The Chattel Principle: Internal Slave Trades in the Americas. *Edited by Walter Johnson.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. x + 389 pp. Index, notes, maps. Paper, $35.00. ISBN: 0-300-10355-7.

Reviewed by David Eltis

The intra-American slave traffic has received a tiny fraction of the scholarly attention directed to the transatlantic slave trade. Yet, depending on definition, it is likely that it was responsible for the movement of more slaves than was its transatlantic counterpart. Almost any volume on this underexplored subject is to be welcomed. The collection of papers under review is the result of a conference at Yale in 1999.

The coverage of the essays is not quite commensurate with the role of the intra-American trade in sustaining the slave systems of the Americas. From the broad temporal perspective, that role may be divided into four parts. In the early development of any plantation system, slave markets were usually too small to warrant direct supplies of labor from Africa, and thus tended to draw heavily on intra-American sellers who could offer smaller numbers of slaves at a time. For example, Virginia, South Carolina, most of the British Leeward Islands in the seventeenth century, and Maranhao and Montevideo in the eighteenth century could not have left the starting gate as slave regions without this traffic. Second, when a plantation region grew sufficiently to trade directly with Africa, the intra-American trade acted as an important supplement to the transatlantic traffic. It was able to respond much more quickly and precisely to sudden, and perhaps temporary, market signals, so it persisted even as the transatlantic commerce thrived. Third, geography and mercantilism combined to ensure that some major areas of the Americas—most Spanish-speaking regions before 1800, Guadeloupe, Minas Gerais and Goias in Brazil, are examples—drew almost all their slaves from other American markets, even at the height of the transatlantic slave trade. A final role emerged with the abolition and then the suppression of the Atlantic traffic, which nicely completed the symmetrical temporal pattern by once more ensuring that, except for natural increase, the intra-American traffic was the only source of slaves in the Americas. As this summary suggests, the geographic range of the intra-American slave trade was immense. There is no doubt that the intra-American trade shifted far more slaves before 1800 than it did after.

Despite its subtitle, *The Chattel Principle* focuses entirely on the post-transatlantic era, when the intra-American trade was in fact in decline. It gives no hint of the central importance of the trade before 1800 and not much sense of its geographic range. Eight of the thirteen essays are about the traffic within the United States (the longest of them was already published in a recent issue of the *American Historical Review*), two of the essays are on Brazil, two on the British Caribbean, and one is a case study of a small group of slaves moved from the Bahamas to Cuba—the only essay on the massive transnational shifts of slaves within the Americas. The two essays on the British Caribbean cover identical periods, as do the two essays on Brazil. The introduction, too, gives little sense of the broader temporal perspective, and half of it comprises a straight précis of the essays in the collection. Most of those essays on countries outside the United States draw on U.S. comparisons whenever appropriate; by contrast, almost none of the studies concerned with the United States draw parallels with the experience of other regions. Several contributors within this second group argue that Americans have been unwilling to confront the U.S. domestic slave trade. Yet the fact remains that the U.S. domestic traffic already accounts for almost all the published research on the movement of slaves within the Americas, and this collection in effect brings to light new information and findings for those parts of the intra-American traffic that were already well known. This observation is certainly not intended as a criticism of the conference organizers or the editor of the collection, but rather as a plea for scholars to direct their efforts where they are really needed.

As with any such collection, the topics and the depth of the research vary widely. Adam Rothman elaborates the paradox of U.S. defenders of slavery attempting to put moral distance between themselves and the domestic slave trade while at the same time maintaining an "ultimate dependence" on that trade. Daina Raima Berry uses data on the price of slaves from eight plantations in Georgia, along with qualitative evidence, to argue that slaves knew their own value and tried to influence sales to hold families together. Robert H. Gudmestad argues that slave resistance forced the nation to face the paradox that Rothman spells out. Steven Deyle contrasts the importance of the U.S.

domestic slave trade with the lack of attention it has received from historians. Michael Tadman extends and updates his 1989 book and contrasts the reality of the traffic with planter positions on their treatment of slave families. Lacy Ford pursues this line of investigation by asking what our current knowledge of the trade says about planter paternalism. Edward E. Baptist's previously published essay uses Marxian and Freudian theory to explore the sexual exploitation of enslaved women in the trade. Philip Troutman writes of the informal information network that U.S. slaves created. In a broad comparative essay, Seymour Drescher places British suppression of the traffic in the contexts of both imperial policy and plantation activity in the Americas. Hilary McD. Beckles surveys the historiography of the British intercolonial trade and rightly stresses the political significance of the trade, rather than its demographic importance. Manuel Barcia Paz recounts the fascinating story of Bahamian slaves duped into and, in a few instances, recovered from a lifetime of slavery in Cuba. Richard Graham provides an impressive and judicious survey of the Brazilian traffic, together with vignettes of individuals caught up in it. The most important analytical contribution in the book is probably by Robert Slenes, who draws on and greatly extends a chapter from his unpublished 1976 thesis on the Brazilian traffic.

The volume will perhaps be most useful for those interested in the changing attitudes that made abolition in the Americas possible. Slaves are appropriately accorded a major role in the ending of the intra-American traffic in this book, but the fact remains that slaveholders over many millennia had faced slave resistance without threat to either the institution of slavery or slave trading. What made the nineteenth century different for slaves was the emergence of the conviction that not only should one not be a slave—which people everywhere had always felt instinctively—but also that no one anywhere should be a slave. The split within the ruling class over this issue (abolitionists versus slaveholders) provided opportunities for slave resistance that had never existed before in human history. All these essays in one way or another provide abundant new raw material for charting this split, though most of the contributors will likely not see their focus on slave resistance in quite these terms.

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