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[et al.]

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A fluidez identitária, em razão da mobilidade das pessoas e seus líderes, leva-a a contestar a existência de uma etnia na região, como demonstram os casos dos reinos de Wambu, Mbailundu e Viye, englobados, após 1850, como Ovimbundu, denominação inexistente nos séculos anteriores (pp. 292–3). Este ponto é relevante, entre outras razões, porque aponta para o equívoco de perguntar-se porque os «africanos» escravizavam seus conterrâneos ou criticar o escravismo baseado numa suposta homogeneidade entre os povos de Angola ou qualquer outra região da África[14]. Pelo contrário, a ocorrência da escravização e do tráfico estimularam a fragmentação política (p. 290).

Com esta história de Benguela, Mariana P. Candido amplia nosso conhecimento do escravismo e do tráfico atlântico de escravizados, mas, sobretudo, traz para o centro do debate historiográfico o papel protagonista da violência, que esteve na raiz do colonialismo e da ocupação territorial na África.

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Carla Boos *et al*, *De Slavernij. Mensenhandel van de koloniale tijd tot nu*, Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Balans, 2011, 229 pp. ISBN 97894660033346
Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands. Sixty-five years of forgetting, commemorating, silencing*, Annabel Howland (transl.), Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2011, 287 pp. ISBN 9789089643537

Coming to terms with the past: slavery and the slave trade in Dutch society

Even though slavery and the slave trade in the Atlantic Ocean was a multi-national enterprise, it continues to be studied from one nation's perspective. For example, to a general audience, slavery and the slave trade is often seen as part of the American South, and not part of the Dutch colonies or the Netherlands. Indeed, slavery has only recently become part of the official high school curriculum in the Netherlands. However, this neglect is changing. Even though Dutch historians have long written specialized studies of Dutch involvement in slavery and the slave trade, media attention and general interest in the Dutch legacy has grown, particularly as it is the 150th anniversary of abolition in Surinam and the Dutch Antilles.

14 Ver a argumentação de Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Beyond the shame and the silence*, Massachusetts, Beacon, 2005, p. 62.

Whereas professionals fear to internalize historical studies, the reading and learning public seeks for personal relevancy. The three studies discussed in the review each highlight this balancing act between the public and the author. The first is a focused historical study of a slave vessel, the second, an overview of slavery and the slave trade in territories under Dutch influence meant for a general Dutch audience, and finally, the third, a book about commemorating the past in the Netherlands, especially in light of the cultural baggage of post-colonial migrants.

"On January 1, 1738 the slave vessel Leusden shipwrecked at the Mouth of the Marowijne river in Surinam." With these matter-of-fact words Leo Balai introduces his case study about the slave vessel Leusden and Dutch involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. An estimated 664 African prisoners drowned because the ship's crew was afraid that their captives might rebel and kill them. They closed the exits and the consequences were disastrous. The crew was never punished for their actions, and contemporaries and historians alike only condemned this event in terms of a disastrous financial loss for the West India Company, leading to the end of its direct involvement in the slave trade. Balai asserts that this was probably the most lethal shipwreck in human history. Although it was man made, the story of this disaster remains virtually unknown.

Unlike Marcus Rediker's *The Slave Ship. A human history*, Balai's account is calm and unexcited. It minutely recounts the history of the ship Leusden from its construction to its ultimate demise, Yet, the author's motivation is obvious: providing a precise and accurate history of all ten voyages of this vessel, based on all available primary sources and scholarly publications in Dutch and English. In this published dissertation, he wants to demonstrate as objectively as possible how this vessel was constructed and how it fared from the Dutch West India Company's perspective.

In a sense this makes the book an indictment of professional historians. His seemingly dispassionate account of the West India Company's calculations—from construction of a multi-purpose vessel (the triangle trade), the making of a tight packer (constructing a special deck on the coast of Africa), the changing ports of intakes and destinations, the subsequent difference of trade products, choice of captives (ratio men/women/children/ethnic diversity), the composition of the crew, the usage of Africans as overseers (*bombas*), the giving of a slave child to the captain for personal sale, the moving of an aging vessel from the rich chamber of Amsterdam to the poorer chamber of Groningen, frequency of rebellions, a fight with Portuguese competitors (for which ship captains are punished)—all add up to a balance of what is left over to chance and what to calculation. Half of the book thus consists of documentary appendixes and endnotes. With a chill the reader comes to understand that the drowning of the 664 Africans was an act of premeditated murder, a fact unacknowledged by both the West India Company and professional historians. Yet for Balai, the Surinamese-born former Amsterdam alderman and retired lawyer, the story is deeply personal. He recounts how his granddaughter innocently exclaims, «my granny is writing a book about a ship.» Without explicitly stating it, Balai forces us to ask the question, how do we come to terms with the colonial past?

