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*Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* by William D.  
Phillips Jr. (review)

Jarbel Rodriguez

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*Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*. By William D. Phillips Jr. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. Pp. 257. Map. Notes. Index. \$65.00 cloth; \$65.00 e-book.  
doi:[10.1017/tam.2015.9](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2015.9)

Over the last few decades, the study of slavery in medieval and early modern Iberia has expanded considerably with dozens of monographs and scores of articles. Building on this rich scholarship as well as his own extensive knowledge of the field, Phillips has crafted an engaging synthesis that will be welcomed by experts and newcomers alike. And although the book suffers from the typical weakness of synthetic works—depth sacrificed for breadth—I would suggest that even those who are experts in the field will find Phillips’ work meaningful, filled as it is with details, anecdotes, and insights. The book also has the laudable goal of bringing many recent works of scholarship, some better known than others, to the attention of a broader audience (p. 5). In this effort, the author is particularly successful, as he is able to draw in even marginal and tangential sources.

After a brief introduction that highlights some seminal works on Iberian slavery, and a first chapter that narrates its history, Phillips devotes each of the remaining five chapters to specific aspects of enslavement: becoming a slave; the traffic in slaves; living as a slave; slave work; and becoming free. The chapters follow a definitive and effective pattern in which each subsection begins with brief glances at Roman and Visigothic slavery, followed by a much-expanded analysis of Muslim and Christian slavery in the Peninsula.

As a sample chapter that can stand for others, chapter 4, “To Live as a Slave,” includes subsections on the beginnings of life in slavery, the legal conditions of slaves, gender divisions, concubinage, family and marriage, religion, health and death, and crime and punishment. Each of these subsections represents multiple sources in the literature, and one wishes at times that the book were longer to give Phillips a chance to develop some of these themes more exhaustively. However, working within these limitations, the chapters are excellent examples of succinct scholarship, enough to inform and tempt us to dig deeper in the sources, but often too brief to fully satiate our interest on their own.

In the book’s epilogue Phillips looks at the broadening implications of Iberian slavery as Spain went from being a relatively small state in Europe to a massive empire with colonies all over the globe, principally in the Americas. In particular, he takes up the arguments first espoused by Philip Curtin and Robin Blackburn, that is, that slavery in the America took Old World practices and institutions and adapted them to New World realities.

This is an important text that should find a perfect home with an undergraduate audience but could also be used in graduate seminars, as either an introductory text in courses on Iberian slavery and or an all-inclusive work in courses that engage with

broadier topics. However, it is not without flaws. For example, there is little mention of ransoming and exchanges in the chapter on becoming free (although there is a brief discussion on the topic elsewhere). Moreover, it is clear that for Phillips Iberia is a geographic entity—the bulk of his study focuses on slaves found on peninsular soil. This makes sense, and I understand that books need to have limits. Yet, slavery also deeply affected those who left Iberia, taken overseas for a life of servitude, and those people Phillips largely ignores. This issue has broader implications than merely giving equal coverage to Iberians as slavers and slaves, because the taking of people from Iberia, their treatment, and the mechanisms and institutions that negotiated for their release influenced how slaves found in Iberia were captured, treated, and potentially set free. In short, a broader look at Spanish slaves in foreign polities would have been welcomed. The book, nevertheless, is an excellent complement to the growing secondary literature on Iberian and Mediterranean slavery and should remain so for years to come.

*San Francisco State University*  
*San Francisco, California*

JARBEL RODRIGUEZ

*Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba.* By David A. Sartorius. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. Pp. xix, 312. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$89.95 cloth; \$24.95 paper.  
 doi:[10.1017/tam.2015.10](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2015.10)

Throughout the nineteenth century, official records and foreign visitors very often characterized Cuba as the “Ever-Faithful Island.” David Sartorius asserts that this allegiance could not have succeeded without the affirmation of Cubans of African descent. Eschewing depictions of Cubans of color as either “truly rebellious or truly loyal,” he demonstrates how they used the rhetoric of loyalty and subordination as a strategy for political inclusion (p. 54). He draws on a variety of archival sources in Cuba, Spain, and the United States, including organizational proceedings, periodicals, military units, and the records of political parties, to address the underexplored theme of colonialism and black fidelity. In doing so, Sartorius crafts a revisionist history that challenges established divisions separating Cuba’s ideologies of race in the colonial and national periods. The efforts of black Cubans to be incorporated, albeit unequally, into colonial politics reveals the centrality of race and loyalty to the preservation of Spanish colonial rule in Cuba.

Sartorius examines how Cubans of color used military service and public spaces, especially political organizations, the press, and associations, to engage the category of colonial subject. Interrogations of black soldiers during the Ten Years’ War shed light on the motivations of enslaved Cubans for aligning with the imperial power. Former bondsmen in the Spanish army gained their freedom for “having actively sought out