

could become kin, and individuals like John Johnstone, thousands of miles away from the women and men who helped to define him, could feel utterly alone amid crowds of people.

Amanda E. Herbert, Christopher Newport University

PAUL R. SELLIN. *Treasure, Treason and the Tower: El Dorado and the Murder of Sir Walter Raleigh*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. Pp. 338. \$64.95 (cloth).
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Sir Walter Raleigh cut a dashing figure in the Elizabethan world and continues to inspire heroic treatments today. He had a necessarily more muted Jacobean career, however, having found himself enmeshed in an absurd plot against England's new king and having spent a decade in the Tower of London. Casting himself in the role of one of Queen Elizabeth's heroic naval men, he returned from a voyage in search of South American sources of riches for his queen in 1596 to promote schemes for exploiting the relative weakness of Spain's hold near the Orinoco. Two decades later, he used that same personal experience to barter for his release from the Tower in order to undertake another voyage to the region. Little did he know, however, that George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), his supposed ally in the scheme to exploit the riches of the Orinoco region, would betray him in his hour of need. In *Treasure, Treason and the Tower*, his breathless study of the "cold case" of Buckingham's betrayal of Raleigh, Paul Sellin brings together several sorts of evidence to vindicate Raleigh's efforts to secure mineral wealth for his monarch and his nation. Readers will find some of this evidence more persuasive than the rest.

Sellin tells three stories associated with Raleigh's life. In the first, he marshals textual evidence, comparative bibliographic evidence, empirical evidence, and logic to assess Raleigh's claims about discovering gold on the Orinoco and establishing alliances with indigenous peoples in the name of Queen Elizabeth. This story takes up the bulk of Sellin's book. In essence, Sellin carefully reads Raleigh's *Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Emphyre of Guiana* against modern navigational charts, recent geological surveys, lunar calendars, and his own excursion into the Orinoco delta to determine the accuracy of Raleigh's claims about the 1595 expedition. Purporting to be initially skeptical of Raleigh's veracity, Sellin makes a "comparison of statements in the *Discoverie* with my chart of the Gulf of Paria" (29) and eventually accepts that "the narrative of some of his adventures along the river could be trusted" (80). Having hired boats and crew to trace Raleigh's voyage up the Orinoco, Sellin combines his own personal experiences of the river journey with his knowledge of Elizabethan surveying, mining practices, military transportation, and Spanish records to conclude that "the accuracy of the *Discoverie* showed it to be fundamentally admirable, its basic veracity undisputable, and most of the critical events and places recorded therein eminently verifiable" (215). Although readers may find Sellin's prose somewhat ostentatious and may be taken aback to find a phrase like "I telephoned for a taxi" (137) in the midst of a book about Raleigh, this careful piecing together of Raleigh's trip up the Orinoco reads like a wonderful adventure tale.

Sellin's second Raleigh story combines an archival experience in the far North with the direct experience of travel on the equator. Sellin describes (and transcribes with English translations) a collection of diplomatic exchanges sent from Michel Le Blon to the Swedish chancellor, Axel Oxenstierna, concerning a secret agreement between George Villiers and Gustavus Adolphus to pursue the project of extracting the mineral wealth Raleigh had claimed would be found along the Orinoco. Although Buckingham's assassination ultimately scuttled the plan, the duke's claims to possess detailed directions to the mine Raleigh had seen in 1595 and

had sought unsuccessfully to find again in 1618 persuaded the Swedish king to support an expedition to the region. In his 1645 letter, Le Blon referred to a contract that the Swedish king and the impoverished and unpopular English duke had concluded shortly before his murder in 1628 and to directions to Raleigh's gold mine and ciphers that had passed to him from Villiers. The documents Sellin describes include Le Blon's correspondence and the contract itself, with the precise location of the mine in ciphers. Armed with this information, Sellin undertakes his own expedition up the Orinoco to verify the location of Raleigh's mine. He describes arriving in the vicinity of the mine with transcripts of these documents in hand and, performing a careful comparison of the French and Latin documents and examining them with the geological and topographical formations he observed from the river in mind, concludes that the mine was located on Cerro Sorondo. Reflecting on his personal knowledge of gold discovered in California, together with his firsthand experience of "the topography, the hydrography, and the toponomy around Sorondo" (112), Sellin persuasively concludes that Raleigh's gold mine must have been located in this area.

In the final tale, Sellin tells of his investigation of Raleigh's search for gold and the documents related to the mine's location. He argues that Villiers, the ambitious royal favorite, betrayed Raleigh in order to secure wealth for himself. Having risen rapidly to a position of influence over the king, Villiers was in a position to know the information Raleigh had provided to the Privy Council to justify his release from the Tower for his voyage to the Orinoco. When the expedition ended in disaster, Raleigh had naively trusted Villiers to second his appeals to powerful allies for leniency. When Raleigh ultimately went to his execution, having failed peacefully to secure the gold mine for England's king, Villiers had documents in his possession that should have vindicated him. Instead, he turned his back on the adventurer. The story Sellin tells here, of the grasping courtier who "cold-bloodedly let Raleigh go to the scaffold on charges of fraud" (236), is the most conventional part of the book. Combined with the adventure tale of re-creating Raleigh's first trip up the Orinoco and the validation of Raleigh's claims about the gold mine to be found there, this final section of *Treasure, Treason and the Tower* should serve to vindicate Sir Walter Raleigh as a man firmly dedicated to his country's good.

Andrew Fleck, San Jose State University

WILLIAM B. STEPHENS. *The Seventeenth-Century Customs Service Surveyed: William Culliford's Investigation of the Western Ports, 1682–84*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012. Pp. 256. \$124.95 (cloth).

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One of the most neglected aspects of the economic history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain is illicit trade. In most general accounts, it is completely ignored or simply mentioned in passing. Yet it was a massive problem for the evolving, revenue-hungry, British state and preoccupied politicians throughout this period. Indeed, such was the extent of this alternative economy that it exceeded the legal sale of a whole array of commodities, ranging from the new addictive delights of tobacco and tea to more traditional items like spirits and various textiles. One reason for its historical neglect is the lack of data charting its volume and extent. Invariably, for economic historians, where there are no numbers, there is no history.

We may lack the figures, but luckily, we have qualitative sources such as William B. Stephens's excellent overview of William Culliford's survey of the Western ports between 1682 and 1684. Culliford was a trusted employee of the king's Customs service, and his report is the only surviving one of this period. It is bound in two volumes at the National