Book Reviews

Manuel Barcia, *West African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba: Soldier Slaves in the Atlantic World, 1807–1844*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Past and Present Book Series, 2014. Pp. vii, 190. 978-0-19-871903-8 (Hardback) 987-0-19875426-8 (Paper).

For many years historians have discussed the role of the Mâli slaves of Bahia, Brazil in a series of slave revolts that rocked that colony in the early nineteenth century. The presence of archival data that included a number of Islamic talismans, led earlier historians to focus on the revolt as an extension of the famous Jihad of Usuman dan Fodio.¹ In this slim but impressive book, Manuel Barcia takes a different path, focusing on the military background of the enslaved Yoruba and Hausa slaves and looks at their impact in Cuba as well as Brazil.

Barcia has penetrated the substantial archival material to do this research. The documents of the Comisión Militar in Cuba contains hundreds of legajos; and while the Portuguese documentation is less diffuse, Barcia has worked it fully. He has also creditably mined the relevant primary sources for his work on the African background.

After an initial chapter on the African background of the decline of the Yoruba empire of Oyo and the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in the early nineteenth century, Barcia proceeds to demonstrate how these events fed a substantial early nineteenth century slave trade that ran simultaneously to Brazil and Cuba, then the largest importers of slaves in the Americas. This chapter thus establishes the virtual ethnic identity of both streams so that literally two people might be enslaved in the same action and one ends up in Cuba while the other lands in Brazil. This introduction is then ended by a description of the slave experience in both areas, both in terms of the simi-

1 For one of the most important contributions in this long historiography, see João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

larity to each other and to their own African origins. In this way, Barcia artfully establishes the basis for a comparative study.

Following this preliminary, Barcia then begins the process of analyzing warfare in the home region, as a way of establishing his main point, that insurrections in both areas were acts of warfare. In this, Barcia shows that leadership, command and control, tactics and military custom (or doctrine as it is often called in today's armies) were deployed in all the actions. He achieves this by asserting, convincingly, that the participants themselves regarded it as a "war" rather than an insurrection or revolt by examining the exact wording of their testimony and comparing the use of the term with similar terms in Yoruba and Hausa.

Beyond this linguistic proposition, however, Barcia also follows up to demonstrate that other aspects of organized war that can be teased out of the limited record of warfare in West Africa also confirm this contention. Here he examines not only the simple issues of weapons and tactics, which necessarily had to respond to the potential weapons available to the participants, but also the use of music, established systems of command, and other military details which were not necessarily essential to the creation of a military operation, but were present in their African form.

Barcia's argument rests making a distinction between rebellion, which could be seen as a simple spontaneous uprising without much organization, and a war that involved a great deal of military culture beyond simply having a grievance and emotion. Indeed, it is organization, coordination, and a shared understanding of the task at hand that makes an army capable when an outbreak of violent resistance is not. The fact that the rebel army was defeated both in Cuba and in Bahia does not obviate Barcia's fundamental argument, and forces us to re-examine the way in which historians deal with African resistance in the Americas.

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