenesis" (289), an application of the origin-concept to this native group at that time has typically defied consensus.

Nevertheless, most readers will learn much from Strang's study and appreciate the gaps it fills. The Gulf South borderlands provide an alternative setting for evaluating North America's development in a variety of areas. By emphasizing their role in creating scientific data and ways of obtaining it, Strang magnifies one such area. The chief value of his work, however, lies in how it transitions Gulf South studies into a phase where deciphering the interaction of populations is not the principal objective, but instead a means of understanding multiple, other aspects of borderlands society from both a regional and continental perspective.

doi:10.1017/S0165115319000433 Daniel S. Murphree, *University of Central Florida*

L.H. Roper, ed. *The Torrid Zone: Caribbean Colonization and Cultural Interaction in the Long Seventeenth Century*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018. 264 pp. ISBN: 9781611178906. $49.99.

In *The Torrid Zone*, Lou H. Roper and the volume's contributors encourage scholars "to consider the 'long' seventeenth-century Caribbean in an organic, transnational, holistic way that incorporates the diverse array of actors involved" (3). While the Spanish Empire dominated the Caribbean during the seventeenth century, this volume instead turns its focus to indigenous interactions, early settlement and imperial development, and military and commercial competition between the Danish, Dutch, English, and French empires. At the heart of *The Torrid Zone* lies two fundamental questions: "What made the Caribbean the Caribbean?" and "To what degree—and why—was the history of the Caribbean from circa 1580 … distinctive from that of other parts of the Americas?" (3).

Roper observes that very little historical analysis has "concentrated on seventeenth-century Native-European relations in the Caribbean", which is especially notable as Native people's "enduring and significant territorial, diplomatic, and cultural influences … have faded from view" (3). In Part I, Tessa Murphy, Carolyn Arena, and Sarah Barber's contributed essays present significant initial steps in filling this lacuna. Murphy, Arena, and Barber's emphasis on Native American agency and the reality that "much of the region remained outside of European control" provides a reminder that European domination was not "a foregone conclusion any more than it was elsewhere in the Americas" (3-4). In the opening chapter, Murphy demonstrates that indigenous groups employed their own colonization strategy as they migrated to areas unsettled by Europeans, and they exploited an array of military and diplomatic tactics that delayed European domination of the Lesser Antilles well into the eighteenth century. Arena's contribution expounds upon Caribbean natives' commercial relationships with the English and Dutch at Suriname from the 1630s to 1650s, and how Anglo-Dutch conflicts during the mid-seventeenth century facilitated the slave trade, Native-African slave rebellions, African-European-Native relations, and provided a grounding for Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*. Heated and violent Native-European confrontations, as Barber's essay illustrates, fueled English and French colonists' fears of "fierce Caribs", and shaped how rival European powers and colonial officials employed Native-European alliances as tools to oppose neighboring claims, denigrate opponents, and consolidate power and influence in the Caribbean (5).