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### **Review of Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, eds., From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas**

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**Borucki, Alex, David Eltis, and David Wheat, eds. *From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas*. Diálogos Series. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020. x + 350 pp. + 4 fig. + 3 maps + 7 tables.**

Published at a pivotal moment in the global reckoning with legacies of early modern slavery, *From the Galleons to the Highlands* reframes historical narratives that have downplayed the importance of slavery and slave trading in the Spanish Empire. Building on *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America* and *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, this volume looks to the routes of slave trading themselves for insights into the lives of African and African-descended captives. The chapters offer new findings on the spatial distribution and direction of slave trading to the Spanish Americas; data on demographic phenomena, including *mestizaje*; modes of transit of enslaved people, especially mule trains; as well as interlocking circuits of local, colonial, and transimperial commerce. The authors are to be commended for the breadth and depth of their sources, which range from notarial records to documents produced at the highest levels of imperial bureaucracy. Thus, the volume treats the role of slave trading in the development of the Spanish Empire and the experiences of enslaved people who arrived in Spanish territory by a variety of routes.

In their introduction, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America,” editors Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat present the volume as a corrective to the paucity of broad studies of the “size, nature, and significance of the African connection with Spanish America” (1). First, the editors revise estimates of the scale and impact of slave trading. From 1520-1867, perhaps 1.51 million Africans were disembarked from transatlantic voyages to Spanish America, and more than half a million more people were trafficked within the Americas (3). Such findings demand a serious engagement with Black slavery as a central aspect of Spanish rule and the subsequent rise of colonial societies, an undertaking that is certainly underway, but which deserves further attention. While empirical data are the backbone of their discussion, the editors assert the centrality of the “experiences of captives” and the ambitions of slavers in the Spanish empire (10-11). Second, the introduction argues for a general reassessment of the impact of enslaved Africans and Black people over the long term. In brief, the volume proposes that “Black populations had a key role in the growth of the Spanish Americas before 1800” (3). That the slave trade shaped each of the four centuries of colonial rule is one of the main contentions of the book as a whole.

Consisting of 11 chapters and an introduction, the book covers multiple regions, periods, historical methodologies, and sources relevant to the study of

trades in African captives. The theme of routes and space unites the volume and allows the chapters to intertwine multiple historiographies and Atlantic processes. To understand Spanish American contexts of slaving, the authors often take up the relatively new framework of “transimperial” analysis. This approach helps to establish the intertwined and interdependent networks of Spanish and other Atlantic actors that facilitated slave trading. Some chapters strive to uncover the experiences of Black captives, while others take an approach that renders demographic patterns. The chapters progress chronologically, with greatest emphasis falling on what are now Cuba and Mexico in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The tables included draw from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD), national and regional archives, newspapers, and the Archivo General de Indias. A handful of maps provide orientation to specific regions of Mexico and Central America. The multilingual bibliography spans classic and recent works and will be of interest to graduate students and researchers alike.

The first chapter, “The Size and Direction of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas,” presents findings from the TSTD and Intra-American Slave Trade Database (I-Am) in Atlantic contexts. Written by the editors of the volume, the piece analyzes new data on transatlantic traffic until 1640 and the subsequent major source of captives until 1800, the intra-American trade. Scholars of Spanish imperial bureaucracy will note that Spanish traders relied on contraband trade to an extent not seen in other European empires. The chapter connects the forced migration of Africans with processes of *mestizaje* “to explain why identities in the Spanish colonies evolved differently” (17). Yet, demographic patterns can both reveal and obscure African and African-descended people. The authors challenge the reader to envision a past in which Africans were key historical actors throughout Spanish America.

