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Antonio Santamaría García and Consuelo Naranjo Orovio (eds.), *Más allá del azúcar: política, diversificación y prácticas económicas en Cuba, 1878–1930* (Madrid: Ediciones Doce Calles, 2009), pp. 314, €30.00, pb.

Fernando Ortiz may have characterised Cuban history as a counterpoint between indigenous tobacco and foreign sugarcane, and other historians continue to pursue this dialectical approach to understanding the island's past as a dynamic relationship between its conflicting parts, but Cuban historiography has nevertheless tended to be dominated by the paradigm of sugar monoculture. By the mid-nineteenth century the island had become the world's leading producer, and this one crop increasingly dominated Cuba's macro-economy. This increased as the cane fields continued to spread down the island, with sugar being largely responsible both for wealth generation and for the growing economic dependency that would see Cuba swap colonial domination by Spain for neo-imperial control by the United States. It was not idly that one of the co-editors of this collection, Antonio Santamaría, entitled a previous publication *Sin azúcar no hay país*.<sup>3</sup> Recent scholarship is increasingly demonstrating the social and economic complexities that the *cañaverales* and imposing *ingenios* have tended to overshadow, however. This collection of articles by Spanish and Cuban historians seeks to make a contribution to this, showing how Cuban economy and agriculture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was actually more diverse than has generally been credited.

Rather than simply setting sugar to one side in order to concentrate on other aspects of the island's history, the collection begins with sugar at centre stage and spirals out from this, progressively widening to incorporate ever more elements of a more diverse economy and society, and broader transnational interconnections. Consuelo Naranjo examines the discourses surrounding the promotion of white settlement in Cuba during the nineteenth century, both as a racialised response to the fears generated in a society whose sugar plantations in particular were dependent upon African slavery and as a means to help bolster Spanish rule. Most of the white (principally Spanish) colonists were destined for agricultural occupations, and although during the mid-nineteenth century they were involved in the cultivation of *frutos menores* (primarily food crops) and livestock rearing, by the late nineteenth century they had become particularly associated with cane cultivation. Antonio Santamaría takes a broad view of the Cuban economy during the final two decades of the nineteenth century and its relationship to colonial power – that is, to the decline of Spain and the rise of the United States. Nevertheless, although he includes other agricultural and industrial sectors, his macro-economic perspective cannot avoid returning to the overriding dominance of sugar.

Oscar Zanetti's chapter examines the flip side of an economy dominated by a single export crop: the dependence upon imports to satisfy consumer demand in Cuba. In particular, he looks at how – for all that the United States replaced Spain as the principle source for many goods – Spanish merchants continued to play a central role in the island's import trade, even after loss of the country's colonial power after 1898. Many of these were of Catalan origin (as they had been throughout the nineteenth century), and the following chapter looks at the other end of this historic link

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Santamaría, *Sin azúcar no hay país: la industria azucarera y la economía cubana (1919–1939)* (Seville, 2001).

between Cuba and Catalonia. Much of the latter's economic development in this period originated in the Antillean trade, and Martín Rodrigo shows how this resulted in the urban transformation of Barcelona. In particular he relates this back to the high profits generated by the sugar industry, whether directly or through the indirect general stimulation of the economy.

The remaining four contributions bring the focus back down from the national and transnational to the regional and local, helping to build a vision of a Cuba that was, even during sugar's heyday, considerably more diverse. María Antonia Marqués' posthumous chapter allows us a glimpse at the variety of small-scale industrial activity in Cuba in the final years of the nineteenth century, aimed not at serving the island's export sector but at satisfying the demands of local society. She points to the combination of traditional and modern methods of production and organisation. This can also be said of Leida Fernández's chapter, from the point of view of agricultural diversity and attempts to modernise food cultivation during the period. She describes the technological innovations that enabled the island's farming sector to develop far more than just an advanced sugar industry.

One important example of a key food crop, the development of whose cultivation and trade has tended to be overshadowed by that of sugar, is the banana. Alejandro García explores the local economies of eastern Cuba, where the banana had long been established as a dietary staple, to show how, from having used bananas essentially as a subsistence crop, in the late nineteenth century Cuba developed a substantial banana export sector whose growth in the period outstripped by three to one that of sugar. This consideration of other crops is followed up by Mercedes Valero, who assesses how different agricultural projects pursued in the latter years of the nineteenth century actively sought to diversify Cuba's fields. For the purposes of this chapter she pays particular attention to the little-known local attempts, particularly in Villa Clara in the centre of the island, to cultivate mulberry bushes, thereby making possible the emergence of silk production.

This is a book that has come out of a collaborative research project whose central focus was the role of sugar in Cuban and Puerto Rican history.<sup>4</sup> An important outcome of this project was to signal not merely the already much-discussed centrality of sugar cane to Antillean history, but to look beyond this at the wider diversity and complexity that developed in the shadow of the cane fields. This collection of superbly researched articles may not cover every possible aspect of this, but it makes an important, varied and illuminating contribution, and points the way towards further avenues of research that will enable us to escape from the paradigm of sugar monoculture and delve deeper into the often hidden complexities and diversities that were responsible for constructing Cuba's past.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Memoria del azúcar: prácticas económicas, narrativas nacionales y cultura en Cuba y Puerto Rico, 1791–1930'; see <http://reccma.es/proyecto1.html>.