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Book Reviews

Race and Labor in the Hispanic Caribbean: The West Indian Immigrant Worker Experience in Puerto Rico, 1800-1850. By Jorge Luis Chinae. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. xv + 227 pp. Maps, tables, appendix, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$59.95 cloth.)

Through the study of West Indian immigration to Puerto Rico during an era of accelerated economic and political reorganization in the Spanish empire (1800-1850), Jorge Chinae takes on the difficult task of outlining the complexity of migratory flows, introducing the Caribbean as a privileged site for the study of imperial/colonial relationships during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and providing an alternative story of cultural and ethno-racial formation in Puerto Rico. The author challenges the white Hispanic fundaments often attributed to Puerto Rico's cultural identity by reinscribing Puerto Rico as a Caribbean site and creatively weaving the island's history into the story of the vast, multilayered, and shifting networks that connected the many Caribbean islands, continental colonies, and European metropolises.

One of the book's great achievements is the author's exploration of the historical processes that led to the formation of "multi-ethno-racial" settlements in the mountainous interior of Puerto Rico in the centuries before 1800. While most official documents center on Hispanic urban experiences, Chinae interrogates a wider set of sources to provide a much richer picture of the social landscapes outside the walled city of San Juan. The pre-1750s economic marginality of Puerto Rico within the Spanish empire resulted in insufficient resources for the local colonial state to effectively guard the island's open shores. Simultaneously, neighboring islands were undergoing massive transformations as their Dutch, Danish, French, and British rulers facilitated the development of plantation economies. Consequently, Puerto Rico's coastal areas became permeable sites where enslaved Amerindians, maroons, and free blacks from neighboring islands sought refuge. A host of Europeans (runaways, pirates, buccaneers, freebooters, and interlopers) also frequented Puerto Rico for either trading purposes or temporary settlement. This mixture of individuals joined already existing communities or created new ones, engendering a "mestizo" way of life in the interior (p. 33).

Chinae demonstrates that Spanish authorities closely linked immigration to economic development policies. The racial, political, class, and religious background of foreigners, however, was always a source of concern to colonial officials and Creole elites. Therefore, authorities banned the entry of certain groups of foreigners at different historical moments. While from 1800 to 1850 colonial authorities and planters sought out West Indians, especially skilled blacks and free people of color, to labor on the island, they also feared them as possible agents of insurgency. After compiling an ample database and consulting sources not usually incorporated in the study of

immigration, China is able to map—in the second and third chapters—the migratory flows and settlement of West Indians on the island, as well as measure their economic impact on the escalation of the sugar industry after 1800. He argues that while European immigrants, most of whom had extensive contact with other Caribbean sites, were responsible for the financial capital and managerial and trading skills needed to prompt the sugar economy, West Indian free blacks, people of color—artisans, domestic servants, and petit traders, especially from the Danish and French Caribbean—and slaves built the required infrastructure. The final chapter details how Spanish authorities, concerned about newcomers' possible links to revolutionary movements in the continental colonies and neighboring islands, increased surveillance and devised new modes of disciplinary action, particularly against black and mulatto West Indians. This increased surveillance of immigrants, the growing relevance of slavery on the island, and slave emancipation in the non-Spanish Caribbean after the 1830s, deterred non-white West Indians from traveling and/or settling in Puerto Rico.

This book would have benefited from a conclusion in which the transnational immigration circuits China describes—between Europe, the Caribbean islands, and continental America—and similar migratory flows of the twentieth century are presented as overlapping, rather than discontinuous, processes in the ongoing power struggles shaping colonial and neo-colonial relations. Nonetheless, China's research provides the groundwork from which to ask a new set of questions. For example, the world described in these pages is an overtly masculine world, despite a few examples of female immigrants. One wonders how women's lives and household organization changed as a consequence of the gender imbalance. How did the racial politics of the period impact the mobility of women across the class and racial spectrum? How were gender and sexual identities transformed by these economic, political, and social changes?

In sum, the author provides a close reading of sources, expands the set of documents previous immigration scholars have consulted, contextualizes the production of sources, and interrogates the categories employed by them. Through this endeavor, China offers a rich social history of immigration that should be considered obligatory reading for Caribbean and Latin American Studies courses. Its accessible language and precise arguments, although sometimes repetitive, also make it appropriate for lower division undergraduate classes.

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