

ATLANTIC TRANSFORMATIONS

Dale W. Tomich ed., *Atlantic Transformations: Empire, Politics, and Slavery in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020). 240 pages.

This is the latest word from a group of scholars who have collaborated in developing the “Second Slavery” paradigm. Dale Tomich coined the term in 1988, and, since then, has brought together specialists from around the world who have contributed to collective volumes and journal special editions. Briefly, Tomich and his colleagues have demonstrated that industrial capitalism and political liberalism promoted the expansion of slavery in key areas of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world despite the advent of abolition. By so doing, they helped debunk a previous paradigm, a product of Marxism and modernization theory, that had depicted slavery as a preindustrial and even a “semi-feudal” form of labor. While Tomich initially focused his research on the French Caribbean, other scholars examined Cuba, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and the southern United States.

The volume has a parallel purpose. It is dedicated to the memory of Christopher Schmidt-Nowara (1966-2015), former Prince of Asturias Chair in Spanish Culture and Civilization at Tufts University and previously director of the Latin American and Latino Studies Institute at Fordham University. As such, it pays much attention to Spain and its empire. Lurking in the background (and foreground) of many essays is his influential notion of a “colonial public sphere”. Associations and organs in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Spain discussed slavery, abolition, anti-slavery, immigration, free trade, taxation, and a bevy of related matters that revolved around the plantation system. Before Schmidt-Nowara’s work, scholars of Cuba and Puerto Rico had underappreciated the depth and influence of metropolitan and colonial associations and interchanges. What is more, historians of modern Spain had regarded the colonies as holdovers from the early modern empire rather than as integral parts of a global political economy. Taken as a whole, the ideas of Tomich and Schmidt-Nowara inform the essays, a tribute to their collaboration and friendship.

Josep Maria Fradera’s essay, “1780-1880: A Century of Imperial Transformations” sets the stage. He demonstrates how “imperial nations” replaced old-regime monarchical empires characterized by aggregation, multiple jurisdictions, and different layers of law. The new empires were national spaces with different laws, and lawmaking procedures, for

metropolitan and colonial territories. Governors, proconsuls, captain generals, and other undemocratic (and often despotic) figures promulgated administrative, juridical, and fiscal norms that granted different incidences of citizenship to persons depending on the community to which they belonged. Within this process, abolition and Second Slavery -- and the concomitant increasing numbers of free Blacks -- caused racial notions of citizenship to seep into, and eventually pervade, colonial and metropolitan political culture. This occurred just as Europe set its sights on the colonization of Africa and Germany joined the club of imperial nations, importing its “precocious biologism” into the mix.

The heart of the volume consists of a series of essays on the Caribbean, and, to a lesser extent, the Latin American mainland. Marcela Echeverri’s survey of post-independence Gran Columbia demonstrates how the Second Slavery framework helps understand the history of places that have not normally been associated with the phenomenon. She shows how free-womb laws and other gradual abolitionist measures ensured the continuance of slavery, and, in some places, its temporary growth. This occurred even in the absence of plantation economies. While the pace of abolition continued to be debated in the republics, slavery was being ramped up in Cuba. In a fascinating article, José Antonio Piqueras illustrates how the famous proclamation of the Congress of Vienna that announced the imminent abolition of the slave trade came to have a reverse effect in Cuba. In the ensuing decades, planters and traders devised sophisticated and effective ways to capture and transport Africans, while striving to influence and water down the contents and enforcement mechanisms of treaties and secret agreements between Britain and Spain. Even after abolition, the remnants of slavery did not disappear. In his article, Luis Miguel García Mora discusses the press campaigns of two Cuban autonomist newspapers published in Madrid, *La Tribuna* and the *Revista de las Antillas*. These organs appeared in 1882, two years after Spain had announced the end of slavery on the island. The directors tied autonomism to the abolition of “patronage”, an institution that partially bound slaves to their former owners despite the promise of freedom.

Two insightful essays address the Dominican Republic, another country that has rarely featured in the Second Slavery literature. Anne Eller examines the Spanish annexation of the Dominican Republic from 1861 to 1865. She explores how Dominican and Spanish elites believed that modernization was synonymous with the development of a plantation economy. They contemplated the implantation of various forms of coerced and semi-coerced labor, such as military-agricultural colonies, indenture schemes, and prison and vagrant work regimes. Despite metropolitan assurances to the contrary, many observers assumed that the return of slavery -- and even “reenslavement” -- was an inevitability. Albert García-Balaña’s article also addresses the annexation within a wider analysis of how Spain’s “African war” in Morocco (1859-1860) reverberated in the Caribbean. He uncovers an illustrative microhistory of Catalan volunteers who fought in Morocco and then travelled to Cuba where they were feted as heroes. There, they recruited volunteers to join them in the war against Haiti in Santo Domingo. By citing other examples, he shows how the same groups who celebrated the Spanish victory in Morocco, and subsequently rallied behind Dominican annexation, were those committed to defending slav-

ery in Cuba. Imperial expansion, the plantation system, and race wars went hand-in-hand.

To conclude, Rafael Marquese and Dale Tomich co-author the article “Slavery in the Paraíba Valley and the Formation of the World Coffee Market in the Nineteenth Century”. Even though the title draws attention to Brazil, its contents are broader. The authors synthesize the major transformations in global sugar, coffee, and cotton production. It is a fitting finale, bringing the reader back to the subject of free, coerced, and forced labor and the world economy after being immersed in the Spanish Caribbean for much of this excellent volume.

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