One of the answers is to make the discussion on both the slave trade and slavery public. As part of a 2006 revision of the curriculum on Dutch history, an official commission presented fifty topics to be learned at primary and secondary schools. One of the fifty "windows" on the "canon of Dutch history" is slavery. This has generated an increased scholarly production on both slavery and the slave trade in the Atlantic, as well as the creation of media projects that can be used in classes or shown to a general audience. Thus a two-tiered television series "Slavery," for an older general audience, and "Slavery Junior," meant for a younger audience, aired on Dutch Public television in 2011. Additionally, an abbreviated two episode series (one on the slave trade, the other on slavery) was made for high school classrooms. The makers of the television series published a companion book based on the most recent historiography of the slave trade and slavery in the Netherlands and the Dutch Atlantic colonies (Dutch Brazil, Surinam, the Dutch Antilles, and establishments on the West African coast).

The purpose of both the television series and the book (*Slavery. Trade in humans from the colonial times to the present*) is refreshing: history needs to be brought alive and to be made relevant. Hence the personal is brought out in the open through stories, examples of the past, as well as evidence in the present. The book itself is subdivided into five parts. For example, part one shows slavery's precursors in the Mediterranean, from the Roman Empire through North African enslavement of Dutch sailors. This chapter brings the reader back to the early involvement in slavery and the slave trade, and specifically to the Dutch West India Company in Brazil, from its early conceptions by Willem Usselinx as a settler colony through its later development as a slave-based society when the WIC occupied North East Brazil. This history is brought to life with stories, such as the plea of a Dutchman asking his family and the local community to pay for his ransom so that he will be set free from his enslavement in North Africa. Indeed, a special fund was set up to pay off the ransom for such cases.

The book also uses stories from the WIC fortress of Elmina to describe the acquisition of slaves in Africa. The close cooperation of Dutch and local society is illustrated with stories such as that of the company director Huydecooper, who married locally, stayed in West Africa and acquired considerable wealth in the slave trade. The close interaction between Dutch slave traders and the local populations still remains visible, and their offspring are ambivalent about their part in the slave trade. For example, the series and the book highlight the Dutch-Surinamese stand-up comedian Roué Verveer who is searching for his Ashante ancestors, themselves deeply involved in the slave trade in Ghana. As in the Netherlands, such complicity is hardly discussed, but certainly triggers emotional and conflicting reactions. A similar ambivalence can be found in the middle passage, but now from the perspective of Dutch private traders and companies who brought half a million captive Africans across the Atlantic Ocean. Next to the cruel circumstances of the Middle Passage, this chapter pays considerable attention to the contemporary mentality of merchant families such as the Rotterdam-based firm Coopstad and Rochussen who openly boasted that their wealth was derived from the slave trade during a wedding party. Even

in the logbooks of slave vessels, it was recorded that if a crew member died during the Middle Passage, he would go to heaven, but if an enslaved African died, (s)he would not. The modern day descendants of these slave traders are more ambivalent. The family of a Dutch captain from Veere, Zeeland, still has the diaries and table silver that was bought from the profit of the slave trade. One family member politely states, "this was the mentality of the time," even though she was shocked by the descriptions of what occurred on board the slave vessels. Another abhorred the luxury goods, as she wanted nothing to do with her family's shameful legacy of the slave trade.

From the Middle Passage the book and series move to the plantations of Surinam and the sea salt fields of the Antilles. Again the same ambivalence shows itself among persons living in between (the descendants of slave owners and slaves) as the violence of slavery, the hardness of plantation life, and the ubiquity of revolts are depicted. In Surinam, the presence of large maroon populations (communities of runaway slaves) somewhat restricted the absolute authority of plantation owners. As a result, personal and communal acts of rebellions were prevalent, and still remembered in songs and stories.

The book ends with a discussion of the mentality of the Dutch medical world in response to abolitionism. The Netherlands was one of the last countries to abolish slavery (1863), partly because Dutch scientists refused to recognize equality between persons of African and European descent. Indeed, outside influences, such as the Dutch translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* were of crucial importance to achieving abolition. There were exceptions, of course, to the views of the scientific establishment. The late eighteenth-century scientist from Groningen, Petrus Camper, for instance, dissected bodies from two Africans to demonstrate that their skin, blood and the brains were like everybody else's. But these and similar works were still challenged. Racial overtones continued after abolition, long into the twentieth century as persons of African descent were depicted on book covers, songs and pop art as childish and less intelligent. Hence we should not be surprised that the abolition of slavery as such is not the main holiday on the island of Curacao, but rather that of a failed slave revolt.

