Pays-Bas dans le monde atlantique au XIXe siècle

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Historians of European colonialism typically focus on
Britain and France rather than smaller colonial powers
such as the Netherlands. To redress this imbalance,
Sicking examines three sites of Franco-Dutch
conflict: the Caribbean island of St. Martin; the Gold
Coast (Ghana); and the border dispute between Suri-
nam and French Guiana. In these regions projects for
the extension of French territory at the expense of the
Netherlands were proposed and supported by colonial
and naval officials along with various special interest
groups. In his painstaking examination of diplomatic
correspondence (drawn primarily from the Archives
d’Outre-Mer), Sicking illuminates the complex and of-
ten contradictory motives of those involved and the
means by which the Quai d’Orsay and The Hague re-
strained efforts at territorial aggrandizement.

The Dutch and the French both settled St. Martin,
eventually reaching an agreement to split the island in
1648. This division was not revisited until the early
1840s, when the French navy became intrigued by the
Dutch port of Philipsburg, which could harbor large
vessels and counterbalance the British naval presence
in the region. Although a plan to annex the Dutch side
of the island was forwarded to the Quai d’Orsay, the
idea was rejected on the grounds that such an acqui-
sition would add a large number of slaves to the colonial
population and thereby raise the specter of emancipa-
tion, an issue that the July Monarchy was unwilling to
countenance.

The prospect of annexation would arise again once
slavery was abolished following the Revolution of 1848
and the establishment of the Second Republic. Sugar
planters complained they were now bereft of a labor
force as former slaves migrated to the Dutch side of the
island to work in the more lucrative salt mines. In 1853
they submitted a petition to this effect and were sup-
ported in their efforts by the territorial governor, who
believed that annexation was possible in exchange for
the cost of all Dutch slaves. While naval and colonial
officials were favorably inclined, the Quai d’Orsay
 balked as it believed the Dutch would soon abolish slav-
ery, thereby rendering the plan moot. Although they
were incorrect—the Netherlands did not end the prac-
tice until 1863—the project was abandoned and the di-
vision remains to this day.

It was not sugar or salt but the promise of gold, ivory,
and the burgeoning trade in slaves that drew European
voyagers and adventurers to the West coast of Africa.
Indeed, once slavery surpassed gold as the chief export,
Portuguese, Dutch, British, and Danish merchants built
fortified trading stations along the Gold Coast. By the
mid-nineteenth century, however, only the British and
Dutch remained.

To facilitate trade the two powers concluded a treaty
in 1867 that awarded the eastern part of the coast to the
British and the western part to the Dutch. As a result,
the new Dutch holding of Apollonia was contiguous with
the Ivory Coast. As in St. Martin, French naval
officials played a role in the events that followed as they
wanted to lay claim to the former French fort of Am-
ackou, then exchange the fort for Apollonia, thereby
expanding French territory. Officials in Paris were hes-
itant about the unstable situation in the region, how-
ever, and the matter was closed once it was determined
that the claim could not be substantiated. Given the
violent reactions of various African peoples to the An-
glo-Dutch treaty and the eventual civil war in Apollonia
that followed, such misgivings were well placed. Indeed,
the Dutch vacated the Gold Coast in 1871–1872.

Boundaries were also ill defined between Surinam and
French Guiana, particularly in the forest hinter-
lands. While the Maroni River was the basic divide,
a border dispute arose following the discovery of gold by
French prospectors in the territory between the Tap-
ahanoni and Lawa rivers in the 1880s. Demands for
mining concessions ensued and upon Dutch insistence
the dispute was sent to arbitration and eventually me-
diated by Tsar Alexander III. Although the Quai d’Orsay
believed the tsar would rule on its behalf, the
matter was settled in favor of the Dutch with the provis-
on that all previous concessions granted by the French
government be recognized by Surinam.

This was a victory for the Dutch, who were not in-
terested in the auriferous territory (the costs associated
with exploration were prohibitive and greatly inhibited
mining efforts in the region) but rather in demonstrat-
ing that they remained a viable colonial power. If they
had simply acquiesced and recognized French claims,
this would have damaged Dutch colonial prestige and
set a precedent that could endanger their hold over In-
donesia. Indeed, Dutch diplomats viewed the East In-
dia colony and events in South America as inextricably
twined.

