

Holger Weiss (ed.). *Ports of Globalisation, Place of Creolisation. Nordic Possession in the Atlantic World during the Era of the Slave Trade* (Brill: Leiden, 2016)
 ISBN 978 90 04 30278 5. xi + 315 pages, 29 ills. Price: €117,00.

Where both the Portuguese and British Atlantic political and religious histories have received ample scholarly attention, the Nordic Atlantic ventures have received far less consideration. The anthology *Ports of Globalisation* seeks to address this by presenting a series of essays that, ordered in a chronological manner, discuss issues related to the Nordic (read: Danish) Atlantic empire. Four contributions focus on Danish presence in West Africa while five chapters examine topics related to the Danish West Indies; the closing article (to some extent an oddity in the volume though well-worth reading) discusses the Swedish Colony of St. Barthélemy. Topics include a discussion of Oddena, Oguaa and Osu, three African Atlantic Towns (Holger Weiss), 18th century Danish diplomatic and economic relations with Akwamu (Fredrik Hyrum Svensli), two noteworthy studies of Danish endeavors to establish cotton and coffee plantations on the Gold Coast (Per Harnæs and Jonas Møller Pederson) as well as an analysis of the rise of the right movement among colored people in the Danish West Indies (Christian Damm Pedersen) and a discussion of slave laws in the Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy (Fredrik Thomasson).

Three contributions in the anthology are of special interest to readers of *Exchange*. Anders Ahlbäck's spellbinding chapter on the 18th century mission history by Christian Oldendorp (1721-1787) compares Oldendorp's original manuscript with its published version, evidencing the productivity of studying archival materials and published sources side by side. Ahlbäck convincingly demonstrates that Johann Jakob Bossart, head of the Moravian archives and editor of Oldendorp's manuscript, substantially altered Oldendorp's text, without seeking consent. Ahlbäck writes: "[T]he original manuscript can be read as a scathing critique of the West Indian slave society and a passionate appeal for the human dignity of its African and African Caribbean victims" (p. 191, 192). In Bossart's published version however all passages critical of slavery and the slave-trade have been removed or toned down, so as to align the text to the official Moravian policy on the slavery-issue. Later historians have often critiqued Oldendorp's conformist attitude towards slavery, unjustly so, as Ahlbäck now convincingly demonstrates.

Equally fascinating is Louise Sebro's portrayal of three free Africans in 18th century St. Thomas, two of whom (Domingo Gesu and Anton Ulrich), were closely connected to the Moravian mission on St. Thomas. Especially Sebro's discussion of the near mythical role ascribed by Moravians to Anton Ulrich as

catalyst of the Caribbean mission and of Ulrich's later disavowal of Christianity, forms an intriguing read. Equally captivating is Gunvor Simonsen's study of the emergence of the notion 'obeah' in Danish Caribbean legal archives. Simonsen demonstrates how connections between the British and Danish Caribbean may have introduced the term 'obeah' in the Danish West Indies, where the concept only gained prominence in the 19th century. Simonsen argues that the notion 'obeah' offered Africans, African Caribbean and Europeans alike a vocabulary to talk about 'things spiritual', be it that each group ascribed different connotations to the term.

The book's theoretical framework is formed by concepts such as proto-globalisation and creolization, framing European Atlantic possessions as "interconnected spaces", "where groups of people of various ethnic origins and classes engaged in trade, agriculture and consumption, but also in acts of repression, rebellion and violence" (p. 1), with ports as key nodes in the Atlantic webs of connectivities. While all chapters merit reading in their own right, the common thread of theory is faint to say the least. The main relationship between the contributions seems to be their link to Danish colonial ambitions and policy, rather than a shared theoretical frame or a collective coherent effort to reflect on and contribute to theory on creolization, Atlantic connectivities or interconnected space. While this is a missed opportunity and to some extent also a flaw of the book, the anthology offers a stimulating read to scholars of the (Danish involvement in the) early modern Atlantic world.

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