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Small Islands, Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean.

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polygynous, for instance, and brought those expectations with them, as they did much of the spirituality which pervaded other modalities of their existence.

In lifting the lid on the Chinese box of cultural survivals, Palmié scores the theoretical suppositions of Melville J. Herskovits as “naive” (p. xix), while praising another scholar for “discarding much of an older analytical vocabulary involving concepts such as ‘culture contact’ or ‘acculturation,’ and substituting the fashionable notion of ‘cultural conversations’” (p. xx-xxi). Accordingly, precedence is given to the by-now familiar arguments that incoming Africans were “mere collectivities of deracinated individuals” (p. xvii-xx, xxiii) (encapsulated in Mintz and Price’s influential *The Birth of African-American Culture*), and to the complementary view, in Genovese’s “magisterial” work, that the slaves’ introjected their owners’ paternalistic outlook.

These positions don’t hold up well in light of what is now available in the literature concerning the role played by African cultural carryovers (which in certain times and places may be attributed – as they were by contemporaries black and white – to specific West African nationalities); nor are they corroborated by descriptions in this collection of repatriated slaves (Richard Rathbone, pp. 57, 62-63), slave cults derivative of Africa (Oostindie & Van Stipriaan, p. 93), and actual code words contemporaries used to denote those among their slaves who were African (Gudrun Meier, p. 71).

This is a useful volume, particularly because several of its contributors have been willing to take on the more difficult comparative and theoretical issues which continue to animate discussions of early African American history.

Small Islands, Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean. KAREN FOG OLWIG (ed.). London: Frank Cass, 1995. viii + 200 pp. (Cloth US\$ 39.50)

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This exciting volume fills gaps large and small and points to directions for future research. I emphasize one such direction here – the connection

between liberal ideology, free trade, and new forms of exclusion – which may become more important, with the rise of regional free trade agreements that leave out the Leeward Islands and the globalization of finance and production that weaves them in. Regardless, this book affords an opportunity to reflect on emancipation and rethink liberal conceptions of freedom. As Olwig writes, “[t]he ability to absorb the contradictions of freedom may well be one of the most important legacies of emancipation for Caribbean societies” (p. 7).

Olwig’s insightful introduction attends to these contradictions of “freedom.” No longer “protected” as property in a paternalistic slave system that guaranteed certain limited “customary” (and, to slave owners, cost-free) rights to subsistence, medical care, and education, the newly-emancipated were left “to fend for themselves” (p. 4) and, thus, were left with only themselves to blame for their failures. Common land tenure and migration emerged as responses to this paradox, and new racisms developed to “explain” people’s failures – and often violent resistances.

B.W. Higman takes an historical look at Caribbean history-writing. With the end of slavery and protectionist policies came decreased metropolitan interest and fewer written histories. Higman identifies Merivale’s 1841 *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies* as a key text for subsequent writing. Merivale noted that the imperial fringes were “characterized by extremes of both liberty and slavery” (p. 11), and developed a typology of colonial societies based on land-labor ratios and the importance of export crops. Merivale also speculated about the demise of protectionism and the rise of free trade. Free trade led to economic failure, and economic failure came to be written in the terms of social Darwinism (p. 16). Higman traces the continuing influence of Merivale’s typology, and concludes with oral and popular histories.

Susan Lowes’s essay on the decline of elites in Antigua, and Riva Berleant-Schiller’s on the rise of the peasantry in Montserrat, nicely complement each other. Lowes describes challenges to elites posed by the Sugar Duties Act of 1846, which eliminated sugar subsidies and further consolidated free trade, and chronicles the concomitant rise of norms of “respectability” among non-white elites attempting to maintain their social position. The emerging race/gender system of respectability (based on legal marriages, legitimacy, etc.) ensured the exclusion of non-white lower classes. By the 1860s, free trade had so thoroughly decimated the economy that even “respectable” non-whites had little chance of economic advancement. Many sent their children abroad, or simply left the island altogether. Lowes concludes with a compelling discussion of elites’ efforts to maintain themselves by pleading with the Colonial Office for new forms

of protectionism. The result: Crown Colony rule and foreign corporate control of the sugar industry.

