

The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World. Wim Klooster. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780801450457

Between 1620-1670, the Atlantic world underwent a monumental change whereby an area mostly controlled by the Habsburgs gave way to Dutch, English, Portuguese, and French colonization. During this half-century, Wim Klooster argues that the Dutch played a fundamental role in transforming the Atlantic world, so much so that their power during this period would never again be equaled. While the Dutch played a fundamental role in this changing New World order, they did not rise to prominence through sustained efforts at colonization or significant agricultural efforts. Instead, the Dutch profited in the Atlantic by acting as merchants, transmitting goods, capital, and slaves amongst other European empires. Klooster argues that to understand the Dutch impact on the Atlantic world we must examine the web that the Dutch interwove between and amongst empires and societies, taking into account interactions with Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians.

The Dutch empire was forged through constant war. The Atlantic world was a battleground where the Dutch captured territory and fought with the Portuguese, Spanish, and English. Violence helped usher in the great transformation of the Atlantic world in territorial makeup as well as the extraction of wealth. The Dutch, however, also proved to be proficient traders since many Dutch migrants hailed from urban roots, and did not possess the agricultural acumen necessary to plant and harvest cash crops effectively. Instead, they prodigiously engaged in trading throughout the Atlantic. It was not all one way—as the Dutch traded with others so did other societies factor into Dutch successes; and many Dutch colonists, sailors, and soldiers hailed from foreign nations, including territories in Africa and the Americas. When Dutch power waned

post-1670 they did not entirely leave the Atlantic world, but defended their few remaining outposts and continued to engage in trading.

Klooster's book builds on the bevy of work by prior historians of the Dutch Atlantic world that has examined the institutional history of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), the role of religion in the Dutch Empire, economic and military interactions between the Dutch and indigenous societies, and the history of the Dutch colony of New Netherland. Klooster's book adds to this historiography by providing a thorough study of the amalgamation of Dutch influence in the Atlantic world, which differs from previous studies that have only examined individual areas and not corralled them into one, overarching text, allowing him to demonstrate the multifaceted impact of the Dutch over the Atlantic world in the middle of the seventeenth century. In particular, Klooster addresses what he feels is a misplaced bias in the historiography by deemphasizing the importance of New Netherland, and instead foregrounding the Dutch presence in Brazil. He argues that Brazil was the jewel in the Dutch Atlantic crown, the largest geographically and the most productive in wealth, and thus also the most heavily defended.

In the first four chapters, Klooster charts the rise and fall of the Dutch Atlantic world. He begins with a prehistory, detailing how the Dutch Republic formed in rebellion against the Habsburgs. Privateering allowed the Dutch to enter the Atlantic world, taking them outside the confines of European waters for the first time. As the Dutch began to factor in the Atlantic world, the Dutch West India Company was established to control trade and wage war. The WIC was a hybrid government/private business enterprise founded under the principle that warfare was the best way to sustain trade and influence in the Atlantic. The *Grand Design*, a plan for Atlantic conquest, was drafted by prominent Dutch officials and looked to be viable after the Dutch first achieved victory in Brazil. However, the Portuguese forced the Dutch out just one

year later, and with other notable setbacks the *Grand Design* was deemed a failure. Instead, the Dutch turned to privateering and plundering of Iberian vessels. In 1628 the Dutch ventured back to Brazil and achieved lasting success, securing territory in the midst of a rich, sugar-producing area. In addition, the Dutch settled on the Atlantic coasts of North America and Guiana in the 1620s, and the Caribbean and African Gold Coast in the 1630s. After Portugal separated from Spain, the Dutch took advantage of an infantile Portugal and capture territory in Angola, reaching their territorial zenith in 1642.

The Dutch lacked the ability to control inland Brazil, maintaining their communication and authority through sea power that ultimately resulted in rebellion. With disturbances in Brazil, the Portuguese went on the offensive in Africa and captured both Luanda and Sao Tome from the Dutch in 1648. Meanwhile, the WIC began a steady decline due to the unrest from the Brazilian revolt and financial mismanagement in the Netherlands. The Portuguese finally forced the Dutch to relinquish Brazil in 1654. Meanwhile, New Netherland was embroiled in conflicts with the Swedish, English, and Amerindians, before the Dutch relinquished it in 1667 to the British. Competition between the Dutch and English on the Gold Coast lead to war between the two nations, leading to Dutch attacks on outposts in the Caribbean and Canada. Despite the Dutch capture of New York and the surrounding area in 1673, all newly conquered territory was given back to the English for good in 1674, the same year the WIC finally shut up shop. Klooster ascribes at least some of this failure to the nature of Dutch imperial forces. Dutch soldiers and sailors were integral in the growth, flourishing, and decline of the Dutch Empire. Poverty was the greatest attractor for Dutchmen to join the military or navy. Dutch forces kept the WIC humming, and these two entities together were the crucial enterprises that kept the Dutch Empire robust. Due to the tropical nature of Dutch outposts, living conditions were brutal, disease

