

David Domínguez Cabrera, *Trabajo portuario y segunda esclavitud en Cuba (1763–1886)*, Granada: Comares, 2023. 224pp, ISBN 9788413695648. Price €24.

Warehouses and harbour work in general are a complex economic ecosystem that requires specialized personnel and investment, and that highly depends on economies of scale to increase productivity. They are also a critical and strategic part of supply chains, which gives their workers significant bargaining power. The ability of dock workers to paralyze a country has been demonstrated on several occasions (see, for instance, the 1889 Great Strike in London). As a result, a book like the one written by David Domínguez Cabrera, which explores warehouse evolution on Cuban docks across an extended time-frame, is essential for fully understanding the evolution of global trade during the nineteenth century.

Following Dale Tomich's conceptualization of "Second Slavery" and Daniel Rood's studies on the warehouse revolution, the author examines the evolution of labour segmentation on Cuba's docks through the second half of the nineteenth century.¹ The underlying idea in this book is to understand how the urban economy functioned during the era of Second Slavery, exploring the legal, economic, and social changes that resulted from integration into an economic system that heavily relied on enslaved labour and that required advanced infrastructure to operate within the Atlantic economy. In contrast to the *ingenio* (sugar plantations) system, Cuba's warehouse system during the Second Slavery did not use slaves intensively. This is the book's most significant contribution: the analysis of a sector that, although serving as a cornerstone of an economy which relied on slavery massively, operated with a logic somewhat different from that of the used in the sugar plantations.

The book is written with fluid prose that makes it easy to read, despite addressing a complex issue. It uses good introductions in each chapter to catch the reader's attention and to illustrate the specific content of the different topics. The book is divided in five chapters. It begins with a general description of Cuba's role in the sugar market and how its role shifted from being a hub of Spanish Atlantic trade to becoming a world-class sugar producer. This productive change fostered internal transformations on the island as the productive sector had to adapt to this new role, the most important result being the dramatic increase in the number of slaves. The author describes further impacts on the island: the increasing concern among the elites about

1 Daniel Rood, *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dale Tomich, "The Second Slavery and World Capitalism: A Perspective for Historical Inquiry", *International Review of Social History* 63, no. 3 (2018): 477–501.

the possibility of a slave uprising, the technological changes needed to meet production demands (i.e. railways, harbours, steam engines, steamers), as well as the expanded need for more and more types of food to support the increasing number of slaves. This increase in the demand of sugar expanded the island's surface dedicated to sugar production, opened more cities to international trade and drastically shaped the island's economic system. In this context, Eduardo Frasser, a merchant from Cadiz, created in 1842 a new model of warehouses initiating a new kind of business aimed to support the logistics of this expansion. In a nutshell, the model involved the creation of spaces outside the city, fully dedicated to storing sugar, equipped with docks, and operating from sun to sun. The key to understanding this expansion was that, during the Second Slavery, technology was massively adopted by both the sugar plantations and public and private infrastructure that was developed to support their economic growth (new warehouses, but also railways), which included deep changes in the dock's logistics and the adoption of the working discipline of the *ingenios*.

The core of the book is an analysis of the characteristics of the free and enslaved workers in the warehouses, which presented a clearly segmented labour market. The regulation of the market began in the eighteenth century with a militarization that granted privileges to the Afro-descendant militia through an enrollment (*matrícula*). However, this changed after the Escalera Conspiracy (1843–44), when the Spanish authorities used a small revolt as a pretext to consolidate their position against free and enslaved Afro-descendants, claiming that a full-scale rebellion was being planned. In this context the *bataillones de pardos* (militia formed by free Afro-descendants) were disbanded, and the European free workers became tightly protected. This trend was reinforced by the availability of a new immigrant workforce (forced Asian labour and low-wage European immigrants) and by the demand for enslaved labour by the *ingenios* and racialized the docks labour market. This is clearly seen in Table 2 (153), which summarizes how between 1826 and 1859 Afro-descendants' workers were systematically excluded from specialized jobs on the docks (*pilotos, calafates, toneleros* ...) and had to remain in non-skilled ones (*jornaleros* and *carretilleros*). Although the legal protections lasted until the progressive liberalization of the state during the late 1860s led to ending the privileges of the *matrículas* in 1873, the racialization of the job market continued. By the beginning of the twentieth century, even though slavery had been abolished, the dock job market remained segregate.

Domínguez Cabrera uses an outstanding array of different sources to explain this evolution – ranging from Spanish and Cuban archives to newspapers. The book also dialogues with these different sources, exposing the contradictions in

historiography when they appear. For instance, on page 22, the author reviews the data provided by Victor S. Clark on the number of Afro-descendants; or in footnote 64 (41), he analyses the volume of sugar produced by the western district of the island and compares these numbers to the figures given by Moreno Fragnals and Carlos Ribello. The only (very minor) criticism that can be given to the book is the lack of more graphs and tables (there are only six in total). It is evident that the author uses a large quantity of data to reconstruct the evolution of warehouses, and more detailed tables and graphs would have more clearly expressed his findings. All in all, this book will be very useful to those researchers and students interested in understanding both Cuba's economy during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and the changes in the labour force during the Second Slavery.

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