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Yves Bénot and Marcel Dorigny, Eds., *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises. Aux origines de Haïti.* Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003. 592 pp. 35.00 €. ISBN 2-7068-1692-9.

Review by Jeremy Popkin, University of Kentucky.

The Napoleonic law of 30 of Floréal, Year 10 (20 May 1802) shares with the Vichy regime's *statut des juifs* the unhappy distinction of being one of the French government's most flagrant repudiations of the basic principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Ostensibly, this law simply maintained the status quo in the French colonies where the National Convention's decree of 16 of Pluviôse, Year 2 (4 February 1794) abolishing slavery had never been applied, principally Martinique, which had been under British occupation from 1793 until the peace of Amiens, and the Indian Ocean colonies, which had successfully resisted a feeble Directorial effort at abolition in 1796. In fact, armed expeditions were already on their way to France's other Caribbean colonies, particularly Saint-Domingue and Guadeloupe, to prepare the way for the re-enslavement of their black populations. The consequences would include the brutal war, costing the lives of 50,000 French soldiers and uncounted numbers of former slaves, that culminated in the independence of Haiti in 1804 and the reestablishment of slavery in the other French colonies until the second abolition of 1848.

For understandable reasons, historians of revolutionary France have preferred to emphasize the country's pioneering role in the abolition of slavery, and those devoted to the cult of Napoleon have been especially reluctant to dwell on a decision that was not only morally indefensible but that led to one of their hero's most humiliating failures. The thirty-five contributions to this volume, edited by Yves Bénot and Marcel Dorigny, two leaders in the exploration of the French revolution's confrontation with issues of race and slavery, underline the significance of the 30 of Floréal law.[1] The volume, the product of a major conference held in Paris in May 2002, shows that it is difficult to isolate the law from its most spectacular consequence, however, for many of the contributions deal more with the impact of Haitian independence than with the issues raised by Napoleon's re-imposition of slavery.

Le Rétablissement de l'esclavage is divided into five sections, which deal with the context of the French re-imposition of slavery, the fate of Saint-Domingue, the consequences in the other French colonies and in Cuba, the reaction to Haitian independence among the other colonial powers, and the connections between the Napoleonic era and later French colonialism. There is no doubt that Napoleon must bear responsibility both for the law of 30 of Floréal and for the disastrous expedition by General Charles Leclerc to Saint-Domingue--the contributors dismiss the claim that Josephine, a Creole from Martinique, influenced him--but the two contributions on the background of the decree by Bernard Gainot and Thomas Pronier disagree on the circumstances of his decision. The constitution of 1799, implemented immediately after the coup of 18 of Brumaire, opened the way for the restoration of slavery by explicitly stating that France's colonies would be governed by special laws, in contrast to the Directorial constitution of 1795, which had promised that laws would be the same for the *métropole* and the colonies. As long as France remained at war with England, however, Napoleon had no way of imposing his authority overseas. Only with the perspective of peace in late 1801 did the future of the colonies become an "action item" on his agenda.

Pronier follows Yves Bénot, whose *La Démence coloniale sous Napoléon* argued that the First Consul intended to reintroduce the slave system from an early date. Gainot, however, sees the evidence as less clear-cut, and thinks that the decision may have come later. Gainot and Pronier both point out, however, that Napoleon quickly reappointed former members of the colonial bureaucracy to important posts, and that pro-slavery politicians exiled after the coup d'état of 18 of Fructidor were welcomed back. Both thus reject the argument that Napoleon's decision to send Leclerc's expedition was essentially determined by the news that Toussaint Louverture had promulgated a colonial constitution on his own in July 1801. Gainot also shows that the republicans of the Directory period had become divided among themselves and did not present a united front to defend the existing legislation. Many of them had become estranged from Toussaint Louverture, the de facto ruler of Saint-Domingue, who was prepared, as Sabine Manigat shows, to seize the opening provided by Napoleon's constitutional provision for special colonial laws by erecting his own political order.

Regardless of when Napoleon decided in favor of slavery, however, he was not acting in a vacuum. The two contributions by Claude Wanquet and Jean-Claude Halpern, on the authors Louis Narcisse Baudry Deslozières and Julien-Joseph Virey respectively, document the ideological offensive against abolition and racial equality that accompanied Napoléon's decision. Wanquet remarks that Baudry Deslozières's book was dedicated to Josephine, raising the question of whether her role really was as insignificant as other contributors suggest. Eric Saugera's paper on the enthusiasm of French port cities to resume the slave trade, delivered at the conference but not included in the volume, adds to the evidence of support for Napoleon's decision. Lawrence Jennings's article on post-revolutionary abolitionism in France reminds us that Napoleon vigorously censored any criticism of his policy; opposition to slavery would resurface only slowly and cautiously under the Restoration. Michael Sibalis gives a statistical overview of the black population in Napoleonic France, based on documents compiled to enforce the restrictive racial laws that were enacted soon after the 30 of Floréal decree, but it would have been helpful to have a contribution specifically devoted to those measures.

Several contributors, such as Carolyn Fick, Vertus Saint-Louis, and Michel Hector, discuss the social bases of the resistance to Leclerc and the evolution of Haitian society after the proclamation of independence in 1804 and show that the legacy of French rule strongly affected the new republic. In particular, both Toussaint and the post-independence ruling elites remained wedded to the plantation-economy model, which put them in conflict with the mass of the population, who preferred to carve out small plots of their own for subsistence farming. Post-revolutionary France was not entirely innocent in this process: the agreement made under Charles X in 1825 required Haiti to pay a heavy indemnity to the former plantation owners, thereby compelling the country's government to pressure its citizens to produce export crops. The brief contributions on the 1825 treaty by François Blancpain and Gusti Klara Gaillard-Pourchet show how it perpetuated Haiti's economic dependence on France throughout the nineteenth century and created a model for a kind of neo-colonialism that would be echoed in the twentieth century.