Berleant-Schiller examines the promotion of "peasantries" by the Colonial Office after the collapse of elites. She shows how the struggle for land became central to people's attempts to carve out niches for themselves, and details the rise of peasant crops as the main export. Plantation owners refused to sell land to the newly-freed, instead developing share-cropping systems. These systems encouraged squatting, which, by 1860, was legally recognized and even taxed (p. 62)! Berleant-Schiller emphasizes the impact of peasant export production on creating linkages with the rest of the Caribbean. As she notes, "systems of land and labour in Montserrat, and in the Caribbean, have always been tied to a global economy" (p. 68).

Jean Besson's essay on land, kinship, and community, and Olwig's on cultural complexity in Nevis, also nicely complement each other. Besson argues that the Hispanic Caribbean did not develop the customary tenures found in the English Caribbean because continuing Spanish colonialism, and later U.S. imperialism, propped up plantation economies. In the English Caribbean, customary tenures became a means of solidifying kinship and community on the ruins of the plantations. Family land was a process of "rooting" and "uprooting": the system which gave symbolic value to land ownership depended on migration to prevent competing economic claims from destroying kinship and community ties.

Olwig identifies three cultural traditions in Nevis: a hierarchical, paternalistic, quasi-feudal rural order, a mixture of African cultural elements brought by slaves, and an ideology of respectability that arrived with the Methodists. The latter made a good deal of sense when, with the coming of capitalist "freedom," industriousness and clean living seemed to underwrite one's successes. Respectability increased in importance as the newly-freed sought to differentiate themselves from each other, after the decline of elites, while earlier models of sociability complemented ideologies of freedom and equality. As with the family land system, migration alleviated the contradictions of this complex interweaving of sociability and respectability.

Gad Heuman reviews post-emancipation labor unrest and the rise of direct Crown rule. He argues that the structural causes of labor riots were low wages, the lack of capital among planters caused in part by free trade, and the withdrawal of prior "privileges" like rum and sugar allowances. Other factors included land scarcity, the unfairness of the judicial system, and the fear of re-enslavement.

George Tyson's chapter on labor riots on St. Croix from 1849 to 1879 tells an engaging story of new labor laws and intra-regional migration. As rural laborers left the estates for wage work in the cities, planters imported laborers from the rest of the Caribbean, creating competition between Cruzian urban day-laborers and immigrants. Horrible working conditions and efforts to prevent immigrant laborers from leaving created conditions for insurrection. Immigrant laborers led the cause. This chapter contains fascinating information on how laborers conceptualized their contracts, and the notions of freedom and bondage they brought to bear on emerging systems of wage work.

Elizabeth Thomas-Hope's review of post-emancipation migration synthesizes one position the chapters share: that "[m]igration provided a new framework within which Leeward Islanders could participate in economic activity central to regional interests and, at the same time, could adapt to an official freedom within the limits of their island system" (p. 163). In spite of colonial efforts to restrict their movement, Caribbean migrants consolidated circuits that provided both escape from the plantations and a means of maintaining links with home communities.

David Lowenthal's postscript identifies four post-emancipation developments: continued hegemony of the plantocracy; economic decline; the reduction of metropolitan interest; and the rise of new racisms. These are all connected, I would argue, and are linked to the implantation of liberal ideology and free trade. Liberalism declares all people free and equal, but in so doing, leaves people with only themselves to blame for their failings. Furthermore, liberalism justifies exclusion and hierarchy – and labor-force segmentation – based on naturalizations of these "failings," often with reference to kinship and gender. It should come as no surprise, then, that kinship and gender emerge in the post-emancipation period as key loci for the configuration of identity (through the emphasis on respectability and marriage, and the emphasis on sociability and extended kin ties articulated around family land).

In sum, this is an important volume that rectifies the dearth of scholarship on the post-emancipation period and solidly locates the Leeward Islands within broader conversations about the nature of the global and the local, cultural complexity, migration and citizenship, and the paradoxes of liberalism. These little islands in the global network provide big opportunities to rethink the global condition.