

alliances, feuds, and protocols. In this regard, the book rises to new heights in the historiography of Brazil.

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Slave Families and the Hato Economy in Puerto Rico. By David M. Stark. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015. Pp. xv, 251. Figures. Tables. Index. \$74.95 cloth. doi:[10.1017/tam.2016.43](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2016.43)

Documenting the history of those early colonial Spanish American regions farthest removed from the viceregal seats of imperial power or other major governmental centers is no easy task. Among those regions are parts of the Hispanic Caribbean during the approximately 200-year period extending roughly from 1550 to 1750. Historians generally refer to this interval as the pre-plantation era to accentuate the glaring contrast between that time and the subsequent rise of commercial, slave-based sugar and coffee that began to take form around the last decades of the eighteenth century. The earlier phase was marked by widespread smuggling, subsistence farming, low population density, sparse urban settlement, a rudimentary communications infrastructure, limited “legal” immigration, and lax administrative control. Given the relative dearth of such standard materials as censuses, municipal tax records, and official commercial statistics that might be useful to reconstruct the past, just how can one safely establish the social, cultural, political, and economic evolution of those areas?

David Stark’s book delves into this shadowy landscape and the elusive enslaved Africans in its midst. The author notes that most of the research carried out about the plight of the involuntary migrants is overwhelmingly based on their dehumanization in the plantation belt. There, especially in the export-oriented, sugar-producing estates, African captives and their enslaved kin were treated harshly, worked brutally, their geographical mobility and leisure activities closely monitored or curtailed and their ability to form lasting, legally recognized unions almost universally denied. According to Stark, those conditions did not dominate the lives of those toiling in the *hatos*, the vast, unenclosed landholdings that became entrenched in Puerto Rico prior to the nineteenth century. Slaves in the *hatos* generally raised various kinds of draft animals, timbered, grew provisions (including tobacco), and hunted game, occupations that were not as physically demanding, in relative terms, as those performed by the counterparts on the sugar plantations.

The author focuses on the extent to which enslaved men and women married and established families in accordance with the doctrines of the Catholic Church prior to the reemergence of labor-intensive, commercial agriculture. He does so by painstakingly gathering the birth, marriage, and death records of the northern town of Arecibo for

nearly the whole of the eighteenth century, and comparing the resulting patterns with those he has identified in several other comparable settlements in Puerto Rico and elsewhere in Spanish America. A data set of more than 19,000 entries, of which nearly 10 percent relate to enslaved parties, constitutes the basis of the work. The figures are examined with a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, guided by a family reconstitution methodology. In searching for links between the *hato* economy and family formation among free and unfree islanders, Starks pays particular attention to the type and seasonality of work regimes, the liturgical calendar, and the prenuptial requirements for couples who wanted to marry.

Historians and other specialists in African slavery in the Americas should welcome this major contribution to the field. For one, the book's documented existence of Church-sanctioned, viable, and freely reproducing households of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean undermines the prevailing notion of mutilated black families nearing social death that dominates the published literature on the subject and raises an important question that scholars might well consider: how much of the demographic behavior displayed by the captives in Puerto Rico and the rest of the Spanish Antilles can be attributed to the fact that the enslavement of Africans existed alongside other forms of labor exaction not structured exclusively around black slavery? In the absence of punitive slave codes, oppressive forms of coercion and other methods of social control, what other mechanisms maintained and reproduced the slave regimes in non-plantation settings?

The book stimulates readers to rethink other widely held beliefs that some have taken as foregone conclusions. The scholarship of the Hispanic Caribbean generally views *hatos* from a perspective of deficiency, stressing their role in the widespread decadence that engulfed the region following the reorientation of Spanish colonization to *Costa Firme* from about the 1550s onward. The writings of enlightened eighteenth-century observers such as Alejandro O'Reilly, Fray Inigo Abbad y Lasierra, and Pierre Ledru, among others, helped propagate this simplified picture. Starks acknowledges that conditions of life and work on the open ranges of Puerto Rico were "different," certainly not affording landowners of the period the ostentatious lifestyle enjoyed by the sugar and coffee barons who followed them.

Leaving aside the obvious contrasts between the two land tenure systems, *hateros* developed economically viable enterprises by exploiting valuable natural resources, especially livestock and timber, and a variety of cash crops, which they marketed across the Caribbean archipelago over profitable but illicit trading channels. This level of economic activity required a supplemental supply of labor, which they found, in part, by trading island products for enslaved Africans. Stark's research points the way toward a more nuanced view of this "invisible" component of the island's population on the eve of the sugar revolution.

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