

equated” with these extensive lands (47). This conclusion represents a revision of much of Broun’s own groundbreaking work on the early history of Scottish identity and it has important consequences for the future studies of the politics of high medieval Britain. While the essays in this collection vary in length and quality, collectively they demonstrate the value of studying traditional “national” histories through the lens of new theoretical constructs.

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PADRAIC X. SCANLAN. *Freedom’s Debtors: British Antislavery in Sierra Leone in the Age of Revolution*. Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. Pp. 299. \$40.00 (cloth).
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In this beautifully written book, Padraic Scanlan brings the ironies of Britain’s antislavery colony into sharp focus in innovative ways using new sources. Scanlan has meticulously researched—in archives on three continents—the Sierra Leone Company and the colony’s early governors. He demonstrates how the arrival of the company drove up demand for slave labor in the region and how the Slave Trade Act of 1807 created a new economy based on naval prize money and the bodies of Liberated Africans, who were conscripted into military regiments, used to profit antislavery activists, and settled into villages to produce for the colony or for export. Scanlan observes that the campaign to end the slave trade “was always expected to earn money for its champions” (21). At each stage of the colony’s history, antislavery produced contradictions, profits, and hierarchies. The lives of former slaves who would come to populate the colony would be “defined by the debts Britons assumed they owned to the British empire in exchange for freedom” (223).

This pathbreaking study is structured around five main chapters, the first of which highlights the paradoxes of the antislavery colony’s early reliance on slave traders and slave-produced goods for its survival. Scanlan shows that Sierra Leone, “founded to prove the economic efficiency of wage labor and the potential of the West African market for non-slave goods, became a clearing-house for goods made by slaves” (30). The young colony was failing until the company connected antislavery with the war effort by admitting maroons from Jamaica and securing a lucrative government contract for their “care” and the protection of the Royal Navy (55–57). From the beginning, African settlers were “expected to listen to European command and grow cash crops for the market” or “forfeit European patronage” (53).

Scanlan demonstrates that the great paradox of Sierra Leone was freedom itself. In the second chapter, he shows how the 1807 Slave Trade Act was “a bright line between slavery and antislavery in Britain,” but in Sierra Leone “the line faded into the backdrop of colonial practice and local traditions of slave trading” (66). The Act ensured lucrative bounties for the capturing sailors and much-needed labor for Freetown. Liberated Africans were indentured to European merchants, colonial officials and Maroon and Nova Scotian settlers in what was effectively an “auction” (67–70). When Governor Thompson sent protests back to London, he inadvertently provided officials with “ever more grandiose ambition” and “new possibilities for African empire” (92). Thompson envisioned antislavery as an imperial project and viewed people rescued from slave ships as “blank slates” who could become colonists, pioneers and soldiers in the service of Britain (96).

Freetown’s Vice-Admiralty Court—the focus of chapter 3—became the hub of Sierra Leone’s economy in 1808 as the Royal Navy brought in captured slave ships and “prize

money” that incentivized their capture. The court had the power to emancipate shiploads of captives, and ultimately resettled at least 14,500 people released from the Middle Passage between 1808 and 1823. Yet, Scanlan observes, it “wasn’t particularly interested in what happened to the people it released” (98). Liberated Africans were counted and registered, and then pushed into the military or indentured to locals, but afterward they essentially “disappear from the records” (113). The Court itself was “informal, even corrupt, by design” (101). A virtual monopoly held by the prize agent’s firm ensured the accumulation of a private fortune, and a “feedback loop” allowed a small number of officials to control both public monies and private enterprise (110).

Scanlan argues convincingly in chapter 4 that raids on slave forts led by Charles Maxwell mark a turning point in British imperial history, “when the campaign against the slave trade tipped from being a campaign of national self-purification conducted at sea, and became a justification for expansionist imperial war on land” (154). The raids drew the ire of West African rulers and inspired protests, written in Arabic, warning Maxwell “you are a stranger here, we are the proprietors” (161), but only the courts could halt this expansion, which Scanlan correctly notes was the expression of an abolitionism that “synthesized humanitarianism with capitalist accumulation, and drove it forward by military force” (165).

The climax of the book is its superb fifth chapter, in which Scanlan highlights the transformation in British antislavery that followed the Napoleonic Wars. Although prize money drove Sierra Leone’s economy during the wars, after 1815 “‘Civilization’ replaced prize money at the heart of the colonial economy.” Scanlan explains how the “abstract idea of ‘civilization’ became a program to teach former slaves European folkways: wage work, scheduled and times labour, dress, consumption, and church attendance” (168). Scanlan masterfully demonstrates how the “ideology of antislavery, in the hands of a few officials looking for a new way to make money from the practices of stopping the slave trade, was transformed into a colonialism that proposed to transform former slaves into Christians, wage workers, and consumers” (170).

Padraic Scanlan has not only written an excellent book on Sierra Leone, he has produced one of the most important books ever written on Liberated Africans. The sources necessarily skew the book—as the subtitle clarifies—toward a British rather than an African history. African actors are present, but secondary to the main characters, who are British. The book may thus be read alongside Paul Lovejoy’s *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* (published simultaneously) to provide additional context. And, because the book concludes after the Napoleonic Wars, readers may hope Scanlan will follow up with a sequel, as the majority of the estimated 100,000 African captives taken to Sierra Leone arrived after the period examined in this book.

Freedom’s Debtors is essential reading for any university course on abolition and for any scholar interested in British abolitionism’s effects in Africa. Scanlan powerfully re-centers our understanding of abolitionism and forces us to reexamine its immediate and long-term effects in Africa.

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TIMOTHY J. SHANNON. *Indian Captive, Indian King: Peter Williamson in America and Britain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018. Pp. 343. \$39.95 (cloth).
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Timothy Shannon’s intriguing new book hinges, quite literally, on the question of what is and is not a lie. In the first half of *Indian Captive, Indian King*, Shannon tells the story of