

In James's book the core tension is in a sense the reverse: the articulation of a distinct Uduk culture and community has been strengthened through the experiences of war and displacement, the influence of ethnicity-based government and refugee policy, and the availability of new technologies of communication to mitigate the scattering of the community. The survival of vernacular language and revival of cultural expression is hailed as vital to the recreation of a sense of belonging and a place in the world, and yet the darker side of new ethnic consciousness and new dichotomies of good and evil also rears itself in the book, most vividly in the 'battle of Karmi' between Uduk and Nuer refugees.

That neither book resolves these tensions and moral ambiguities is not a failing, for they reflect the power and politics of culture with which their protagonists are also wrestling. What emerges most clearly from both books is the role of active agency and choice – be it individual or collective – in negotiating the dilemmas posed by war and displacement; people's decisions are not predetermined by their ethnic identity, religious or political affiliation, or even necessarily their family membership. Both authors criticize the international policies towards refugees and IDPs for their frequent denial of just this agency, not least in the assumption that the migrants must ultimately 'return', a process viewed by the subjects of these books with ambivalence, to say the least. Above all, the two books complicate notions of power and empowerment by demonstrating how people may mitigate their own marginality by appropriating and deploying resources from its very source. The result, as James puts it, is a 'consciously transformed, if recognizable, social world', a world that will continue to be transformed as such communities negotiate their place in the post-secession Sudans.

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DEREK PETERSON (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press (pb \$28.95 – 978 0 82141 902 1). 2010, 248 pp.

SEYMOUR DRESCHER and PIETER C. EMMER (eds), *Who Abolished Slavery? Slave Revolts and Abolitionism: a debate with João Pedro Marques*. New York NY and Oxford: Berghahn Books (hb £26.50 – 978 1 84545 636 8). 2010, 216 pp.

As the literature on the Atlantic slave trade has proliferated, so too have a series of debates. One of the sources of debate is the connection of the abolition movement to nineteenth-century imperialism, a topic linked to a 65-year exchange on Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*. Another source of debate in recent years has been the desire of people of African descent to connect with their origins. Like Jews, Armenians and other victims, many of them have developed sites that symbolize the bitter memories of suffering in slavery. Though most academic historians, including all of the authors gathered in these two collections, would agree that the slave trade was a brutal and traumatic experience, some sites have become the subject of myth making, of tales that never happened, and of elaboration on what did happen. On the other side, there are official memories that celebrate abolition as a moral triumph, often touted by political leaders who would rather remember abolition and the good persons who produced it than the

trade it ended. All of these engagements have produced not only contested sites of memory, but valid debates shaped by the desire of some to confront the suffering and of others to remain emotionally at a more removed place. The two books under review deal with these questions.

The Peterson collection is surprisingly coherent for an edited collection. It emerged from a series of lectures at Cambridge University which in Peterson's words 'was conceived as a contrarian effort to challenge the self-congratulatory frame in which the bicentenary of the Abolition Act was being cast' (p. 4). The authors are mostly established scholars, who approach the relationship between abolition and imperialism in different ways. John Thornton does not even deal with abolition, though his chapter ably uses the correspondence of a series of African monarchs to explain their definition of who was enslaveable. This flows from Thornton's effort in other publications to present the logic of African participation in slaving and the slave trade. The other articles all deal in some way with the relation between imperialism and abolition. Peterson's opening essay starts with the way different peoples use slavery as a metaphor for different kinds of oppression. He also lays out the problems of discourses of abolition, which are important to a number of authors. The rest of the volume is clearly linked to connections between abolition and empire.

Christopher Brown, one of the most interesting younger scholars working on slave trade history, points out that the slave trade involved little investment in Africa and that the slave traders had no desire to see any investment. The end of Britain's American empire and the development of abolition created a constituency interested in Africa. In a sense, the abolitionists are able to imagine a different Africa, though their efforts to create it run into difficulty and the long-run effects of their efforts produce results very different from what they wanted. Both Seymour Drescher and Robin Law take that discussion into the nineteenth century. Drescher looks at abolition's relations to colonization, and then at the way British foreign policy used the abolitionist crusade to justify intervention abroad. Law argues that in this effort, while Britain paid lip service to international law, it regularly violated its precepts over the protests of its own experts and of African rulers. Like Thornton, Law makes it clear that African rulers operated with clear sets of rules and had a good understanding of the way the international political system was supposed to operate.

There are particularly interesting pieces by Philip Morgan and Jonathan Glassman. Morgan casts abolition in a comparative light by comparing the intersection of material and moral motives in the first three nations to abolish the trade: Denmark, the United States and Great Britain. He is particularly interesting in his analysis of improving planters who wanted to encourage natural growth in slave populations and free themselves from dependence on slave imports, and whose ideas were similar to those of the abolitionists. He also looks at schemes for imperial expansion after the American revolution and attempts by Britain to achieve comparative advantage during the Napoleonic wars. For Morgan, the 'abolitionist project was inherently imperialist' (p. 110). Morgan's article reads like a prospectus for what could be an interesting book. One of the themes that runs through both books is the reactions to the revolution in St Domingue, which varied from year to year and place to place. In the short run, the brutality of the war weakened the appeal of abolition, but, in the longer term, abolitionists were able to argue that the repressiveness of plantation systems could only produce violent responses.

