

Michiel de Jong, Gerrit Knaap and Henk den Heijer. *Oorlogen Overzee: Militair Optreden door Compagnie en Staat Buiten Europa 1595-1814*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2015. 499 pp. ISBN: 9789089533586. €45.00.

The military history of Early Modern Dutch overseas expansion is still an often overlooked aspect in the histories on the Dutch chartered companies. The history of the Dutch chartered companies (the East India Company or VOC and the West India Company or WIC) is mostly written from the perspective of trade and commerce rather than warfare and conquest. The VOC, for example, is more often hailed as the “world’s first multinational”, rather than as a colonial state in Asia. This book sets out to challenge this narrative and underlines the importance of the military dimensions of the operations of both companies, and it does so successfully. For the authors, this is not their first foray into this field. Henk den Heijer was one of the editors of a recent volume on the military history of the Netherlands in the Early Modern Atlantic world and Gerrit Knaap, in his recent inaugural lecture in Utrecht focused specifically on the use of force as a key ingredient in the VOC’s success.¹ This new volume, however, takes the study of the military history of Early Modern Dutch expansion to a whole new level. Just under five hundred pages long, copiously illustrated and covering activities in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, it is encyclopaedic in scope and will act as the standard reference-work for the topic for the foreseeable future.

The book is divided into two roughly equal parts. A short introduction provides a common background to the military revolution debate and the importance of studying overseas warfare. The first chapter presents the common background in the Eighty Years’ War for military activities in both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The subsequent seven chapters (2-8) form the first part of the book and focus on the expansion of the VOC in Asia and South Africa. Of these seven chapters, four present a chronological overview of the operations in which VOC forces (and its successors) were active in the period between the founding of the company in 1602 and the fall of Java to the British in 1811. The final three chapters of this part of the book have a different orientation and explore specific themes throughout the entire period under review. These chapters focus on: the military labour of sailors and soldiers; the military technologies and infrastructures of ships, fortifications and firepower; and finally on the daily life on board ships and in garrisons. The second part of the book focuses on the Atlantic and is structured similarly to the first part of the book. The major difference being the substitution of a chapter on daily life by a chapter on non-European enemies and allies of the Dutch in the Atlantic (chapter 12). The whole work is topped off by what is perhaps a rather short conclusion for such a great work. This is the second volume to be published in a larger series on the military history of the Netherlands by the Dutch Department of Defense’s Institute for Military History. The audience of the book is thus not merely academic historians, but a broader Dutch public interested in overseas and military history.

The book is innovative in a number of important ways. In the first place, dealing with both the VOC and WIC in the scope of a single book is still very rare in the historiography of the companies. This is a great strength of the book, as it allows historians to begin to compare the uses of violence within American, African and Asian colonies established by the Dutch

¹ Victor Entoven, H. den Heijer and H. Jordaen, *Geweld in de West: Een Militaire Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Wereld, 1600-1800* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013); G. Knaap, *De Core Business van de VOC: Markt, Macht en Mentaliteit Vanuit Overzees Perspectief* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 2014).

companies. In the second place, the extension of the temporal frame beyond the collapse of the companies into the early nineteenth century is interesting. This is perhaps even more rare in Dutch historiography, where studies mostly end with the fall of the old Republic in 1795 or begin with the creation of the Kingdom in 1814-1815. Including the years under the Batavian Republic, the Kingdom Holland and Napoleonic France allows for a better understanding of the continuities and changes after the fall of the chartered companies. It is to be hoped that the volume in the series dealing with the colonial warfare after 1815 will link up well with this volume.

Of course, some choices can be questioned. One can, for example, question whether the strict geographic division in an “Eastern” and “Western” half of the book provides the best way of structuring the whole work. The influence which events in East and West might have had one another are obscured somewhat in this approach. Perhaps alternating east-west chapters in a generally chronological order would have worked better in this regard. This is perhaps even more so in the case of the thematic chapters. These are perhaps amongst the most interesting in the book, as these chapters lend themselves perhaps best to be engaged in academic debates on the military revolution and its importance for Early Modern European expansion. A more direct comparison of how both companies recruited local soldiers (to give but one example), would have been fascinating.

This criticism cannot, however, detract from the great value of this work. Covering over two hundred years of crucial but ill-studied history spread out over five continents, *Oorlogen Overzee* will remain the definitive reference-work on Dutch military history overseas in the Early Modern period for the foreseeable future. The authors have pulled off the difficult feat of writing a book that is both of interest to a larger interested audience as well as to academics working in this field. It is to be hoped that the fact that it is written in Dutch will not become a barrier for it being read outside of the Netherlands. It is also hoped that it will serve as a starting point for historians delving further into the topics studied in this book and that it will reinvigorate the debate on the military revolution overseas and its importance with examples drawn from the Dutch cases.

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MIDDLE EAST

Matthew S. Hopper. *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015. 320 pp. ISBN: 9780300192018. \$85.00.

Matthew Hopper has written an important book—one that deserves a wide readership among historians of the Indian Ocean, to be sure, but also by historians of the Arabian Peninsula and of global capitalism. The product of a Ph.D. dissertation, Hopper’s book reads like anything but that; it is an impressively polished piece of work, worthy of inclusion in the libraries of specialists and the general public alike. Indeed, the book takes an incredibly difficult subject and manages to present a narrative that is both simple in its outlines and compelling in its broad dimensions and implications—a coup if there ever was one.

First, to summarize the book: after an introduction that is in part colourful vignettes and in part a survey of the historiographical lay of the land, Hopper begins by charting out, in broad