

## Dutch Brazil (1624-1654) and Its Legacy

The central figure in *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil* is Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen [1604-1679], a humanist prince in Europe, a statesman and governor of New Holland in Brazil from 1636-1644 and later, after the Peace of Westphalia, governor of Cleves and ruler of the Rhineland. A true Renaissance man, when he went to Brazil he took his court with him, including scholars and artists, who all set about collecting, studying, describing and painting that extraordinary new world out there.

The most exciting article in this volume, edited by historian Michiel van Groesen, is Mariana Françoço's contribution on his culture of wealthy and exotic display of the colonial riches he gathered overseas. He acted this out in The Hague with half naked Tapuya Indians dancing in the Mauritshuis and in 1652 at Cleves too, where he used the Indians in a re-enactment of the Battle of Zama, in which Scipio [read Johan Maurits] defeated Hannibal and Carthage.

As for the colonial side of this short Brazilian episode, the fact is that the Dutch empire was predominantly a maritime and trade affair, spanning the Seven Seas with a network of harbours, islands, fortresses and trading posts dotted around the world, always on or very near to the coast – from New York to Indonesia, the Cape to Japan, along the coasts of India and Ceylon, the Moluccas and the Caribbean.

At the heart of this empire there was always the business imperative: war is bad for business; an army is a drain on finance; and it is more profitable in the long run to have peace. So, in 1661, the Dutch Republic made a lasting peace with the Portuguese in the Treaty of The Hague, a deal whereby the Portuguese paid for the repossession of Brazil with the salt of Setúbal, which the Dutch fishing industry needed much more than all the sugar of Brazil.

The proceedings of a stimulating two-day conference held at Amsterdam University, with participants from the USA, the Netherlands, Spain and



Belgium (but no German experts, even though in 2004 it was the German government which placed a bust of Johan Maurits in Recife), the value of this collection is its three-pronged approach to the interlude of Dutch Brazil and its legacy.

In the first part, historians Klooster and Schwarz pursue Dutch Brazil's geopolitical links to developments elsewhere, in particular the Spanish empire, and its English and French rivals. Also very interesting is Meeuwese's contribution on the Dutch alliances with - and eventually also their abandoning of - the indigenous Indians, who even sent an embassy to the States-General in The Hague to plead for further action against the Portuguese, but to no avail.

In the second part, it is the cultural legacy that takes centre stage, in the Netherlands, Brazil and elsewhere, with contributions on religion e.g. the legacy of religious tolerance as a Dutch element in Brazilian history, but also the Dutch fight with the Jesuits from Antwerp. Another very interesting contribution concerns free trade, in Weststeijn's analysis of Pieter de la Court's ideas on free trade, which eventually inspired the authors (including Diderot) of Raynal's *History of the Two Indies* (1780).

The third and last section brings a number of contributions by leading American art historians on the Brazilian paintings by Post and Eeckhout, and on Johan Maurits's collections and their dispersal around the world, as a result of which Post's paintings are now in the Rijksmuseum and the Amsterdam Maritime Museum, while his drawings are in the British Museum. The closing contribution by

Runies gives a very good critical comparative discussion of historical mentalities and national mythologies concerning this Dutch episode in Brazil's colonial past.

Here we also find editor Michiel van Groesen's own contribution, on the Dutch 17th century cult of naval heroes and their exploits, beginning and ending with Van Haren's poem of 1769 on the proud episode and the missed opportunity of 'Neglected Brazil' (*Verzuimd Brazil*). Who knows, this poem may well have been the reason why Van Haren's grandson, Dirck van Hogendorp – who had enjoyed a long and adventurous career as a Dutch colonial administrator in Java and Bengal, a colonial critic and reformer at home, then as Dutch ambassador to Russia and as a general in the service of Napoleon, before finally being disgraced back in the Netherlands – went in 1817 to Brazil, of all places, where he spent the last years of his life in exile at the Portuguese royal court in Rio de Janeiro.

There is in this volume an interesting footnote on p. 106, pointing to the connection in the 1930s between the Brazilian poet and essayist Paolo Setúbal, who wrote an historical novel with Johan Maurits as its central character, which was co-translated in 1933 by one of Holland's most important writers on the tropics, the poet J.J. Slauerhoff. Instead of a footnote, this modern Dutch-Brazilian connection would have merited a full article.

All in all, the book offers a very rich collection indeed. It has been published to a high standard by Cambridge University Press, with a beautiful picture on the outside jacket of palms, the ruins of a fortress and a rusty canon on the beach. On the inside, too, there are quite a lot of illustrations, maps and figures, but no colour photographs of the beautiful original paintings by Post and Eeckhout.

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*The Legacy of Dutch Brazil*, Edited by Michiel van Groesen, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 363 p.

## A Failed Political Experiment

### The United Kingdom of the Netherlands 1815-1830

2015 marks the bicentenary of the creation of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Between 1815 and 1830, Belgium and the Netherlands were briefly joined under William I. How did this come about and what went wrong?

Long before the last remains of the Napoleonic Empire were swept away at Waterloo and the little French emperor was banished to Saint Helena, the European superpowers had already begun to redraw the map of Europe. Great Britain was particularly in favour of creating a buffer state on the northern French border. The idea of merging the Northern and Southern Netherlands and thereby countering French expansionist tendencies actually dates back to 1805. British Prime Minister William Pitt found a willing ear in his Russian ally. In the Eight Articles of London, signed in June 1814, the superpowers secretly agreed to implement the unification, under the leadership of King William I. This agreement was then ratified at the Congress of Vienna. With the appointment of William I, the superpowers sought a return to peace, order and prosperity after two decades of power struggles and upheaval.

William reigned over the United Kingdom of the Netherlands between 1815 and 1830, ruling the land as if it were his own. The 'Functionary King' inundated the people with royal decrees, in the firm belief that he knew the way to prosperity and happiness. He wanted obedient and industrious subjects, and the church, the education system and the press were all expected to serve his government. Only industrialists and merchants were permitted some freedom of movement. He supported these members of society, sometimes even with his own capital.

William saw it as his mission to form the two combined regions into an 'intimate and complete' (*intime et complète*) amalgam, as set out in the first of the Eight Articles of London. His policies provoked misunderstanding and discontent, especially in the South, and led to short-term resistance. The main