

To be clear, *SPD und Parlamentarismus* is not a précis of the peculiarities of Social Democratic parliamentarians, along the same lines as Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke's *The House of Commons, 1754–1790* (1964), it is a biography of a party and its leading actors that accepts their political agency and explicative centrality first and foremost.

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Ports of Globalisation, Places of Creolisation. Nordic Possessions in the Atlantic World during the Era of the Slave Trade. Ed. by Holger Weiss. [Studies in Global Slavery, vol. 1.] Brill, Leiden 2016. xi, 315 pp. Ill. Maps. €115.00; \$149.00.

This collection of essays, edited by Holger Weiss, contributes to the growing scholarship on Nordic colonial activities in the Atlantic World available in English. It grew out of a workshop on Atlantic history held in Åbo, Denmark, in 2012 and includes ten chapters written by a balanced mix of junior and senior scholars. Chapters are organized geographically, with the first half focusing on the Danish sphere of interest in West Africa (present-day southeast Ghana) and the latter half on the Danish colonies of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, and the Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy in the Caribbean.

An introductory chapter by Holger Weiss frames the collection within the broader scholarship and history of the Atlantic World. Weiss succinctly summarizes the rise of Danish and Swedish colonial ventures in a transnational context, setting the tone for a volume that aims to keep the entangled history of the Atlantic World at the fore. Drawing on Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann's model of "portals of globalisation",¹ the collection seeks to address and analyse "local articulations of proto-globalisation and creolisation in the Danish and Swedish possessions in the Atlantic world". It does so through the prism of the concepts of place, space, and simultaneity. While this is an ambitious and exciting agenda, contributors adhere to it unevenly.

The chapters on West Africa open with Holger Weiss's contribution on the slave forts of Oddena (Elmina), Oguaa (Cape Coast), and Osu (Christiansborg). Weiss argues that these "entangled" spaces were creolized through the evolving contact between Europeans and Africans between 1650 and 1850. In his view, the hybrid architectural style of the stone houses that emerged around the forts testifies to this process. In the following chapter, Fredrik Hyrum Svensli examines Danish political and commercial strategies on the Gold Coast in the early eighteenth century. Focusing on tributary relations between Danish governors and local African rulers, Svensli analyses governors' use of gift exchange as a

1. Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, "Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization", *Journal of Global History*, 5:1 (2010), pp. 149–170.

means to navigate shifting alliances with rulers and rebels of the Akan kingdom of Akwamu. He shows how gift giving was essential to ensuring a continuation of trade with the interior during times of war.

Per Hernæs's and Jonas Møller Pedersen's chapters focus on Danish colonial and territorial ambitions in West Africa. Hernæs shows how, between the 1780s and 1830s, colonial officials and private entrepreneurs strove to found plantations in Africa along the lines of the Caribbean model. He provides a detailed study of plans for cotton and coffee plantations and discusses their small-scale success and ultimate failures. Pedersen, in turn, analyses an 1848 proposal for a Danish agricultural colony on the Gold Coast by the Danish Guinea Commission. He pays close attention to the concept of *pligtarbejder* (translated as "duty worker" or "forced labourer"), used to describe the workforce intended for the colony. The idea was to purchase slaves locally and then allow them to move towards freedom while labouring under a Danish work regime, depicted to be gentler than local ones and infused with "fatherly" care. Although the proposal was stillborn (Denmark sold its African possessions to Britain in 1850), Pedersen argues that the episode offers insights into the operations of Copenhagen-based colonial agents and illuminates their efforts to advocate colonial expansion in West Africa at a time when the slave trade and slavery were increasingly under attack.

Readers unacquainted with Danish colonial activities and policies in West Africa will find a great deal of useful information in these chapters. However, the themes they explore will be very familiar to scholars of other European powers in West Africa, particularly the themes of gift giving, the development of agricultural plantations, and justifications for colonialism in an age of abolitionism. Such parallels are not touched upon in the respective chapters. Instead their authors remain transfixed on the Danish context. A more explicit engagement with the inherently transnational (or trans-imperial) approach associated with Atlantic history would have allowed the authors to consider the ways in which strategies, ideas, and policies migrated from one colonial interest sphere to another and, from there, to underline more powerfully the aspects that were particular to the Danish context.