The colonies that remained French after 1802 followed a very different trajectory. Slavery was re-imposed in Guadeloupe at a high human cost. Léo Elisabeth tells the story of the blacks who had fought in the French armies before 1802. In addition to those killed in Guadeloupe, many were exiled, some of them ending up in as part of the army of Napoleon's Kingdom of Naples. Frédéric Regent shows how whites in Guadeloupe reverted to the pre-emancipation system even before the 30 of Floréal law was officially implemented. There was a certain amount of resistance to the restored slave system there and in Guyana, as well as in Martinique where emancipation had never occurred. The Indian Ocean island of La Réunion had experienced neither emancipation nor slave revolt during the revolutionary period. Françoise Vergès maintains that the period left the island with a distinctive mentality built around a claimed identification with France coupled with a paradoxical refusal to accept the *métropole's* republican values.

France's re-imposition of slavery inspired no imitators among other European countries, since none had emancipated their slaves by 1802, but the success of the Haitian insurrection had profound, if paradoxical, effects. Plantation slavery expanded in Cuba, as discussed in contributions by Alain Yacou and Dale Tomich, and Brazil, which is not treated in this collection, to provide the sugar that Haiti no longer exported. It is well known that the impending loss of Saint-Domingue made Napoleon abandon plans for a French empire in the Louisiana Territory. By selling that land to the US, he launched the career of a new imperial power and created a powerful threat to Spain, as Dolores Hernandez Guerrero explains. Alyssa Sepinwall's survey follows the development of American historiography on Haiti, which has moved from an early focus on diplomatic relations and trade to a growing interest in the ways in which the existence of the black republic affected race relations in this country, and David Brion Davis summarizes recent historiography on the abolition of the slave trade and later of slavery in the British colonies. Although the revolutions in Spain's American colonies followed closely on the heels of Haitian independence, Richard Hocquellet argues against seeing Haiti as their inspiration. Instead, the Creole elites in the new republics were not necessarily favorable to emancipation.

Contributors to the volume's final section all suggest, in varying ways, that the bases of France's second imperial era were laid in the Napoleonic period. Rachida Tlili and Yves Bénot show how Napoleon's unrealized projects for undermining the Ottoman empire foreshadowed the 1830 invasion of Algeria, while Marcel Dorigny analyzes the liberal economist Sismondi's arguments in favor of a colonialism justified in terms of the *mission civilisatrice* rather than the slave system. Bénédicte Fortier's contribution shows how Napoleon and the Restoration government moved

in the direction of imposing a uniform set of laws and institutions on the colonies, creating a framework that would be expanded to accommodate the new territories acquired later in the nineteenth century. Jean-Claude Halpern's essay on the racial theorist Virey demonstrates how notions of white superiority were built into the period's thought, even though Virey was an opponent of slavery.

Like most conference volumes, *Le Rétablissement de l'esclavage* is somewhat uneven in quality, and some selections could have used more extensive editing. Although the volume is wide-ranging, some important aspects of the subject remain uncovered. Reading this volume would not tell one, for example, that members of the *Idéologue* group and the abbé Grégoire created some real opposition to the 30 of Floréal law in the Napoleonic legislature, as Yves Bénot documented in *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*. There is certainly more to learn about the activities of the colonial lobby, whose members kept the issue of indemnity for the Saint-Domingue planters alive down to the 1820s, and one wonders precisely how the impact on the army of the defeat there was managed, especially before the new round of victories in 1805-07 consolidated Napoleon's reputation. The economic impact of the Saint-Domingue catastrophe, as well as the reestablishment of the other colonies, is another topic deserving of further exploration.

Although even this large volume does not exhaust the topic, *Le Rétablissement de l'esclavage*, like the recently translated volume on the French abolitions of slavery previously edited by Dorigny, demonstrates the necessity of integrating the colonial dimension of the revolutionary and Napoleonic era into any overall assessment of these subjects.[2] In particular, the fact that the decree of 30 of Floréal, Year Ten, was planned and issued in the same months as the Concordat with the Catholic Church, suggests that Napoleon had decided on a return to hierarchical institutions modeled after those of the Old Regime earlier than many historians have admitted. Recognition of the influence exercised by the former colonial officials and Directory-era pro-slavery politicians appointed to office by Napoleon indicates that, for the people of color in France's colonies, the "healing of the fructidor schism" described in Isser Woloch's recent *Napoleon and his Collaborators* was anything but a benign process, and the evidence presented here shows that the history of French racism starts long before the work of Arthur de Gobineau.[3] The contributors to this volume also demonstrate the extent of the continuities between France's first and second imperial eras: France's overseas territories may have been sharply reduced from the 1790s to 1830, but the appetite of its successive governments for empire never wavered. *Le Rétablissement de l'esclavage* is thus an important addition to the steadily growing historiography on the ways in which the revolutionary era's confrontations with colonialism, race and slavery have shaped modern French and world history.

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[1] See especially Yves Bénot, *La Révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987) and Bénot, *La démenche coloniale sous Napoléon* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992).

[2] This important volume, originally published in France in 1995, is now available in English. See Marcel Dorigny, *The Abolitions of Slavery: From Léger Félicité Sonthonax to Victor Schoelcher, 1793, 1794, 1848* (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, 2003).

[4] Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators: The Making of a Dictatorship* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

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