Glassman takes the relationship into the twentieth century and looks at the 'echoes of abolition' in Zanzibar. It is the only article in either book to look at the discourse of abolition after the formal end of slavery. In West Africa, local

populations were often averse to discussion of local slavery until the beginning of slave trade tourism, which has been particularly important in Senegal and Ghana. In Zanzibar, this discourse was central to political debates. The ruling elite was proud of its Arabic roots and the intellectuals who emerged from it saw Zanzibar and thus slavery as an expression of a Muslim civilizing tradition. After the Second World War, a new group of intellectuals of more modest origins rooted their opposition to the regime in the perceptions of the rulers as outsiders and as exploiters. Though many of the people rallied by the Afro-Shirazi party, which seized power in 1964, were not descended from slaves, an abolitionist critique of the regime that continued to rule under the colonial umbrella provided the ideological justification of the 1964 revolution.

If there is a central problematic to these articles, it is an effort to explain why abolition took place. Historians, with Drescher playing a leading role, have rejected many of the arguments made 65 years ago by Eric Williams. The question that still troubles historians is why European and American states abolished a slave trade that was highly productive, was expanding and was an important source of revenue for the state. Most historians are too sceptical of human motivations to return to an analysis of abolition as a triumph of pure morality.

The abolitionists themselves were motivated by Christian principles, but they shared many of the values of their opponents and were successful only because they were able to convince practical men to join their crusade. The Drescher and Emmer volume takes aim at another current in recent historiography, the study of different forms of resistance to slavery. In its most developed form, this historiography argues that slaves essentially won their own freedom.

Who Abolished Slavery? is not a series of independent papers, but a debate. The heart of it is an 88-page essay by João Pedro Marques, an outstanding scholar, who has up to now published mostly in Portuguese. His essay argues that 'the role of the runaway or rebel slave in achieving his own freedom was considerable, but his role in direct action to free all slaves was limited' (p. 75). He makes a series of key points. The first is that resisting slaves were concerned about themselves and not about slavery as a system. Some of the more successful maroon communities held slaves themselves, and all who signed treaties with colonial states agreed to return runaway slaves to their masters. Second, he analyses a series of major abolitions and argues that in no case were they influenced by slave resistance. Until the Haitian revolution, slave revolts were all highly localized and often put down easily. He explains the success of the Haitian revolution by the role of the French revolution, the intervention of foreign armies, and fortuitous epidemics which decimated troops sent to restore control. Only after British abolition of the trade were there several revolts in the West Indies, which threatened the system, but Marques argues that 'abolitionism encouraged the rebellions, rather than the other way round' (p. 37).

The rest of the book involves comments on the Marques thesis. With the exception of Hilary Beckles, who was attacked by Marques and counter-attacks, all of these comments accept the basic argument, but most qualify and take issue with some of the details of Marques's formulation. Thornton argues that slaves did not seek the end of slavery, but they rejected the plantation system and sought to create space. Emmer argues that maroons, who were particularly important in Dutch colonies, made plantation agriculture less profitable, but sees no evidence that any sought abolition of slavery itself. David Geggus argues that in general, Marques is right, but that slave resistance led to abolition in St Domingue and the Danish West Indies. Geggus also takes issue with some parts of Marques's argument on St Domingue. David Eltis and Stanley Engerman do not argue so

much about whether Marques is right as much as they elaborate on key points. They insist that slave flight accelerated the demise of slavery.

They also discuss shrinking criteria of who is eligible for enslavement and shifts in what is considered acceptable levels of cruelty. The question of who can be enslaved is important to our understanding of the emergence of racially defined slavery, but adds little to the debate on Marques. If Marques makes his argument successfully, it is largely that he has defined his target well. Olivier Petre-Grenouilleau points out that the views attacked here are not widely held by academic historians. They are more widely held by journalists, political leaders and non-academic intellectuals. There is a rich literature of slave resistance, but slave resistance does not necessarily involve systemic attack on the system. It did, however, shape the system and contribute to its demise. Marques cannot in a relatively short essay tackle the meaning of this literature. Some authors try to do so. Most historians are well aware that plantation slave systems depended on a high level of coercion. That is why African slave systems, which could be harsh, were forced to leave more space for slaves within the system.

In all systems, the effort of slaves to achieve space for themselves is as important as resistance because it is part of the way slaves shape the nature of slavery. There is another sub-text that runs through this volume, which is that conflict within the system or outside intervention often provide an opportunity for slaves to find space. For Peter Blanchard it was not resistance, but participation in the wars of independence in Spanish America that contributed to the decline of slavery. Slaves were recruited by both royalists and patriots and generally rewarded with freedom. Slave women filled the void their men vacated.

Geggus and Robin Blackburn argue that leaders were more willing to compromise with the established order than their followers. Blackburn insists that the actions of ordinary slaves made plans for gradualist reforms unworkable. The problem for plantation slave systems was that they depended heavily on coercion. That meant that those who held power were easily frightened by limited but violent slave risings. It also meant that the slave system could easily fall apart. In the American Revolution, large numbers of slaves crossed British lines to seek freedom. Marques points out that during the American Civil War the recruitment of ex-slave soldiers was a factor in the war, but more important was the number of slaves who crossed Union lines to seek freedom. This also happened in Brazil, Reunion and elsewhere. Resistance was important not because resisters wanted to end slavery, but because the measures required to control slaves made plantation slavery so repressive that it could not resist the strain of other conflicts.

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BEHNAZ A. MIRZAI, ISMAEL MUSAH MONTANA and PAUL E. LOVEJOY (eds), *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora*. Trenton NJ and Asmara: Africa World Press (pb £24.99 – 978 1 59221 705 2). 2009, 336 pp.

This book consists of fourteen studies of Muslim slavery in areas ranging from the Crimea to the Caribbean, from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. It is a very welcome addition to slavery studies because it opens up a hitherto little explored field. Paul Lovejoy stresses the need to inquire into how slaves in the Islamic world responded to their enslavement, and how Islam was used to justify slavery. Ehud Toledano attributes the paucity of research into