
Hilary Jones, Florida International University

Pernille Ipsen’s Daughters of the Trade fills an important gap in the literature about interracial marriage, race mixing, and the transatlantic slave trade. She mines Danish sources to analyze Denmark as a slave-trading power and to trace the position of Euro-African communities that emerged as a result of the Danish presence on the west coast of Africa. Specifically, Ipsen brings together administrative records of the trading companies, diaries, letters, wills, European travel accounts, memoirs, and portraits to illustrate how and why Danish men engaged in interracial marriage, known as cassare, on the Gold Coast. By using gender analysis and cultural theory as a framework for considering this documentation, Ipsen examines how African women and their mixed-race offspring understood and negotiated the presence of Danish merchants and officials at the Christiansborg fort and in the surrounding Gold Coast town of Osu.

The monograph begins in the social world of eighteenth-century Osu by exploring the process that gave rise to the Euro-African community at the center of Danish slave trading in West Africa. Ipsen examines why company employees at the fort used marriage as a strategy for integration into the local community and how intermarriage functioned as a means of inserting themselves into African kinship networks. At the same time, the author considers the problem that “assimilation” into the Danish-speaking world posed for Ga-speaking women of Osu. In doing so, she sheds light on the debate regarding how and why African families sought male partners for their daughters from among European merchants in the Atlantic trade. Ipsen suggests that Ga matrilineal customs may have influenced the deliberate choices that Ga families made to cassare their daughters to European men. Matrilineal customs thus constituted a critical difference from similar practices of intermarriage in Senegambia, where patrilineal systems dominated. She maintains that the nature of lineage systems likely shaped the expectations that women and their families had of such unions.

Ipsen addresses the specific hybrid culture that formed at the port as a result of explicit borrowing of European material culture, language, and religion, which nevertheless, she argues, remained rooted in the “social world of Atlantic slave trading” (56). In this node of the Atlantic networks, Ga merchants and traders controlled the business of transporting slaves and provisions to European traders. Reports by Danish chaplains and administrators offer insight into the “problem” (60) that Ga wives of Danish men

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and their mixed-race children presented for Danish officials and religious authorities. Ipsen's close reading of this documentation explicates African women's relationship to Danish men at the fort, demonstrating that Ga women and their families insisted that Danish men recognize the distinction between enslaved and free women at Osu. This distinction, she argues, informed Danish traders' consciousness of the difference between slave and free, thereby creating a category of marriageable African women.

In the third chapter, Ipsen takes readers into the social and cultural worlds of Danish merchants and their families in eighteenth-century Copenhagen. Drawing on her knowledge of Denmark, Danish family histories, and Danish literature, she examines the meaning of blackness in Denmark and the ways in which knowledge of the Gold Coast and Euro-Africans circulated in the European city. This chapter, in particular, offers needed analysis of the under-studied role of Denmark in slave trading on the West African coast. Ipsen presents evidence from the memoirs of Danish traders and reports of the few Afro-European sons of Danish men who traveled to Copenhagen to show ambivalence and anxiety toward interracial mixing within the eighteenth-century Copenhagen merchant community.

Chapter 4 deals with "the Christian Mulattresses, whom Europeans cassare" (115) in the Danish fort on the Gold Coast. Ipsen contends that their experiences cannot simply be told as a story about the agency of Euro-African women who profited from the slave trade. The lives reveal the pressures that the slave-trading world placed on mixed-race women to adopt Christianity and European material culture as a means to distinguish themselves from enslaved Africans coming from the north and bound for slave ships making the Atlantic crossing. The trade activities of Euro-African women, as well as the problems of slavery and pawning at the fort, are central to Ipsen's analysis.

The book concludes by showing the changing nature of conjugal relations in the Danish community on the Gold Coast. By the nineteenth century, a class known as the “Christiansborg Mulattos” (142) carved out an intermediary position that corresponded with growing European interest in colonizing the Gold Coast. As Ipsen shows, the end of the Atlantic slave trade thrust the Euro-African community of Osu into the position of mediating the “protoccolonial” (143) moment, balancing the tension between Danish traders’ desire to circumvent legal prohibition of slave trading and their need to protect the wealth, inheritance, and social well-being of their Gold Coast wives and children. By doing so, Ipsen forces us to weigh the intimate and familial obligations of Danish traders against their proslavery discourse. Colonialism necessitated a fixed racial hierarchy. Like the métis of Senegal, the Euro-Africans of Osu found themselves in a world that stigmatized cassare marriage. As Ipsen points out, the pressure of the changing
Atlantic world compelled nineteenth-century Euro-African families to switch between two cultural worlds rather than assume a flexible belonging to both as they had in the era of the slave trade.

The history of Africa’s Atlantic ports reveals the thorny and uncomfortable trajectory of peoples who are often viewed as individuals who facilitated the slave trade and mimicked European colonial powers. Ipsen tackles this problem head-on, making a compelling argument that Atlantic historians must not only train their eyes on the legacy of the slave trade for the enslaved but also grapple with how the trade shaped the family lives of Africans in Osu and Danes in Copenhagen. Ipsen renders this analysis accessible to specialist and generalist audiences alike by highlighting the biographies of individuals and tracing the complex “family circles” that bound Danes and Ga-speakers together. Daughters of the Trade employs a number of illustrations effectively, including eighteenth-century Danish paintings, family portraits, watercolors, maps, and city plans. Ipsen furthers the argument by offering a close analysis of each image. Her consideration of a watercolor painted by Wulff Joseph Wulff of his cassare wife, with a letter to his brother written around it, offers an intimate view of the hybrid cultural world that Euro-African women inhabited as well as the complicated way that racism shaped Danish portrayals of their mixed-race wives and children. The book relies heavily on European sources. Although Ipsen’s “Note on Sources” addresses the problem of getting at African women’s voices from this documentary evidence, engagement with Ga oral tradition and Osu family histories could have offered a valuable perspective.

Daughters of the Trade is an important contribution to a growing body of literature on interracial marriage and the mixed-race communities that emerged on the African coast in the era of the Atlantic slave trade. Scholars and students of the Atlantic world, slavery and abolition, and West African slave-trade ports will find a great deal to consider in this work, especially in terms of methodology and analytical approach. Ipsen offers an important framework for understanding the world made by Danish traders and Ga-speaking women of the Gold Coast.