



The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800

Robin Blackburn

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At the time when European powers colonized the Americas, the institution of slavery had almost disappeared from Europe itself. Having overcome an institution widely regarded as oppressive, why did they sponsor the construction of racial slavery in their new colonies?

Robin Blackburn traces European doctrines of race and slavery from medieval times to the early modern epoch, and finds that the stigmatization of the ethno-religious Other was given a callous twist by a new culture of consumption, freed from an earlier moral economy.

The Making of New World Slavery argues that independent commerce, geared to burgeoning consumer markets, was the driving force behind the rise of plantation slavery. The baroque state sought—successfully—to batten on this commerce, and—unsuccessfully—to regulate slavery and race. Successive chapters of the book consider the deployment of slaves in the colonial possessions of the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the English and the French. Each are shown to have contributed something to the eventual consolidation of racial slavery and to the plantation revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is shown that plantation slavery emerged from the impulses of civil society rather than from the strategies of the individual states.

Robin Blackburn argues that the organization of slave plantations placed the West on a destructive path to modernity and that greatly preferable alternatives were both proposed and rejected. Finally he shows that the surge of Atlantic trade, premised on the killing toil of the plantations, made a decisive contribution to both the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the West.

The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800 **Details**

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Lois says

I used this book to look at and study the history of slavery. The author has a theory and spends much of the book in pursuit of that theory. I ignored the theory and just focused on the history of chattel slavery that develops. So I skimmed a lot.

This is wordy and I think the author uses not complicated language but is more wordy than necessary.

Amy says

Huge! Comprehensive!

Canuck says

Good for what it is. Long winded. Dry. But worth it for the knowledge gained.

Nicholas During says

Full disclosure, I am good friend of Robin's. Still, this book is has more information on the subject of world slavery than any other I've seen. It takes slavery out of the US only context and really shows how colonialism (mostly European) and slavery are united at the core. Also, has some heroes, like the Spanish missionaries who wrote back home complaining about treatment of the natives and imported slaves. Wonderful book, full of information, with persuasive interpretations, and a reach that few history books can hope to attain.

Taylor Stoermer says

It suffers from the vices that pervade many synthetic works in that its persuasiveness rises and falls depending on the strength of the underlying secondary sources. When it comes to Blackburn's interpretation of the British American Chesapeake and Low Country, the work is rather weak, relying as it does on the same old tired sources (i.e., Parker Rouse's 1971 biography of James Blair) that bedevil the field in general.

Peter Hefti says

Very informative and the prose is very clear and concise. I love history books like this that are magisterial while still being accessible and accommodating enough where you don't need extensive background knowledge to follow along.

