

mortality rates for slaves leaving different regions of Africa? My list could go on and on. All told, this is a wonderful atlas. I'll return to it for years to come and look forward to introducing it to my students.

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The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan. By Matthew Restall. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. Pp. xviii, 456. Notes. Glossary. References. Index.

Matthew Restall's main thesis—that Afro-Yucatecans filled a middle position in Yucatan, thereby impacting colonial society from Spanish city to Mayan village—is straightforward and persuasive. Afro-Yucatecans served as economic and cultural middlemen, operating in an ambiguous space both inside and outside the Spanish and Mayan worlds. For Afro-Yucatecans, this space was “as much Maya as it was African, as mestizo as it was mulatto” (p. 259), even as they lived in attached subordination to Spaniards. Thus, Restall makes the provocative claim that Yucatec Mayas “had in a sense become Afro-Maya” by independence (p. 5). Importantly, this is the first study, to my knowledge, that brings indigenous language sources to bear on discussions of the experiences of persons of African descent in Spanish America.

Two significant argumentative threads shape Restall's conclusions. First, he employs Ira Berlin's “society with slaves/slave society” dichotomy to articulate the evolving status of Afro-descendants in the province, evoking arguments regarding the relative harshness of British and Ibero-American slavery and racism made famous by Frank Tannenbaum. This leads to a series of forced comparisons between Yucatan and British America in lieu of more apropos comparisons that might have been drawn from the experiences of enslaved and free people of color elsewhere in Latin America. As one interesting example, Restall finds that naming patterns of slaves were not grounded in contempt, as they were in British America, but were instead a product of familiarity. Common first names for slaves generally mirrored those for Spaniards (María and José being the most popular), and slaves often took the surnames of their masters. This leads Restall to assert that Yucatecan slavery was less dehumanizing than that of other slaveholding societies. My impression is that the naming patterns he cites are very similar to those in the rest of Spanish America, particularly central Mexico, where slavery could be quite dehumanizing.

Second, Restall tackles the applicability of “race” to colonial society, rejecting it as too modern. *Calidad* and *casta*, he argues, better reflect the reality that Spanish justifications for slavery and Spanish ethnocentrism were more about rank and status than an “immutable concept” of race. Thus, those terms better explain Afro-Yucatecan experience and mobility. This mobility is seen in the transition from slavery to freedom (free people of color came to exceed slaves in Yucatan within a generation after conquest)

and in the move of Afro-Yucatecans into middling positions in the colonial economy and thus the social hierarchy. This was possible, Restall argues, because Spaniards did not presume that Afro-Yucatecans, by virtue of their phenotype, would either be slaves or be restricted to slave-like status. These conclusions fit within general findings of recent scholarship.

Restall also rejects “race” as a marker of individual identity, in favor of a more complicated combination of ethnic and racial classifications, occupation, kinship, and location. Still, his data might suggest an even more complex picture than he portrays. For example, he argues that a distinct Afro-Yucatecan community did not exist in colonial Mérida, and by extension Yucatan, because a sizeable 46 percent of Afro-Yucatecan grooms married Maya or mestiza brides, while 54 percent chose Afro-Yucatecan brides. Yet, he does not discuss the marriage patterns of women of African descent, who proved to be significantly more endogamous than men in colonial Mexico.

In addition, Afro-Yucatecans represented about 13 percent of Mérida’s population with Mayas and mestizos together totaling 66 percent. Thus, an endogamy rate over 50 percent might suggest a strong sense of community among the Afro-Yucatecan minority, even as they had significant contacts with their Maya neighbors. This is particularly true when considering the importance of the *pardo* militia, which Restall argues was a key institutional means of mobility for Afro-Yucatecans, and the presence of specifically Afro-Yucatecan parish churches in Mérida and Campeche since the mid-sixteenth century.

Restall opens each chapter with a detailed case study that makes for compelling reading and proves impressive in the depth of research and thoughtful and informed speculation required to give the stories depth and meaning. Restall’s study will be of great interest to specialists in the African and Afro-American experiences in colonial Latin America and the wider Atlantic World.

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FRANK “TREY” PROCTOR III

ECONOMIC HISTORY

El Azúcar en América Latina y el Caribe. Cambio tecnológico, trabajo, mercado mundial y economía azucarera. Perspectiva histórica y problemas actuales. Edited by Horacio Crespo. Mexico City: Senado de la República, 2006.

Given the importance of sugar in molding Latin American social and natural landscapes, the present collection of articles is a very appropriate effort to cover the entire hemisphere, with original contributions by scholars from various countries. Its publication comes as a reward to its editor’s steadfastness, since it springs from two conferences almost 20 years apart (Cuernavaca in 1985 and Mexico City in 2004) and had to overcome many obstacles on its way to the press.