Marc Eagle and David Wheat argue in the second chapter that sixteenth-century slave trading consisted of overlapping systems and multiple itineraries. “The Early Iberian Slave Trade to the Spanish Caribbean, 1500–1580” reveals unexpected detours and unscheduled stops that only arise from study in archives beyond the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. In this early period, the authors chart connections between the Caribbean islands and circum-Caribbean ports to Atlantic Islands. Slave trading was not a centralized, uniform operation controlled by the Spanish Crown, nor were all ships carrying captives large-scale slaving ventures. These early “complex itineraries” show that “the transimperial slave trade to the sixteenth-century Caribbean was primarily a transatlantic, rather than an intra-American, phenomenon” (64). The authors argue that the sixteenth century is better understood as a template, rather than a foil, for transatlantic slave trading during the Iberian Union.

Chapter Three, “The Slave Trade to Colonial Mexico: Revising from Puebla de los Ángeles, 1590–1640,” follows African captives from port cities to interior hubs. While examining these routes, Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva highlights the importance of mule trains in the success of slaving within New Spain. The chapter focuses on the “spatial dynamics” to detail not only the paths enslaved people took through what is now Mexico but also the conditions they endured in transit (75). This work represents a complement to recent studies of the conditions on transatlantic slaving vessels. Sierra Silva here brings to life, in earthy and human detail, the internal markets and mechanisms that facilitated slave trading. An appendix includes a translated contract that illuminates the effects of this traffic on children as well as the organization of the mule trains.

In Chapter Four, “West Central Africans in the Province of Guatemala, 1605–1655,” Paul Lokken employs sources from the Archivo General de Centro América to demonstrate the prominence of West Central African origins among enslaved people in the early seventeenth century. African forced migrants impacted “the more peripheral areas,” as well as the viceregal centers, of the Spanish Empire (105). The piece describes a dynamic African population in the Province of Guatemala and shifts in the provenance of captives from Upper Guinea to West Central Africa in the period under study. Qualitative data provide insight into the fate of African-descended women in trade routes within Central America and build on the primacy of the mule train networks discussed elsewhere in the volume. The author foregrounds African origins as a key archival linkage between Central America and the Atlantic world.

Chapter Five transforms notarial sources into a nuanced picture of the experiences of captives in Atlantic, American, and Pacific slave trading routes. “Slave Trading in Antequera and Interregional Slave Traffic in New Spain, 1680–1710” suggests that more Black and *mulato* people were trafficked into slavery through intra-American routes than past studies of this region have supposed. Author Sabrina Smith describes networks and journeys—some of them from the Indo-Pacific—using specific examples of enslaved people and merchant families. Antequera epitomized the “complexity and irregular nature of interregional slave traffic” to smaller population centers of late-seventeenth century New Spain (131). This traffic coexisted with transatlantic slave trading and brought many American-born Black people as slaves to Oaxaca. The slave trade into Antequera, Smith argues, is an example of the flexibility and evolution of trade in human beings within New Spain into the early-eighteenth century.

Rachel Sarah O’Toole’s chapter, “Securing Subjecthood: Free and Enslaved Economies within the Pacific Slave Trade,” follows commercial connections between Panama and northern Peru. Sustained through the labor and knowledge of free and enslaved Afrodescendants, these networks linked Pacific ports to Caribbean and Atlantic trades in goods and human beings. The chapter

argues that the individual fortunes and ventures of free and enslaved Black people were vital to the small- and medium-scale success of the Pacific trade in the seventeenth century. From this piece emerge men and women who, though barred from the vast wealth generated by slave trading, “knew their value” to its survival (154).

In Chapter Seven, Alex Borucki establishes the central role of the slave trade in connecting the Río de la Plata with Atlantic commerce. “From Asiento to Spanish Networks: Slave Trading in the Río de la Plata, 1700–1810” charts the evolution or *rioplatense* slave trading and its transimperial underpinnings. The chapter covers French and English *asientos*, the traffic of people from Colônia do Sacramento to Buenos Aires, and Spanish plans to involve the Royal Company of the Philippines in the slave trade to the Río de la Plata. Luso-Spanish collaborations allowed slavers from this region to eventually become the sole mainland Spanish American traders to traffic captives directly from Africa in the final decades of colonial rule. The author argues that this region forged the “most enduring connections to slave trafficking in the mainland Spanish Americas” (178).

