

RECENSIES

Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa. Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011) 384 p. ISBN 978-90-04-20151-4.

This is a new book about an old theme. Generations of historians from Charles Boxer to Niels Steensgaard, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, Frédéric Mauro, Stuart Schwartz, Piet Emmer, Filipe Alencastro and Francisco Bethencourt have compared the Portuguese empire with its Dutch, French and English competitors in the South Atlantic. General wisdom among these historians is that there was a clash of empires in the struggle to dominate the slave imports from the West Coast of Africa into Brazil and the Caribbean and the export of cash crops into Europe. The result of this clash was the rise of a Dutch, French and English Atlantic empires at the expense of the long-established Iberian Empires, translated into an economic development from an Iberian feudal system of overseas expansion into a capitalist model of empire building exemplified by chartered monopolies fostered by the Dutch and the English.

Filipa Ribeiro da Silva partially addresses these issues in her book by comparing the Dutch and Portuguese presence in Western Africa between 1580 and 1674. Since her work is rooted on comparative analysis, she selected a pool of factors of analysis to sustain this comparison, namely the appreciation of the role of institutions, labor migration, formation of colonial societies and economic organization of the West African entrepreneurial operations. Ribeiro da Silva uses secondary literature and some primary sources to go deep into the institutional structure of the Dutch and the Portuguese colonial enterprise, the labor models that both empires adopted in its various forms and how the intersection between institutions and labor models resulted in specific colonial societies in Western Africa.

Even if the structure of the book privileges a multi-factual analysis of Dutch and Portuguese colonial exchanges in the Western Coast of Africa, the emphasis of Ribeiro da Silva's work lies on the economic construction of a Dutch and a Portuguese Western African space. She underlines the interconnectedness between the African coastal areas privileged by the Europeans and the hinterlands dominated by the Eurafricans and Africans. She stresses the complementary nature of these two systems in the Dutch and the Portuguese cases, although she argues for a Portuguese adaptability model against a Dutch efficiency model in the operation of the system.

Trading routes, commercial practices, production and consumption outlets were paramount for the integration of African coastal areas and their hinterlands, the same was true for the intercontinental operations governed by the Dutch and the Portuguese. Even though, Ribeiro da Silva argues for a certain degree of market integration between the dynamics of the Western African coastal areas and the overseas markets, especially in the Americas. She fails to convince the reader that this market integration also reached the hinterlands and that the impact of market integration influenced the

expansion and contraction of commercial exchanges between the Dutch and Portuguese, on the one hand, and the Africans, on the other hand.

The most peculiar part of this book stresses the business organization of the European competitors operating in the Western African context. Ribeiro da Silva mentions not only the wealthy European merchants of Amsterdam or Lisbon, but she extends her evaluation of the contribution of the ‘men-on-the-spot’, the agents and their local contacts. Even though she sees a certain degree of African and *Creole* agency within the Dutch and the Portuguese areas of influence, it is unclear whether that agency was continuous or sporadic and the long term impact of this practice. Even though she is very keen on characterizing this agency as cross-cultural, she is ambiguous regarding a definition of the concept. It seems that the premise is that people from different religious backgrounds and ethnic groups participated in exchanges and commercial/financial partnerships, but the author disregards, for example, one of the essential elements that characterize cross-cultural exchanges, namely, the meddling between different law (religious or civil) systems.

Overall, this is a very well researched, organized and argued book. The major contribution it gives to current historiography is to conclude that the Dutch States General and the Portuguese monarchs shared similar goals concerning their sphere of influence in the Western African coast. However, the organizational, strategic and administrative differences between the economic needs of both empires resulted in two different approaches to the South Atlantic Complex.

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Elisabeth Musch, *Integration durch Konsultation? Konsensbildung in der Migrations- und Integrationspolitik in Deutschland und den Niederlanden* (Münster/New York/München/Berlin: Waxmann, 2011), Zivildienstliche Verständigungsprozesse vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. Deutschland und die Niederlande im Vergleich, Band 5, 400 p. ISBN 978-3-8309-2387-9.

Elisabeth Musch, tegenwoordig onderzoeksreferent aan het Duitse onderzoeksinstituut voor openbaar bestuur Speyer, is afgestudeerd in Europese Studies aan de Universiteit Osnabrück. In 2010 promoveerde zij aan de Westfaalse Wilhelms-Universiteit Münster op dit onderzoek naar politieke strategieën en het handelingsrepertoire van rijksactoren in de omgang met migranten en hun organisaties. Procedures en problemen met betrekking tot de politieke integratie van migranten staan hierin centraal. De auteur belicht de consultatiestructuren, namelijk de gemeenschappelijke overlegstructuren tussen overheid en openbaar bestuur enerzijds en migranten(organisaties) anderzijds, aan de hand van de vraag naar de rol van de overheid bij de institutionalisering tussen overheid en migrantenverbanden in Nederland en Duitsland. In deze vergelijkende studie wordt gebruikgemaakt van het concept van de ‘Administrativer Interessenvermittlung’ (Lehmbruch 1987), die – anders dan het concept van de ‘Political Opportunity Structures’ – het onmiddellijke overheidshandelen binnen de maatschappij bestudeert.