



Jaap Jacobs, Louis H. Roper (eds.), ***The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley*** (New York: SUNY Press, 2014, xi + 265 pp., ISBN 978 1 4384 5099 5).

Within the flourishing field of Atlantic History, most studies from the past decades focus on the position of a particular nation within the Atlantic world. The historiographical emphasis on the various Atlantic empires, such as the English or the Spanish, has resulted in invaluable studies. Even though Atlanticists agree that Atlantic History is also in need of studies from a transnational point of view, there are relatively few studies that transcend the perspective of one European nation. Taking a geographical area as unit of analysis is a possible way of overcoming national limitations. By analyzing the development of young colonial societies in the Hudson Valley, *The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley* has the potential to do just that.

The collection of articles originates from a symposium on ‘Henry Hudson, New Netherland, and Atlantic History’, organized as part of the four-hundredth anniversary commemorations of Hudson’s arrival in the Hudson River. This West India Company expedition led to the establishment of the Dutch colony of New Netherland and its main settlement New Amsterdam – present day New York. The papers presented by experts in the field of New Netherland and early American history are now published with the goal to ‘provide teachers and others interested in this period of the region’s past with an in-depth introduction and ready reference to the issues involved in the expansion of European interests to the Hudson River and the colonization of its environs’ (ix).

The volume is divided into four parts, of which the first focuses on the ‘European Worlds’. The articles describe the general history of the Dutch and the English Empires in the seventeenth century, and the available cartographic knowledge during the time that Henry Hudson set out for his now famous exploration in 1609. This part is particularly useful for readers who are unfamiliar with either the Dutch or the English seventeenth-century context. The volume’s next part focuses on ‘American Worlds’, with an emphasis on European-indigenous encounters in New Netherland’s early decades. Starting with an introduction on the Dutch and English colonization of the area, the articles illustrate especially how the lives and societies of indigenous peoples changed because of their dealings with European traders, and how they in return impacted the development of European settlements and colonial economies. The second half of the volume is concerned with the development of the colonies on the one hand and with the position

of those colonies within the wider Atlantic World on the other. While the third part's contributions on the colonies focus on the European character of these colonies, the final part of the book returns to the indigenous perspective and adds to this by valuable insights on the position of African slaves in New Netherland.

This volume is a successful introduction to many themes related to New Netherland history from an Atlantic perspective. The articles are varied yet thematically coherent, and most provide an abundance of references for further reading, particularly to secondary literature. However, *The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley* does not entirely fulfill the expectations this title raises, as the emphasis of the articles is on New Netherland in the first half of the seventeenth century. The transition from New Amsterdam to New York in 1664 and its consequences for the Hudson Valley feature only modestly in the volume, specifically in the article of Timothy Shannon on 'The Hudson Valley in an Atlantic Context'. Given the occasion on which the authors of this volume presented their research, the focus on the early seventeenth century is understandable. The results are broad-ranged and well informed. Nevertheless, through this focus on New Netherland the content of the articles is predominantly oriented on the position of one colonizing nation – the Dutch – in relation to their new environment and the peoples they met here. Extending the period of focus to include the English possession of New Netherland more explicitly would have given the opportunity to investigate how much a specific environment influenced the development of a European colony. This could have led to the question how much was uniquely Dutch about this particular colony.

The inclusion in this volume of a concise article on the French Empire by Leslie Choquette demonstrates the potential benefits of a transnational comparative approach. The Dutch are traditionally known as a people that stood out among other European colonizers in the Atlantic. They were traders rather than colonizers, who attracted only few settlers in their American territories. Choquette's comparison of New Netherland with scholarship on the French activities in Canada raises the question whether this was a characteristic specific to the Dutch. The French in Canada needed only few European settlers as long as they concentrated on trade with the indigenous population. Their settlements were accordingly small. Only when their relations with the indigenous peoples soured, more French laborers were necessary and the French presence expanded significantly. This article shows how important it is to investigate more than specific national characteristics for explaining the development of the Dutch settlements in the Atlantic.

When considered from the perspective of studies on New Netherland, this book provides an important contribution to this literature by including articles that explicitly aim to incorporate the role of indigenous and African peoples in the development of the colony. Studies on New Netherland often focus on Dutch or European interactions in the colony. This volume brings together that scholarship with authors who show that the Europeans were only some of the people that shaped the development of the Hudson Valley. It thus successfully places New Netherland in an Atlantic context. That makes this

volume a valuable addition to the available studies on the colony that resulted from Hudson's explorations.

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