More than the general audience production, the "junior slavery" television series continues from here into the contemporary period. What can we do about slavery and child labor today? How does a descendent from Surinam and the Antilles view him/herself in the Netherlands? The viewer sees creative high school students getting involved in a flash mob, special fund raising events, and projects to create awareness about current child labor and slavery, as well as students of Surinamese origin reinterpreting their own backgrounds. The objective of the television series and the book are not only to teach the wider audience a history lesson, but also to bring the past alive.

The colonial past remains sacred for the Netherlands, as Gert Oostindie explains in *Postcolonial Netherlands*. As a professor of Caribbean studies at the University of Utrecht, Oostindie is deeply involved with reconciling the Dutch past and the governmental policies surrounding this issue. Key to our understanding of Dutch historiography on slavery is the relationship with migrants from the current and former "overseas possessions."

Yet, only reluctantly has the state start to sponsor public monuments to acknowledge this past and Dutch multiculturalism, a process Oostindie calls a "memorial culture." And, as Oostindie elaborates in his accessible and jargon free book (or collection of essays), the Dutch case makes interesting comparisons with the post-colonial experiences of other Western European nations.

Since World War II the Netherlands has had two waves of migration that led to historical revisionism. The first wave from Indonesia came in the first five years after the war. First came formerly interned Dutch citizens and military. Then after Dutch recognition of Indonesian independence came officials and Dutch immigrants (Totoks) and their descendants, persons of mixed Indonesian background (Indos), and, reluctantly, a group of Indonesians from the Molucca archipelago who had served in the Dutch colonial army. These groups arrived in a Dutch society that was divided into "pillars." Each community was segregated by religion and political viewpoints and lived within their own circles of schools, social organizations and political parties. As a result, the Indonesian migrants could more easily retain their own identities. Nevertheless, the communities were part of the Dutch state and had to be accepted, given their ease with Dutch language and culture. In what Oostindie describes as a "post-colonial bonus," this allowed a smoother acceptance into Netherlands society.

Yet, there was little space for sympathy towards suffering in the immediate post war society as the Netherlands was doing poorly economically and all inhabitants were still suffering from the trauma of the war. Thus payment of salaries to Dutch East Indies soldiers during their internment, for example, or any a recognition of a migrant group's special status for their suffering during the war, was subordinated to the belief that the nation needed to be rebuilt first. Eventually these migrants became Dutch citizens; the Moluccans somewhat later because they imagined themselves as neither Indonesian nor Dutch, wanting to establish themselves in an independent Republic of the South Moluccas.

The immediate post war revived nationalism and economic instability of the Netherlands led to a somewhat reluctant acceptance of these abandoned communities. The post war attempts of the Dutch government to retain the Dutch East Indies as a colony was supported by a romantic vision. Indonesia, Insulinde, or the Dutch East Indies were at that time still seen with an imagination of magical hidden forces, and nostalgia in literature and historiography mixed with the East Indian Company's heroic actions during the "Golden Age" and economic and cultural development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More down-to-earth though, the surpluses from the Dutch East Indies had helped the Netherlands economy. Hence important cycles of Dutch society viewed the eventual recognition of Indonesia's independence as an utter disaster for both the Indonesians, who had lost the great leadership of their enterprising overlords, and the Dutch, who now missed the income from their former colony.

Starting in the mid-1970s, the second wave of migration from former colonies came from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. By this time the Netherlands had internally moved away from the restraining pillars to a more open, communal and welfare society, which

envisioned "tolerance" as part of its national identity. As with the case in Indonesia this came with the announcement of independence in Surinam, after which half of the population voted with their feet and left for the country of their former colonizer. Yet the main initiative for independence came from the Netherlands, whose government wanted to rid itself from governing Surinam and the Dutch Antilles (six Caribbean Islands).

Surinamese migrants, like Indonesians, were diverse, descendants of contract workers from India (Hindus), Java (Muslims), enslaved Africans (Creoles) and Maroons, each with their own histories and identities. The Dutch Antilles refused to become independent, but each of the six Caribbean islands eventually preserved their own status in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and migration streams still continue to arrive. Whereas the Surinam migrant population was mostly ethnically divided, the Antillean migrants mostly identified themselves by island. As the multi-ethnic Surinamese and Antillean migrants started moving to the Netherlands, Dutch society received direct contact with its colonial legacy of slavery.

