*In a Sea of Empires: Networks and Crossings in the Revolutionary Caribbean*. Jeppe Mulich. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. xii + 204 pp. $99.99. ISBN: 9781108489720.

Metropole-centered analysis has long remained the dominant perspective in understanding colonial development during global imperialism's first age. Metropole-peripheral tensions, great power rivalries, or ideas (particularly of the revolutionary variety) travelled along the trade winds from the European heartland to colonial hinterland and represented the primary motors of colonial history. However, in recent decades a growing emphasis on transnational networks, particularly in imperial borderlands, have challenged this traditional interpretation. Jeppe Mulich's *In a Sea of Empires: Networks and Crossings in the Revolutionary Caribbean* represents a notable contribution to this reevaluation, focusing specifically upon the colonial Caribbean during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Eschewing the metropole or nation-state dominated narrative, Mulich contends that within the Caribbean's Leeward Islands the most important factors dominating policy, politics, trade, and development were layered networks operating within an increasingly integrated regional space. Within this microregion, transnational connections carried much greater weight than imperial allegiances, and these connections centered around contraband trade, slavery, and opportunistic privateering. While one of Mulich's purposes in this work is to reorient our understanding of relations and relationships in the colonial Caribbean between 1783 and 1834, his broader goal is more ambitious. Using his analysis of the Caribbean as a starting point, Mulich hopes to invert the traditional understanding of globalism by emphasizing the central role these microregional connections played in defining and redefining global connections.

Mulich centers his study on three Leeward Islands in particular: the Danish West Indies; the British Virgin Islands; and Swedish St. Barthélemy. He effectively justifies this focus by both stressing their centrality to the Caribbean's inter-imperial networks as well as highlighting the relatively limited studies done on the Danish and Swedish colonies. However, he takes pains to establish that his study places its greatest emphasis on the transnational connections that characterized these islands rather than privileging their place within their respective national/imperial narratives. He strongly asserts, and effectively demonstrates throughout the book, that long-held assumptions regarding well-defined imperial relations decreed by the European metropoles' central authority in regions like the colonial Caribbean fail to match much more blurred transnational reality on the ground, where interpolity relations ruled the day.

Mulich explores the nature of these transnational interregional connections over five thematic chapters, beginning with an examination of trade and commercial networks. His employment of this thematic approach throughout the books attempts to illustrate how interpolity connections manifested constantly across different forms of commercial, political, and legal interaction. Asserting the primacy of trade over all other relations within the Leewards, including relationships with the metropole, he demonstrates how these commercial relationships (both open and illicit) led by the early nineteenth century to *de facto* free trade in the region, providing a model for globalization's eventual mechanisms in miniature. Mulich extends this analysis of commercial interpolity relations to privateering, arguing that the social and economic networks within the

region combined with a near constant state of imperial and anti-colonial warfare to provide transnational entrepreneurs with handsome profits.

Mulich spends much of his analysis of interpolity relations on what he identifies as the most powerful network connecting the region: slavery. He establishes a strong case for slavery's centrality to interregional/transnational connections, beginning with his discussion of the connections built around the constant fear of slave rebellion which deepened following the Haitian Revolution. Mulich both builds upon this and complicates it later in his argument. While highlighting the interregional connections established around slave codes and labor laws, he also illustrates the growing transnational networks among free peoples of color. These free communities used the close connections among these islands, each governed by slightly different legal codes around race, to carve out a space for themselves within the Leeward Islands. Mulich also presents a particularly interesting discussion of "maritime marronage," which allowed escaped slaves to take advantage of the relative free trade and frequent commerce in the region to flee the institution via maritime networks.

Mulich concludes by examining the complexities around abolition in the Caribbean microregion. Briefly discussing the usual top-down narratives regarding different national abolition processes, Mulich contends that a regional approach in a place where slavery proved central for centuries allows for a better understanding the complex realities of abolition's realization. In terms of the Leeward microregion, he asserts it further separated national metropole interests from those of colonies. This connection deepened as the regional connections between the islands allowed slaveowners to circumvent prohibitions on the slave trade and, at times, even abolition itself. Even the clear dominance of the British, with their sustained efforts against the slave trade, would be unable to shut down the illicit trade in human beings in this microregion until the mid-nineteenth century. Mulich's use of slavery in all its aspects as a central element in the microregion's transnational connections provide the most effective chapters in the book.

As a work of both transnational history and analysis of imperial borderlands, *In a Sea of Empires* presents a meticulously researched reimaging of the ties that bound the colonial Leeward Islands to a shared identity that transcended as well as at times defied national ties to the metropole. Mulich's microregional approach not only proves effective within its own context, but also establishes a model for new modes of colonial and imperial historical research. While his broader assertion that these microregions collectively defined globalization's trajectory and development provides difficult to assess, at the very least Mulich's work constitutes a formidable work of Caribbean history as well as a thought-providing springboard for further inquiry.

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