

question of creolization. In the 1833 Lucumí War, members of other ethnic groups joined the Lucumís, and some Lucumís refused to join. There were likely other elements of identity that mattered in how the events transpired, raising another issue. What did it mean to create a Lucumí collective? How did being Lucumí shape one's politics? How did Prieto and others like him navigate their ambiguous political station—working as militia members for a state supporting slavery, while also watching recently arrived fellow Lucumí revolt?

For the story that it gives us and for raising these important questions, this monograph is a moving ethical act of memorialization of a little-known Black religious figure, sitting next to other insightful works that have relied on a similar biographical method.

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ENSLAVEMENT AND EMANCIPATION

Freedom's Captives: Slavery and Gradual Emancipation on the Colombian Black Pacific. By Yesenia Barragan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 326. \$99.99 cloth.
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At a time when narratives of liberalism in the Americas find themselves subject to particular scrutiny in academia and society at large, Yesenia Barragan's *Freedom's Captives* makes an indispensable contribution to an interval often overlooked in the emancipatory saga of Afro-Latinos—the period between the wars of independence and the unconditional abolition of slavery. Her study makes gradual abolition central to understanding slaveholders' efforts, with the connivance of the state, to resist de jure and de facto liberation. This beautifully written, meticulously researched study of Colombia's Free Womb Law of 1821, set along the Atrato River in Colombia's Chocó, or "Black Pacific," argues that "the liberal freedom generated through gradual emancipation rule came to constitute a modern mode of racial governance that birthed new forms of social domination while temporarily instituting de facto slavery" (6).

Although not an environmental history, the first section of Barragan's study foregrounds this ethnographically vivid analysis in one of the more challenging landscapes where slavery was practiced, Colombia's western Pacific. Enslaved and free blacks carved out swaths of autonomy either by captaining canoes, which gave them leverage over urban citizens and outsiders, or by creating breathing room for themselves as they panned for gold along remote streams and mines. A sizable community of free blacks sought their own fortunes, as, in the wake of independence, a growing number of the enslaved

exercised their ability to purchase their freedom. Set alongside earlier studies, including Aline Helg's, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770–1835*, Barragan's work makes the case that geographically peripheral locations, particularly those isolated or complicated by tortured terrain, played a role in shaping institutions of bondage as well as the contours of freedom.

In the second part of the book, Barragan examines the sources and rationale for the Free Womb Law of 1821. This extends the scope of the book to other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, as “mobilized insurgent fear of slave royalism, insurrection, and the example of Haiti [encouraged] gradual abolition in . . . revolutionary Colombia” (114). Self-interest also played an important role in slaveholder support for incremental emancipation. Barragan argues that the state acquiesced to slaveholder demands for such laws in the absence of adequate compensation and the potential loss of income from enslaved mining and agriculture.

Barragan's astute interrogation of the ways in which slaveholders extended servitude under the Free Womb Law until the age of 18 (or later), used manumission ceremonies to duplicitously celebrate their own beneficence, and adapted the market to the sale of free-womb children makes her study a compelling contribution to the study of the long-delayed emancipation of Afro-Colombians. Barragan shows that slaveholders attempted to sabotage the liberation of those who had technically been granted freedom by the 1821 law, even following the abolition of slavery in 1852.

The book also vividly illustrates how the spread of industrialization, as well as the shift from policing individuals to specific territory on a map, further hampered the prospects for freedom after 1852. Even so, Barragan never loses sight of the ability of free and unfree Afro-Colombians alike to assert their will, either individually or collectively, interrogating the silence of the archives in an effort to reconstruct the lived experiences of freedmen and freedwomen.

Barragan's book will be welcomed by scholars studying the development of liberal institutions in Latin America during the nineteenth century, as well as ethnographers and historians exploring the legacy of freedom in the aftermath of emancipation and even down to the present day. Barragan's book would be a welcome addition to upper-division undergraduate courses and to graduate courses.

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