

Letter from the Editors

Itinerario is proud to present a special issue on Africa in the Atlantic World, guest edited by Edmond Smith and Richard Blakemore. They have assembled six research articles with a geographical spread ranging from Brazil to Madagascar. Fittingly, this special research section is preceded by an interview with Kären Wigen. Among other things, she talks about the construction of regions, the importance of those constructions to the past and present of Area Studies, and the interesting perspectives that emerge when you ‘turn your chair the other way’ and challenge received definitions of regions.

The special issue opens with a contribution by Michal Tymowski, who analyses the judgments and opinions of Africans about Europeans during the early Portuguese expeditions to West Africa in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. His article is followed by Judith Spicksley’s “Contested enslavement: the Portuguese in Angola and the problem of debt, c. 1600–1800”. Spicksley examines how Europeans developed practices that brought together African and European perceptions of the law and how African engagement with Europeans ideas affected slaving practices. Next, Edmond Smith takes a global rather than an Atlantic approach, by considering Africa as both a barrier and bridge between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. His article is followed by Richard Blakemore’s, who draws on global microhistory to examine two maritime lawsuits from the 1640s concerning British voyages to Senegambia and Sierra Leone, both of which resulted in conflict between British seafarers and their African trading partners. He illuminates the ocean-spanning networks within which these ventures took place, and reveals the ways in which British traders and sailors perceived trade in Africa within their own legal frameworks. Next, Ryan Hanley examines the remarkable journey of William Ansah Sessarakoo, the son of a powerful Fante slave trader on the Gold Coast who was tricked and sold into slavery in Barbados by a British ship’s captain during the 1740s. He was emancipated and brought to Britain in 1748, where he enjoyed a brief period of national celebrity before returning to the Gold Coast in 1750. Finally, Jennifer Nelson examines the journey undertaken by the slave ship *Brilhante*, which was captured by a British anti-slave trade patrol off the coast of Brazil in 1838. Her contribution focus on ethnic solidarity as well as shipmate bonds which enabled the liberated Africans from the ship to forge new identities. For further details on this special issue, we refer to the introduction by Edmond Smith and Richard Blakemore.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Ria and Gerard de Graaff, whose Leiden-based *Grafaria* has typeset *Itinerario* for well over three

decades. Their retirement is truly the end of an era for the journal. On behalf of the entire editorial board, as well as the advisory board, many of whom have also worked with Ria and Gerard in the past, we thank them for their long service and their close involvement with all aspects of *Itinerario*.

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