

MICHAEL CRATON, ed. — *Roots and Branches: Current Directions in Slave Studies*. Historical Reflection / Réflexions historiques, no. 1. New York: Pergamon Press, 1979. Pp. x, 292.

Many conference publications are flawed by either poor planning, invitations to peripheral academics or uneven quality of papers. The publication under review generally avoids these difficulties, and the result is a book that should be read by anyone interested in the analysis of slavery. The focus is interdisciplinary, but not in the soft sense. The writers deal with common problems and utilize each other's works in a fruitful and meaningful fashion. The articles break new ground in theory, concepts and methods. Most of the articles summarize complex, rich materials. The organization follows an internal logic and the editor employed a firm but judicious hand in the selection of articles. Lastly, there is a genuine dialogue between the disciplines. The introduction communicates the excitement and enthusiasm generated by the combined efforts of historians, anthropologists, economists and sociologists. The articles demonstrate the reasons for the enthusiasm. This publication fractures the already eroded disciplinary lines and pointedly documents how ridiculous and counter-productive the past fragmentation of research has been. Any problem of conflict, exploitation, political power or social stratification cannot rationally be analysed from a narrow stance.

Curtins's excellent lead article summarizes current and past work on the African diaspora. He discusses both the external and the internal slave trade; the newer economic approaches to the slave trade; the impact on Africa of the involuntary trans-continental movement of large numbers of population. He raises comparative questions of the enforced migration with others different in size and in manner of movement. Unfortunately, the historical fact of slavery and its differential use for political purposes by the contemporary African nations is only touched on. This subject has been almost completely ignored.

Lovejoy's paper is the longest and most theoretically innovative and therefore, not surprisingly, the most sweeping and controversial. African slavery is analysed comparatively, both regionally and in historical depth. The theoretical framework is a dynamic one; slavery fluctuates and changes over time. The article assumes a strong materialist stance. Economic and political factors play a dominant role in the variations and functions of slavery. This position clearly clashes with Kopytoff's earlier approach to African slavery. Kopytoff's attempt to rebut it does not do justice to the argument and materials. Even though this article is too sweeping it generates fresh approaches to political changes in traditional African societies.

Greenfields's paper fills a void in the present literature on slavery in the New World. It meticulously documents the historical and structural factors in the exportation of the plantation system from the Old World to the New World. It defines the role of the Portuguese in the process of exploiting the virgin territories. The nature and content of the European political system was critical in shaping the plantation. What now needs to be done is to compare his model with others and to analyse how it created differences in slave systems.

Schuler's paper, brief as it is, provocatively discusses the importance of the African element in Afro-American societies. It brilliantly reconstructs the importance of the African cognitive pattern, primarily as revealed in the religious institutions. The article amplifies Mintz and Price's (1976) seminal work. Critical to her thesis is the strengthening and deployment of ethnic structures in the initial adaptation of African slavery. However, what is missing is information on the ranking of these groups, the internal competition, their bases of power, and how these factors influenced the direction of culture borrowing. The work does correct

the previous stress on the relatively passive role of African slaves in shaping their societies, aside from dramatic revolts, but it does not realistically include the jockeying and conflicts amongst the indigenous Afro-American populations. The article is a helpful contribution to the study of comparative change but has an idealistic tone.

Gutman provides a comprehensive survey of the study of Afro-American family structure, which outlines the major, almost diametric historical shifts in analysing similar materials. The present research phase stresses, again, the role of the Afro-American in making choices. It is a worthy counterbalance to previous mechanical studies, but it downplays those political and economic factors which set parameters on possible alternatives of family members.

Mintz, as always, dramatically but delicately breaks new ground. His article provides a structure for future research in a critical area. Social scientists have generally avoided the question of transformations or large-scale changes. Mintz deals with the changes between the period of slavery and the rise of peasantries. The characteristics of control of land and labour clearly demarcate two distinctive periods. Although Mintz does not discuss the utility of the concept of mode of production he employs that of contradiction in the changing societies and alludes to the changing structural features in the process of transformations, and how some ideological and cultural features were manipulated by the ex-slaves in their adaptations. Mintz ends on a positive note avoiding grandiose theories and hoping for fresh empirical studies.

The closing article by the late Walter Rodney relates past slavery to contemporary problems. It, therefore, is appropriately the most political, controversial and debatable. The two central themes are the effect of slavery on economic underdevelopment and stagnation and the question of whether the slave mode of production can be theoretically employed within a capitalist context. The article is loaded with symbolic rhetoric, but the references are not empty of meaning.

The implicit message of the book is clear — the comparative study of slavery has achieved a new level. The articles articulate the multiple directions in which future work will move and the variety of complex problems to be faced; not much more could be demanded from a conference.

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THEODOR SCHIEDER and OTTO DANN, eds. — *Nationale Bewegung und soziale Organisation*, 1. Munich and Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1978. PP. xix, 571.

Comparative history has in the last two or three decades become one of the established fields in the discipline, alongside such other new ventures as cliometrics, psychohistory and interdisciplinary analysis. The underlying assumption of the comparativists is that the examination of a series of historical processes which, though culturally or chronologically distinct, represent the response of diverse social groups to common collective experiences will reveal essential similarities,