

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this book is the author's efforts to deal with complex situations. Like other prosperous women of African descent who resided in port cities such as Cartagena de Indias, Terrazas Williams's subjects are not always heroic or morally perfect. One of the most fascinating cases examines the decisions made by a woman named Polonia de Ribas who enslaved her own brothers for decades, despite having an African mother who arrived in New Spain as a slave herself. Ethical complexity makes these women more human and offers readers, especially undergraduates, challenging food for thought and discussion. Throughout the book, Terrazas Williams does not tell a simple, comfortable story; instead, she makes her readers think.

This book demonstrates that scholarship on African-descent individuals in New Spain has reached a new level of sophistication. The book's readability makes it an excellent option for teaching and inspiring undergraduates, although scholars will also learn from it. It is heartening to read such a well-written and thoughtful work of history. Both learned and accessible, this book proves that academic historical scholarship can still spark readers' emotions and imaginations.

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## MAROON EXILES IN THE TRANSATLANTIC

*Almost Home: Maroons between Slavery and Freedom in Jamaica, Nova Scotia, and Sierra Leone.* By Ruma Chopra. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. Pp. 328. \$35.00 cloth.  
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Ruma Chopra uses the experience of Maroon exiles as a framing device for a wide-ranging account of the Maroons as a distinct people, and also as a lens for looking into the complicated relationship between slavery and freedom in the British Empire after the American Revolution. The broad, transatlantic context of Chopra's work stretches from Jamaica, through exile in Nova Scotia, and to Sierra Leone. The ambitious geographic scale of the work situates the relatively familiar story of the Maroons as a case study to examine the broader debates over the nature of the empire.

Chopra notes three major contributions of the work: an examination of the Maroons "exposes the possibilities and contradictions of anti-slavery discourse" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the context of post-revolution loyalism plays an important and understated role in the Maroon drama; and Maroons formed a creole society distinct from both the white planter class and the enslaved of plantation society (6-10). Overall, the group is presented as "dispossessed in relation to whites but empowered in relation to other blacks" (4). Chopra's provocative work persuasively

analyzes a people in-between slavery and freedom, within a historiography that traditionally focuses on the stark divide between the two.

The book's strength is the examination of the broad imperial debates on slavery, and their place in an empire in transition. What the postrevolutionary empire would be was unclear in the 1790s. The slow evolution from the first empire to the second was a process rather than a clear break, and the Maroons form one of the first significant case studies for this change. The unique contribution of Chopra's volume is a recognition of how the Maroons were able to advocate for their own interests with colonial governments, imperial officials, and in the halls of Parliament by skillfully exploiting the divisions within the empire. A multitude of groups adopted the Maroon debate as the venue to argue for their own broader economic, political, and social interests. As a symbol, the 'in-between' Maroons provided the perfect vehicle to advance an array of platforms, some of which were only tangentially related to the Maroons themselves.

There is tension between inequality and agency for marginalized populations, but the Maroons' leveraging of their distinctiveness, loyalty, and potential usefulness to the crown provided important—if constrained—opportunities. How these opportunities were practically explored is less clear. Three intermediary figures between the empire and the Maroons arise from the text. Gen. George Walpole in Jamaica is a sympathetic figure who attempts to intercede on behalf of the Maroons in a number of cases. His story is well outlined, as is the story of Sir John Wentworth in Nova Scotia. The figure of George Ross in Sierra Leone is less clear. After his departure from the colony, the text states that the Maroons were now “without representation” (169). This hints at a potentially significant formal and/or personal relationship that could clarify how the Maroons negotiated with empire.

More systemically, a useful framework could be the parallel between the Maroons and the experience of the First Nations as treaty peoples in British North America. The link in Wentworth's mind between the Mi'kmaq and the Maroons is introduced in the text as an entry point for research into an important question that draws from Chopra's scholarship but is beyond the scope of this volume.

Chopra's treatment of the Maroon saga is a significant addition to the history of the Atlantic World. As the author rightly notes, the traditional bonds of national histories hinder a clear understanding of the scope and significance of the Maroons. The ambitious geographic scope of the book returns the Maroons to a broader trans- and circum-Atlantic context that would have been familiar to the world of 200 years ago.

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