

into the history of these empires themselves, the silence on dissenting voices is noticeable. This silence becomes louder in the latter part of the book, where the formal colonialism of the modern period plays a larger role. Likewise, little attention is paid to the mobility of people and ideas. Borders, after all, are notoriously porous. That the existence of an international civil society does not appear until page 474 as part of the post-imperial world, is telling. Overall, readers will enjoy five portraits of empire, painted from a wealth of well-chosen literature. They will not find a synthesis or even a conclusion. For that, the five empires present too vast a canvas. Even hints of comparisons across empires are made with some hesitation (p. 266, for instance). “Have I been too kind to empire?” Kumar rhetorically asks in the preface (p. xv). His answer is “perhaps”, this reviewer’s answer is “yes”. Had this book indeed been confined to the question of how imperial elites saw themselves as carriers and missionaries of universal civilization – in short, to visions of empire – the answer would have been different. In its current form, however, this is a more ambitious project that reaches deep into the workings of empire. This makes the exclusion of forms of resistance and dissent, whether from individuals, groups, or populations, correspondingly problematic.

Jutta Wimpler: *The Sun King’s Atlantic. Drugs, Demons and Dyestuffs in the Atlantic World, 1640–1730*, Leiden: Brill Publisher 2017, 229 pp.

Reviewed by
Alexander Engel, Göttingen

Global history in the age of colonialism tends to be interpreted in terms of a European transformation of the world. Yet undoubtedly, as a consequence of new trans-continental involvements, European societies and economics transformed as well. This is very much the central point of emphasis in Jutta Wimpler’s book in which she studies the material and conceptual impact of the Atlantic world on France from the mid-seventeenth century to the 1720s. More specifically, she is concerned with the impact of goods and ideas (“drugs, demons, and dyestuffs”) that were flowing into France due to its engagement in America and Africa (and also Asia).

The book consists of a ten-page introduction, six main chapters, a short epilogue, and an annex of tables with import data for different commodities. While it makes sense how the chapters are ordered, the reader is explicitly free to pick and choose, as she or he would from an anthology. The six parts do not build on each other like stair steps: they approach the problem of the Atlantic worlds’ impact on France from different perspectives, studying different aspects, which are in part wholly independent of each other. Each chapter is

full of interesting insights, interpretations and hypotheses, which even if one might not all agree with, are generally worth discussing.

Chapter 2 starts by analysing selected French port records, for the 1720s, to get a picture of the range of commodities brought in from the Americas and Africa. Judging from the data collected, sugar and indigo from French Caribbean made up most of the value of the transatlantic imports, but also cocoa, cotton, tobacco, other dyestuffs as well as hides and fur come into view. Wimpler correctly points to the very limited reliability of the numbers, and indeed it seems that products from the realm of other colonial powers are heavily underrepresented. This is especially true for a group of commodities Wimpler gives broad attention to, i.e. dyestuffs. British logwood and Spanish cochineal hardly make a dent in the data: a comparison with imports to Britain or Hamburg for that time could have revealed that they played a much bigger role in commerce than the French port books suggested.

This, however, would only have strengthened Wimpler's argument about the instrumental role transatlantic products beyond sugar had on European industry and consumption. Chapter 3 mainly deals with the "colour revolution", i.e. the introduction of new dyes in European dyeing (and textile printing). As in other parts of the book, there is a strong focus on the French court (it's about the "Sun King's" Atlantic after all!), it is surprising that this aspect is largely absent in this chapter. One would have expected to hear more about the logic behind and effects of Colbert's 1669 rules for dyers, which specified in detail which materials had to be used (the accompany-

ing "Instruction générale pour la teinture des laines" of 1672 was, for decades, considered all over Europe the standard work in dyeing).

Chapter 4 continues the exercise to look at less prominent goods that changed everyday lives in small ways, here with a view on medication, food and cosmetics. It particularly shows that while certain foreign foodstuffs became ever more common – both in terms of volume and in terms of the parts of the population that consumed them –, the "nouvelle cuisine" strove to include new, still exotic and expensive components to stay exclusive and elitist. Both in chapters 3 and 4, products from Africa are analysed along with those from the Americas (gum for the textile industry, grey amber for perfume making).

Chapter 5 links a change in medical thought – the rise of iatrochemistry over humoralism ("Galenism"), a change that was particularly favoured at the French court – with the rise of botany as a colonial science. This entailed the installation of botanical gardens around the world, in the quest to find new vegetable substances, not least with potential medical applications. Chapter 6 asks for the representation of America(ns) and Africa(ns) on stage and in print (more specifically: in court theatre and state-sponsored newspapers), to show their relative neglect compared to Asia[ns]. Chapter 7, finally, discusses religious concepts, i.e. how the French tried to frame American and African worlds in terms of a Christian worldview, a Christian framework of religious ideas, and how these concepts, in turn, adapted to the world they encountered.

Considering that the book was written as a dissertation, it is surprisingly lean (181

pages of text). That should not be interpreted as lack of effort, though, but rather welcomed as conciseness. Wimpler explores very different avenues of how French society transformed because of its involvements in the Atlantic world, so following Blaise Pascal's dictum that you need time to make texts rather shorter than longer, a book of both such scope and concise brevity is not easily and quickly written and published. Still, at some points, more context to the examples chosen, some comparisons to other countries, and/or a broader grounding in adjacent literature would have strengthened the argument. The book has a decidedly anthological character, and the short epilogue cannot overcome this. Depending on taste and expectations, one could frame this as a shortcoming, a lack of a more overarching analysis. Still, like a well-composed bouquet of flowers, it is much more than the sum of its parts and well worth looking at. A caveat would be, that the bouquet is an expensive one and that it contains one unpleasant component: The quality of the nine diagrams is poor. They are small (not using the width of the page) with miniscule fonts, and they are washed out in print, which makes them very hard to decipher. For a book of two hundred and a few pages, its price is already breathtaking. Even if the book is otherwise of fine printing quality, given the price, such blunders look ludicrous. Nevertheless, it should not detract from the fact that Julia Wimpler has written a highly interesting, readable, and thought-provoking book.

Kenneth N. Owens/Alexander Yu. Petrov: Empire Maker. Aleksandr Baranov and Russian Colonial Expansion into Alaska and Northern California, Seattle: University of Washington Press 2015, 360 pp.

Reviewed by
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Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov served as the virtual imperial viceroy of Russian America for almost three decades from 1790 to 1817. He supervised Russia's colonial venture when Russia's fur-trade business in the North Pacific expanded from Kodiak Island to south-eastern Alaska and northern California and trade relations were monopolized by the Russian-American Company. Kenneth N. Owens' book is the first full-length scholarly biography of Baranov and a welcome addition to the growing literature on Russian America. Aleksandr Andreevich led an eventful life. He grew up in Kargopol', a merchant town in northern Russia, born into a wealthy merchant family. In his thirties, he moved to Irkutsk together with his wife and brother. Here, in the capital of Eastern Siberia, he pursued different business ventures and became involved with the fur-trading merchants. Having lost most of the fortune he had acquired in Siberia, Baranov accepted the post of resident Chief Manager in Alaska for the North Eastern Company, when offered to him by its managing director, Grigorii Shelikhov. After a dramatic journey, which included