The Atlantic and transnational frame is more immediately present in the five chapters on the Caribbean. Christian Damn Pedersen's chapter provides an excellent overview of the question of civil, political, and equal rights in the Danish colonial empire in the first half of the nineteenth century. He explores the diverse ways in which rights were discussed and understood among white administrators, metropolitan liberals, slaves, and free people of colour during the global age of revolutions, all the while keeping a close eye on global developments.

Anders Ahlbäck's chapter offers an analysis of discrepancies between the original manuscript of C.G.A. Oldendorp's *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den caribischen Inseln S. Thomas, S. Croix und S. Jan* and the published version of 1777. This detective work allows him to reveal tensions within the Moravian Church over the question of slavery in the 1760s and 1770s. His findings also serve as a warning to historians who use the published version as a trusted primary source.

Louise Sebro's chapter scrutinizes meanings of freedom through the life stories of three Afro-Caribbean men who lived in, or near, the town of Charlotte Amalie on the island of St. Thomas in the mid-eighteenth century. Looking at the unconventional trajectory of Mingo Tammarn (a free man of colour), Domingo Gesu (a privileged slave), and Anton Ulrich (a freed slave) – all of whom obtained degrees of autonomy despite their racial and socio-economic status – Sebro deftly underscores the malleability of categories of freedom and slavery in this period. She also challenges historians to rethink legal freedom as the ultimate goal of the enslaved population.

Gunvor Simonsen's chapter traces the introduction of the concept of *obeah* (associated with magic and African Caribbean religious life) in the Danish West Indies, with particular attention to its use by enslaved Africans and their descendants in Danish West Indian courts. While the phenomenon was widespread in the eighteenth-century British Caribbean, Simonsen argues that it was only in the nineteenth century – possibly as a result of contact with the British Caribbean islands – that the concept became part of legal debates in the Danish colonies (although her evidence points to the 1780s).

The last chapter, by Fredrik Thomasson, offers an analysis of slave laws and colonial rulings in the Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy around 1800. Through an investigation of court of justice protocols on St. Barthélemy, Thomasson highlights tensions between Swedish metropolitan and colonial legislation. In doing so, he demonstrates the ways in which governors of St. Barthélemy looked to the adjacent French, Dutch, and Danish colonies for guidance on rulings involving slaves, rather than to the Swedish metropole.

Most of the chapters on the Caribbean successfully engage with the volume's organizing theme of creolization. However, direct references to "proto-globalization", the other organizing theme announced in the introduction, are entirely absent. For this reason, there is a dissonance between Weiss's introduction and several of the chapters. The book also suffers from a lack of dialogue among the individual contributions. Since the collection grew out of a workshop, it is puzzling that each chapter seems to have been written in isolation from the others. To mention but a few examples: the stone buildings described in Weiss's chapter as representing creolization reappear in Hernæs's chapter but as nondescript constructions. Christian Damm Pedersen's discussion of the Freedman Petition of 1816 could have been referenced in Sebro's chapter, which discusses the very same document. The fascinating connections between Ahlbäck's Moravian missionaries and Sebro's two slaves, Gesu and Ulrich, could also have been acknowledged. As a result of this disconnect, the strength of individual chapters does not contribute to the strength of the volume as a whole. Furthermore, the volume would have benefited from a more rigorous and precise use of terminology. For instance, Weiss notes that buildings in West Africa could be presented as markers of "entangled Atlantic transnational spaces" without deciphering how these terms differ from one another. At another point he notes that "enclaves emerged as 'entangled' or 'transnational' spaces", seemingly suggesting that "entangled" and "transnational" are synonyms. A separate problem is the frequency of grammatical and editorial errors in some of the chapters.

In spite of these criticisms, this is a rich collection. Both specialists in the field and readers unfamiliar with Danish and Swedish involvement in the Atlantic World will find ten rich and informative chapters – even if they are not all about ports of globalization or places of creolization.

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