rampant, and food supplies were typically inadequate and insalubrious. In addition, soldiers were often poorly paid, if paid at all. These factors combined to diminish the effectiveness and capabilities of the Dutch fighting force.

In the remaining three chapters, Klooster shifts to examining Dutch interactions with other societies. The Dutch flourished by trading with all Atlantic empires (Spain post-1648), not by trading amongst themselves. They also traded with Africans and Indians, which allowed the Dutch to craft alliances with native populations. A desire to discover precious ores, whale oil, and salt were the primary reasons for Dutch expansion into the Atlantic world. In addition, the sugar cultivation in Brazil produced riches once the Dutch were established in the area, as did the slave trade which began with capturing Portuguese slaving vessels at the turn of the century and evolved to the point where the Dutch became the largest exporter of slaves by the mid-seventeenth century. Cruising allowed the Dutch to sail by multiple ports, selling their cargo, both human and material, to whoever desired it while having the ability to select specific ports. The Dutch were reluctant to migrate en masse; no major Dutch settlement emerged across the Atlantic. Much of this was due to a wealth of jobs at home and rising wages throughout the seventeenth century. Women were rare in Dutch colonies, as were farmers in comparison to migrants from urban environments who typically acted as merchants. Settlers who migrated, often persuaded by personal contacts, settled in towns which mimicked those found in the Dutch Republic, and cultural institutions like law and architecture helped construct this charade. The Dutch would not populate their colonies alone; many Europeans settled throughout it: settlers from England lived in New Netherland, the Portuguese lived alongside the Dutch in Brazil, and Jews lived throughout an empire that offered religious tolerance. The Dutch interacted with

native populations through trade, military alliance, and marriage, as well as through buying and selling natives through slavery.

This book provides an extensive history of the “Dutch Moment” in the Atlantic world, and does so with a prodigious mix of sufficient detail to understand the intricacies of the Dutch impact in the Atlantic while being succinct enough to maintain a sweeping narrative of the rise and fall of the Dutch Atlantic. Placing the account of the “Dutch Moment” in the first three chapters of this text sets up the reader to tackle the latter chapters on more particular subjects of soldiers, trade amongst empires, and settlement. However, the fourth chapter appears out of line with the remaining chapters, splitting the first three and second three and not quite fitting into either category. Providing more information on the Dutch in Africa, where Klooster mainly focuses on their introduction in the area and conflicts with the Portuguese, could have provided a more holistic view of Dutch life, work, and trade on the eastern side of the Atlantic. In addition, more discussion on Dutch interaction with indigenous societies in both Brazil and New Netherlands could have provided a more detailed analysis on the impact that the Dutch had on local peoples in their two major mainland-American colonies.

This book is best suited for researchers interested in understanding the zenith of Dutch power and influence in the Atlantic. While useful for graduate students in the seminar setting, this book does not find its niche in an undergraduate setting due to its focus on one particular subject within the larger framework of the Atlantic world. This book would not provide the breadth of knowledge for an undergraduate who is not familiar with the Atlantic world, and is best undertaken by a reader who possess prior knowledge due to its deep dive into one facet of the Atlantic world. However, bits and pieces could be taken from this text and added to lectures in an Atlantic world course or when addressing the colonization of the Americas in a world

history survey course. The most profound impact taken from this book is how Klooster masterfully shows how the Netherlands, a relatively newfound and minuscule country at this point in their history, had such a stake in the Atlantic world, which might be shocking for many students who are more familiar with the influence of Spain and Britain in the Americas. Giving the Dutch their moment in the history of the Atlantic world is a powerful reminder of the crucial moment when the upstart Dutch Republic's flag boldly flew over many disparate outposts scattered across the Atlantic Ocean.

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