

### In a Sea of Empires

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Caribbean was rife with revolutionary fervor and political turmoil. Yet with such upheaval came unparalleled opportunities. In this innovative and richly detailed study, Jeppe Mulich explores the interconnected nature of imperial politics and colonial law in the maritime borderlands of the Leeward Islands, where British, Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Swedish colonies both competed and cooperated with one another. By exploring the transnational networks involved in trade, slavery, smuggling, privateering, and marronage, he offers a new account of the age of revolutions in the Caribbean, emphasizing the border-crossing nature of life in the region. By approaching major shifts in politics, economy, and law from the bottom up, a new story of early nineteenth-century globalization emerges – one that emphasizes regional integration and a multiplicity of intersecting networks.

JEPPE MULICH is Teaching Associate in Global History at the University of Cambridge and St. John's College.



### Cambridge Oceanic Histories

Edited by

David Armitage

Alison Bashford

Sujit Sivasundaram

Across the world, historians have taken an oceanic turn. New maritime histories offer fresh approaches to the study of global regions, and to long-distance and long-term connections. Cambridge Oceanic Histories includes studies across whole oceans (the Pacific, the Indian, the Atlantic) and particular seas (among them, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the North Sea, the Black Sea). The series is global in geography, ecumenical in historical method, and wide in temporal coverage, intended as a key repository for the most innovative transnational and world histories over the longue durée. It brings maritime history into productive conversation with other strands of historical research, including environmental history, legal history, intellectual history, labour history, cultural history, economic history and the history of science and technology. The editors invite studies that analyse the human and natural history of the world's oceans and seas from anywhere on the globe and from any and all historical periods.



# In a Sea of Empires

Networks and Crossings in the Revolutionary Caribbean

Jeppe Mulich

University of Cambridge





# CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108489720 DOI: 10.1017/9781108779289

© Jeppe Mulich 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

 $A\ catalogue\ record\ for\ this\ publication\ is\ available\ from\ the\ British\ Library.$ 

ISBN 978-1-108-48972-0 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



For Jacquelyn





### Contents

	List of Figures	page v111
	List of Tables	ix
	Acknowledgments	X
1	Introduction	1
2	Free Ports and Black Markets	27
3	Imperial Warfare, Colonial Violence	58
4	Prize Courts and Privateers	81
5	Slave Laws and Free Communities	102
6	Abolition and the Illegal Slave Trade	134
	Conclusion	157
	Bibliography	177
	Index	200

vii



## **Figures**

1.1	The Leeward Islands in the greater Caribbean	page 9
1.2	Empires in the Leeward Islands, 1815	10
1.3	Chart of the northern Leeward Islands, 1764	11
1.4	Chart of the Virgin Islands, 1764	12
1.5	An ideal-typical inter-imperial microregion	18
2.1	Free ports in the Leeward Islands	45
4.1	Prize courts in the Leewards and neighboring islands	
	during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars	96
5.1	Plan of Kingstown, c. 1831	130
6.1	Detail showing the Anegada wrecks, 1842	154

viii



## **Tables**

1.1	Free and enslaved populations in the Danish	
	West Indies, the British Virgin Islands, and	
	St. Barthélemy, 1812–1815	page 14
2.1	Vessels arriving in Gustavia, 1811–1813	52
2.2	Vessels arriving in Charlotte Amalie, 1820–1839	53
5.1	Free and enslaved populations in the Danish West Indies,	
	1797, 1815, and 1835	118
5.2	Free and enslaved populations on St. Barthélemy, 1787	
	and 1812	118
5.3	Free and enslaved populations in the British Virgin Islands,	
	1815 and 1823	119

ix



### Acknowledgments

While the writing of this book was in many respects a process of isolation and solitude, as is probably the case with most historical monographs, it could not have been accomplished without the gracious help of a great number of individuals to whom I owe a deep debt of gratitude. The book began life as a PhD dissertation at New York University's Department of History, and I am particularly indebted to my doctoral advisor Lauren Benton. Not only have our many conversations been invaluable in honing my thinking on law, history, empire, and academic life in general, but she has also been a constant source of advice, criticism, and guidance throughout the long and at times challenging process of crafting this book. There is no doubt that the work would have been worse off and I a much poorer scholar without her support. John Shovlin, my second advisor, has also graced me with more support and encouragement than I could have hoped for. Through our frequent discussions he has challenged me to think critically about the importance of political economy, the development of the state, and the historical craft. Thanks are also due to my other committee members, Ada Ferrer, Daniel Nexon, and Frederick Cooper, who each provided thoughtful feedback, pointed critiques, and inspiring ideas of immense value to the shaping of the dissertation and later the book.

