

tive abortion, female infanticide or the poor treatment of young girls), created a higher ratio of males to available females. Because of the higher ratio, men were more prone to violence in order to obtain this rare resource. In addition women sought strong men as mates because of their ability to protect women and to acquire wealth. War, despite the many risks and dangers it presents, was necessary and rewarded its victors with social and reproductive hegemony over their competitors.

Often readers focus has been on the ferocious relationships found within the epics until recent changes in scholarship have permitted another view point. Women were beyond the narrow necessity to obtain war goods, but rather were a rare commodity that men fought over in order to capitalize them. While Gottshall's analysis of the epics is unusual, it is convincing. His application of evolutionary biology is significant because it has not been done before in Classical scholarship. He also notes that his argument does not discount the validity of other interpretation of the epics, but rather it complimentary layer of the larger view of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Dominique Wilson

J.R. McNeill. *Mosquito Empires: The Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 390. Paper \$24.99.

J.R. McNeill focuses on microbial dangers of the mosquito-borne diseases malaria and yellow fever to argue that these non-human factors played a crucial role in the success and eventual defeat of European colonization of the "greater Caribbean plantation zone." Published in 2010, *Mosquito Empires* surveys the rise and fall of European empires over the course of three centuries. McNeill, a Georgetown University History Professor, argues that European lust for

wealth and power changed the ecology of the Caribbean by creating instability in the environment and shifting political boundaries.

Yellow fever and malaria significantly shaped colonial and military efforts in the greater Caribbean. Malaria was a peripheral disease since the survivor often gained resistance, while yellow fever bestowed partial immunity. The diseases were less affective on children, Amerindians, and Africans, but caused unstable populations and contributed to the constant influx of Europeans. McNeill focuses on Europeans slave importations to support their monoculture markets, reshaping environments, ecological destruction, and death in the greater Caribbean.

He organizes his book into three main parts, with the first section recounting the climatology of the Caribbean, disease vectors, and European medical practices that caused more harm than good. He finds that before 1685, yellow fever and malaria favored European invaders. The second part describes the rise and fall of colonies depending on European exposure to and relative acquired immunity to the mosquito-borne scourges of yellow fever and malaria. Part three focuses on why revolts by slaves and Eurocreoles against imperial control sometimes succeeded, concluding with the containment and eradication of the diseases in the early twentieth century. In the process, McNeill examines the colonization and ecological changes made to the Greater Caribbean from Cartagena and French Guyana to Jamaica, Havana, and the American South. Yellow fever, malaria, and other diseases were key forces that devastated military and civilian populations.

The greater Caribbean region is damp, hot, and prone to short droughts and monsoonal rains, making it the perfect incubator for disease carrying mosquitos. Plantations and colonies were located equatorial agronomy tracts, were thus subject to the rapid spread and incubation of this scourge. Although the vast amount of the text is focused on

the sheer number of people who became victims of yellow fever and malaria, McNeill also analyzes the environmental destruction.

Mosquito Empires offers a fascinating survey of the devastating effects that human colonization had on Caribbean ecology and the environmental impact on geopolitics. McNeill's expertise as an environmental historian shines through as he examines the force of non-human factors and reinterprets military defeats from the Scots at Darien in 1699 to the British at Yorktown in 1782. Scholars as well as advanced undergraduate and graduate students will find McNeill's work fascinating.

Hamilton Wyatt