

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  
Susanna Rabow-Edling, Uppsala

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

being shipwrecked, he reached Kodiak Island in 1791 and assumed command of the Company's business. Owens describes how Baranov supervised the Company's hunting and trading activities, including his efforts to extend operations into the mainland territories of south-central and south-eastern Alaska and conducting explorations to search for new fur-producing territories. The book ends with an interesting account of Russia's expansion beyond Alaska, discussing trade relations with California's Spanish residents and with Anglo-American merchant shipmasters.

Owens portrays Baranov as an energetic, resourceful and charismatic leader, who successfully led Russia's fur-trade business as well as its colonial expansion into Alaska and northern California, with very little support from the homeland. He had to deal with various misfortunes and disasters almost single-handedly (disgruntled workers, Alutiiq rebellion, disagreement with missionaries, insurgents, war with the Tlingits, foreign rivals, injuries), always short of manpower and supplies. Nevertheless, he generated huge profits for the company and its shareholders.

The author aims to provide an improved understanding of Baranov and his administration. To this end, he devotes much space to refuting criticism against the Chief Manager's conduct raised by Company employees and, especially, by the Russian Orthodox missionaries. They accused him of immoral behaviour and of mistreating Alutiiq peoples. Owens argues that the missionaries were influenced by a rigid moralistic outlook and shows that their critique was instigated by disgruntled employees.

Another important objective is to gain a fuller understanding of the Company's relations with the Alutiiq peoples of the Kodiak Islands and Chugach Bay and the Tlingit peoples of south-eastern Alaska. Unfortunately, despite good intentions, Owen is only partly successful here. While he does include a Tlingit viewpoint in the description of the Sitka Sound War, making use of a compilation of oral histories, the voices of the Alutiiq peoples are not heard. Other missing voices are those of Native women. Here Owens could have made use of Gwen A. Miller's book "Kodiak Kreol".<sup>1</sup> The book also contains some unsubstantiated remarks in relation to women that appear out of place (for example p. 264).

Most importantly, in its efforts to provide a sympathetic account of Baranov, the author lacks a critical perspective depicting its subject in too positive a light. Baranov forced Alutiiq peoples to work and hunt for The Russian-American Company and deprived Tlingit peoples of their homeland. Yet Owen ascribes to him no responsibility for the disastrous consequences of the fur-trade and Russian colonisation for Native Alaskans. It is noticeable that when it comes to the consequences of empire, the dominating actor-oriented approach of the book is replaced by a structure-oriented approach, where Baranov's actions are governed by structures beyond his control. Furthermore, the contrast between the empathetic merchant Baranov and the "arrogant navy aristocrats," who succeeded him, is exaggerated. The building of empire was often motivated by commercial interests and Baranov's management was governed by profit, not by altruism. He was evidently a clever and skilful entrepre-

neur, but he was also unscrupulous. What is more, some of the “navy aristocrats” in fact tried to improve conditions for the indigenous people when they served as Chief Managers, although they did so in a patronizing manner.

The book is based on careful consideration of a wide range of sources including new archival findings and is written in an engaging and accessible style. It provides an important contribution to our knowledge about the Russian-American Company and of the early epoch of Russian America. Above all, it offers new insights into and a fuller understanding of the character and conduct of Aleksandr Baranov and his administration. It is relevant both to historians of Russian America and Global Historians with an interest in comparative experiences of colonization, especially those concerned with the fur-trade business and colonial expansion.

#### Note

- 1 G. A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol. Communities of Empire in Early Russian America*, Ithaca, N.Y. 2010.

**James Alexander Dun: *Dangerous Neighbors. Making the Haitian Revolution in Early America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016, 352 pp.**

**Elizabeth Maddock Dillon / Michael J. Drexler (eds.), *The Haitian Revolution and the early United States*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016, 432 S.**

Reviewed by  
Andy Cabot, Paris

Revolution and the history of the early American republic has been among the most researched topic in the U.S academia, especially since the bicentennial of Haiti’s independence in 2004. This growing interest has led to a flurry of collective volumes on the global impact of Haiti during the crucial years of the Age of Revolutions from the early 1790s through to the Congress of Vienna.<sup>1</sup> For some, this has led to considering Haiti as the “final frontier” of historical research. Yet, to account for this repositioning of Haiti and its revolution at the centre of academic debates – one that transcends particular disciplines and fields – a strong suggestion would be the return of a “Haitian” turn – first located by Joseph Celucien in the writings of African American intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century – in the present U.S academia, but this time with a fiercer post-colonial stance.<sup>2</sup>