Oostindie perceptively observes that these migrants met with Dutch policies hinging on two sets of thought. First was a reluctance to accept others who may have difficulties assimilating to Dutch society, although this was followed with an integration policy. Second was a recognition of the debt owed to these migrants because of the shared past, in turn followed by a policy of recognizing each group's individual legacies.

The author argues that, like the Indonesian migrants before, these policies led to a "post-colonial bonus." In other words, the migrants were received with privileges but also had cultural advantages (like speaking the Dutch language), and especially better access to Dutch citizenship. Moreover, in the 1970s the Dutch government was more open-minded towards righting wrongs of the past. However, in all cases the individual groups had to be vocal about their past, which ultimately was rewarded partly through a policy called "the gesture," final compensation by the end of the last millennium, especially for those of Indonesian background. The gesture was also meant as an endpoint, since the migrant communities were now considered to be integrated into Dutch society, and all moral and financial debts ended. Oostindie also points out that since we are now moving into a second generation of migrants, the memory of the past seems to fade away or merge into a holistic communal Dutch past.

Remembering the past, Oostindie underlines, has been supported through a "monument" culture. Physical monuments were connected to annual commemorative events such as the day of abolition highlighting the suffering of slavery, similar to how monuments commemorating the end of World War II highlighted the deaths during the war "lest we forget." This monument culture was further enhanced with cultural events such as the Antillean street carnival in Rotterdam and the Indonesian Pasar Malam in The Hague. Oostindie points out that we are indeed forgetting the past, as these commemorations remain a specific ethnic affair and are mostly attended by descendants of the specific population groups, some officials and a handful of interested others, with the exception of the Street Carnival which has been extended to a more general audience, with participation from many other former immigrant communities (*e.g.* from the Cape Verde Islands).

The migrant groups from the East and West Indies also influenced how the Dutch curriculum envisioned its colonial past. Among Dutch academia and government officials, the Dutch East Indies have always been seen as a more valuable and important area of study. Currently this is somewhat changing, in part related to the political pressures coming from the migrants. Indonesian migrants were part of and therefore not interested in rewriting the Dutch colonial past in the Dutch East Indies. Indonesian historians ignored the issue altogether or their work was hardly translated and known beyond specific academic cycles. There was a corresponding disinterest of Dutch academics in non-Dutch Indonesia.

Tellingly, an opposition to the practices and commemorations of the East India Company (VOC) came from the descendants of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, where the West India Company and not the VOC was active. Yet the Surinamese of African descent, who comprised about half of the Surinamese migrants, demanded at least a more open recognition of the slavery past, an apology, and reparations. Oostindie points out how personalized this was: even though each of the migrant groups have their own festivals and commemorations, one seldom sees the acknowledgment of each other's cultural and memorial activities. Surinamese of African descent, for example, did not address slavery and the slave trade in the Antilles. Yet, under pressure of these demands, slavery and the slave trade did end up in the Dutch history curriculum for high schools, "the canon of Dutch history," exactly how this needs to be studied will remain controversial.

Oostindie has to be commended for comparing the Dutch experience to other European countries, most specifically Britain, France and Portugal. Less at ease with the Portuguese case, however, he does make a thoughtful observation that the lack of a large migrant population related to the slave trade has left this issue less open than in France and Britain, and that the position of the «retornados» (Angola Mozambique) was quite similar to the "pied noirs" (Algeria) and Dutch who had served/lived in Indonesia. His key point is that the debates among British and French academia, governmental policies and the culture of memory were closely interrelated to the migrant populations from the colonies.

The three books remind the reader how much history continues to be deeply personal, and hence to be very much alive. Gert Oostindie, for instance, starts his book with his life story, how he never imagined he would marry a woman of a different background and ancestry, and how he, as a Caribbean historian, would become deeply involved in the public awareness of the colonial past. Yet even though all three books use and address the parallels of experiences of the slave trade and slavery, they are by their nature strongly related to their own stories. Indeed, it is the presence of the descendants of the slave trade and slavery in the Netherlands that make this most relevant. The need for this relevancy also had pitfalls. History was never meant to be restricted to one's own story. As the international slave trade databank continues to demonstrate, much is gained by combining all nations' and all communities' stories into a communal past, as the personal has no borders.

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