This is a sophisticated account of the role played by
various pressure groups in colonial affairs and their
sometimes troubled relationship with metropolitan of-
ficials. In this regard, Sicking finds striking similarities
in these seemingly disparate affairs, particularly be-

Former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso remembers U. S. President George W. Bush asking him, late in 2001, “Do you have blacks in Brazil?” Gerald Horne’s book is for persons who know the answer to Bush’s question but are less aware of the U. S. role in bringing captive Africans to Brazil in the nineteenth century and dealing with the large South American slave power.

Horne draws together several strands of the study of how U. S. nationals dealt with, and thought of, Brazil during the eighty years before abolition came to that country in 1888. At the core of each strand is either the slave trade or slavery. In the 1830s, slave-based agriculture was expanding in the U. S. South at the very time opposition to human bondage was growing in other parts of the country—and beyond. In states where slavery was outlawed and abolition movements were springing up, American investors, ship builders, manufacturers of trade goods, and shippers profited from the fact that slaves were steadily being acquired along Africa’s tropical coasts and transported to Brazil for sale. Helping this along was the U. S. government’s refusal to allow British patrol ships to search suspicious vessels flying the American flag. Once gold was discovered for California by sea around Cape Horn and stopped in Rio de Janeiro, interest in Brazil heightened, especially among slavery’s supporters. Some southerners—Horne focuses on two Virginians, Governor Henry Alexander Wise and oceanographer Matthew Fontaine Maury—considered Brazil as a possible spot to relocate with human chattel and, as the Civil War approached, entertained notions that a strong trade relationship with Brazil might hold off abolitionist pressures from the northern states and Great Britain. With the war’s end and emancipation, Brazil became a place of retreat for former Confederates, who could not abide life in the United States on a theoretically equal footing with their former slaves. Unable to bring their human chattel with them, most of these expatriate “Confederados” faced disappointment and returned. The few who remained in Brazil grew bitter as they fought abolition in their new homeland.

A quick, initial look at this book elicits excitement over its potential. Horne examines U. S. involvement in nineteenth-century slave trading and hemispheric relations from a fresh, Atlantic perspective; he bases the study on research in archives and libraries around the Atlantic basin; and he has a record of scholarly achievement rarely matched.

But a careful reading brings frustration and disappointment. The frustration comes largely from the way the book is written and presented, and for this New York University Press bears considerable responsibility. Much of the text consists of Horne’s piecing together of the words of others. He quotes and quotes, often when his own words would serve him better: primary and secondary sources, published and unpublished sources, the latest authorities alongside old and obscure dissertations and papers. He gives them equal authority, as if being in print in itself makes each one valid. Moreover the author rarely notes in the text whose words he is quoting, so the reader must turn constantly to the endnotes, only to encounter a welter of cryptic citations (“Ibid.” in this book apparently means merely “cited somewhere earlier”) that can force one to invest hours, literally, searching back over hundreds of citations on scores of pages to determine a quotation’s authority. A bibliography would ease this process, but there is none.

The disappointment is fueled by Horne’s lack of care in using information from his sources. He takes statements far out of context to support his arguments. An example occurs in chapter two, which begins with a statement, essential for Horne’s argument, about how “U. S. nationals were leaders in fomenting the illicit [i.e., nineteenth-century] slave trade” (p. 33). Quoting J. E. Inikori (“The Struggle against the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade,” in Sylviane A. Diouf, ed., Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies [2003]), Horne writes that U. S. nationals, “acting alone or in conjunction with the bandits, intervened in the affairs of these [African] chiefdoms to provoke conflicts that generated export captives.” When one examines Inikori’s quotation (which comes not where Horne’s citation indicates, on pages 170–171 of the essay, but on page 182) to seek better understanding of the seemingly thorny matter, one finds that Inikori is not writing about Americans in the nineteenth century, but about Europeans in the seventeenth century. This leaves the reader wondering how many more of the author’s arguments are based on such misrepresentation of the words of others that he uses so extensively.

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Lisa Chilton. Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s–1930. (Studies in Gender and History, number 30.) Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press. 2007. Pp. viii, 240. Cloth $60.00, paper $27.95.

British philanthropic women’s entrepreneurship in women’s emigration from the late nineteenth century through to the 1920s is a rich topic that has at last found its historian. While other scholars have dealt with the