Chapters Eight and Nine treat slave trading to Cuba using quantitative methods and extensive tables that will be of future use to scholars. “The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade: New Data, New Paradigms,” written by David Eltis and Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez, provides a more comprehensive picture of more than 350 years of slave trading. The new data demonstrate that, for long stretches of the eighteenth century, slavers trafficked more captives into Cuba from places other than Africa. In the long term, 82 percent of Africans enslaved in Cuba arrived directly from Africa, often from West Central Africa or the Bight of Biafra. Examining both intra-American and transatlantic slave trading shows that particular African linguistic or regional designations did not predominate after the sixteenth century and renders the “heterogeneity of the Afro-Cuban population even more striking” (218).

In “Reassessing the Slave Trade to Cuba, 1790–1820,” Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez employs new evidence from newspapers and the Archivo Nacional de Cuba to establish slaving ships’ points of departure and dates of arrival. The author differentiates transatlantic from intra-American voyages and gathers data on vessels that disembarked captives in Matanzas, Santiago, and Trinidad. During the period from 1790-1820, slave trading into Cuba involved dozens of Atlantic regions and ports: “No other region in the Americas could match Cuba in the diversity of its national suppliers and captive origins” (231). The nature of this slave trade made it sensitive to external pressures, such as war with England. With the push for abolition in the early-nineteenth century came Cuban investment in and control of transatlantic slaving enterprises.

Chapter Ten, “Routes into Eighteenth-Century Cuban Slavery: African Diaspora and Geopolitics” focuses on the slave trade to Cuba prior to 1789 and mediates on the effects of some of the quantitative findings of the previous chapters. Elena Schneider puts forward this period as a way to excavate the “social and cultural geography of the African diaspora” (250). The experiences of enslaved people before they arrived in Cuba informed their networks, languages, and cultures. Like Borucki, Schneider cites the slave trade as a regional and transimperial glue that facilitated the success of Cuban merchants and elites. Following the routes by which enslaved people arrived in Cuba in the eighteenth century, the author asserts that intra-American passages themselves were sites of creolization and drivers of hybridity. The piece brings out the diverse consequences of slaving routes for cultural production and community formation.

“Early Spanish Antislavery and the Abolition of the Slave Trade to Spanish America” is the last chapter of the volume. Emily Berquist Soule explores the “strange intimacy between Catholicism and antislavery in the Hispanic world” (277) as well as abolitionist and antislavery ideas from the early nineteenth-century. The author sheds light on the arguments of seventeenth-century writers Francisco José de Jaca and Epifanio Moirans and nineteenth-century liberal activists Isidoro Antillón and José Blanco White. The earliest written condemnations of slavery and slave trading to emerge from the Atlantic may be those of Jaca and Moirans. Though unsuccessful, these advocates spanned the Atlantic and fused religious and political ideas from Spanish traditions and beyond. The early and enduring discourses of antislavery further cement the overarching contention of the volume that the slave trade to Spanish America was extensive and profoundly important.

This volume will be a reference for scholars interested in empirical reassessments of slave trading and routes of passage to Spanish America. Many of these chapters will fit easily into a standard college curriculum. Sabrina Smith’s chapter would add layers to a survey of Mexican or colonial Latin American history, while Emily Berquist Soule’s contribution would be at home in a syllabus on comparative slavery or intellectual history. The book is thorough without being prohibitively technical; the writers presume familiarity with geography. Therefore, it seems reasonable to envision the full text as part of upper-division undergraduate courses, in addition to its use among graduate students and scholars.

The title of the book alludes to the promise of further research: many routes led to the massive forced migration of Africans and their descendants to Spanish America. As the editors recognize, there are large territorial swaths that fall outside the scope of this text. The authors’ data and arguments will complement research into the trafficking of Indigenous people and people from the Indo-Pacific in Spanish America. Rather than simply a trade driven by foreign

merchants or the events of the nineteenth century, the volume shows the need to address slave trading as integral to the Spanish Empire.

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