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Book Reviews

Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874. By Christopher Schmidt-Nowara. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999. xiii + 239 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)

There is a long tradition, dating back to at least Adam Smith, of seeking to understand slavery's viability and the factors leading to its abolition by looking at slavery as an economic institution with manifold links to other segments of the world economy. The process of abolition has also been successfully studied from the international perspective with attention to the transnational clashes and alliances generated around the struggle for the preservation or destruction of slavery. In *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874*, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara attempts to combine these two perspectives in order to explain the transatlantic alliance of Peninsular and Antillean abolitionists which crystalized during the 1860s and early 1870s.

One of the book's most salient contributions is its success at integrating, in a balanced way, the Peninsular and Insular abolitionist thrusts. Most studies on the topic of abolition in Cuba and Puerto Rico have focused on one or the other side of the Atlantic, neglecting to recognize the ideological, cultural, and political bonds uniting Antillean and Spanish abolitionists. The author explains, for example, that "[M]etropolitan initiatives against protectionism and oligarchy easily meshed with the colonial attacks on the slave trade and non-representative rule, facilitating the alliance of Spaniards and Antilleans" (p. 98).

While convincingly arguing that the abolitionist movement was a transnational phenomenon, Schmidt-Nowara fails to frame the abolitionist alliance in a broader Antillean political context in which abolitionism remained a very marginal force throughout the period covered by the book. The abolitionist alliance of the late 1860s and early 1870s was, for one, a rare, perhaps unique, moment in Spanish colonial history—a history marked in the region by two independently functioning political systems. Conditions in the colonial setting were such, particularly in Cuba, that colonial administrators from Miguel Tacón (1834-1838) to Domingo Dulce (1862-1866; 1869) recognized the impossibility of carrying out Madrid's colonial designs in the Caribbean. Spanish policy-makers and abolitionists from both sides of the Atlantic may have sat down in Madrid to discuss Caribbean colonial issues, but Cuba's *manigua* was under the control of *Mambí* generals, and

Spanish *voluntarios* ruled the streets of Havana. Cuba's key political actors, moreover, preferred the conspiratorial and armed struggle avenues over the lobbying and parliamentary options favored by their Puerto Rican counterparts. Cubans, with few exceptions, rejected Madrid as a center of political activity, embracing instead exile destinations in Key West, New York, Tampa, and New Orleans.

Not surprisingly, as Schmidt-Nowara demonstrates, Puerto Rico's abolitionists were more active, and they successfully integrated Spanish abolitionist politics. Puerto Rico's colonial elite was also more inclined to celebrate the cultural and racial bonds uniting it with Spain, while its Cuban counterpart developed a rabid anti-Spanish discourse.

Despite some of the shortcomings outlined above, Schmidt-Nowara's book is an important contribution to the body of literature on abolitionism and Spanish imperial politics. It is a thoroughly researched study that moves beyond the "us-against-them" model that has characterized much of the earlier scholarship, forcing scholars to recognize a more complex Spain, whose various economic and social actors clashed to produce contradictory and seemingly bizarre colonial policies. The preservation of slavery may have been vital to some of Spain's economic sectors, but others suffered its economic and political ramifications. Likewise, Antilleans were divided over the abolition of slavery. While the region's most socially radical voices pushed for its immediate abolition, others feared the social consequences of such a move.

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