At NYU the Atlantic Workshop was an important source of academic support and illuminating discussions. If there is anything of use to historians in general within the pages of this book, it is in no small part due to the valuable conversations I have had with the members of the workshop – especially Gabriel Rocha, Anelise Shrout, Jerusha Westbury, Daniel Kanhofer, Hayley Negrin, Kate Mulry, Max Mishler, Greg Childs, Timo McGregor, Andrew Lee, Nicole Eustace, and Karen Kupperman. Outside the workshop, other colleagues at NYU gave invaluable feedback on early versions of the work, including Jane Burbank, Thomas Bender, Tony Andersson, and Nadim Bawalsa.

My first academic appointment was at the London School of Economics and Political Science, a place that provided me with vibrant communities at both the International History and the International Relations

X



### Acknowledgments

хi

departments. Several workshop presentations and subsequent conversations at Ye Old White Horse helped sharpen my ideas and analysis, including with George Lawson, Padraic Scanlan, Gagan Sood, Imaobong Umoren, Ronald Po, Martin Bayly, Megan Black, David Motadel, Paul Stock, Joanne Yao, Marc Baer, Tarak Barkawi, and all the participants of the International Theory workshop.

At the University of Cambridge, I have been gifted with an expansive and stimulating academic community. Conversations with my students have been a source of much inspiration and motivation, as have discussions with numerous colleagues, including Johnhenry Gonzalez, Jason Sharman, Saul Dubow, Megan Donaldson, Mark Shirk, Duncan Bell, Andrew Arsan, and Nicholas Guyatt. Thanks are due in particular to Renaud Morieux, who read parts of the manuscript before the final submission and provided vital feedback.

Many other scholars have provided me with constructive criticism, useful prodding, and eye-opening insights. At Yale my academic mentors Steve Pincus, Francesca Trivellato, and Philip Gorski helped sow the early seeds of what would later become this book, and convinced me that good history can also be good social science. Elsewhere, at conference panels, hotel bars, and workshop dinners, a number of fellow-travelers provided fresh perspectives and critical takes on both the substance and the framing of my work. Thanks in particular to Paul Kirby, Linda Rupert, Richard Drayton, Adam Tooze, John Carroll, Julia Costa López, Mauro Caraccioli, Paul Kreitman, Lisa Ford, Halvard Leira, Benjamin de Carvalho, Andrew Phillips, Iver Neumann, Ale Pålsson, Victor Wilson, Bram Hoonhout, Ernesto Bassi, Alex Borucki, Fabrício Prado, Christian Koot, Casey Schmitt, Patrick Jackson, Jordan Branch, Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, and Edward Keene.

The research for this book has taken place across multiple countries and continents and would not have been possible without the generous help of librarians and archivists at numerous collections and archives. My thanks to staff members at Rigsarkivet and the Royal Library in Copenhagen, the National Archives in Kew, Riksarkivet and the National Library in Stockholm, the Archives nationales d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Province, the Florence Williams Library in Christiansted, the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, the New-York Historical Society and the Bobst Library in New York City, the Sterling Memorial Library in New Haven, the Cambridge University Library and the Seeley Historical Library in Cambridge, the David Rumsey Map Collection in Stanford, and Gladstone's Library in Hawarden.

I am grateful to David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram for the invitation to contribute to the Cambridge Oceanic



#### xii Acknowledgments

Histories series, and to Lucy Rhymer, Emily Sharp, and the rest of the team at Cambridge University Press for their patience and assistance. Thanks are also due to the anonymous readers who gave incredibly helpful feedback and provided recommendations for how to improve the manuscript.

Last but not least my heartfelt gratitude to my long-suffering family members, who have both put me up and put up with me every time I have visited Scandinavia for holidays or birthdays, only to disappear into the archives for long stretches of time. My deepest thanks are owed to Jacquelyn Truong for being an unwavering source of motivation and sanity, and for putting up with more academic anxiety and sleepless nights than any person ought to be exposed to. In the time it has taken to write this book, we have followed each other across three continents, calling New York, London, Cambridge, and Hong Kong home. I continue to be humbled by her mental fortitude and deep-seated compassion. This book would likely never have been completed without her support.