



The Parry Annual Lecture



DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER
FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Cátia Antunes (Leiden University),
“De-nationalizing empire: Dutch
involvement in the Early Modern
British, French, and Spanish
empires”

September 18, 2023, 4:30pm—6:30pm
CGIS South 050, Harvard University,
1730 Cambridge St, Cambridge, MA
Thomas Chan-Soo Kang Room

Please email Professor Tamar Herzog for more information:
therzog@fas.harvard.edu

Early Modern European empires are portrayed and perceived as nationally geared enterprises, as entangled spaces at the peripheries and as zones of contact. In the Netherlands, these perceptions have filtered into the public debate that seeks to define material and immaterial responsibilities for the colonial past. What the historiographical perceptions, academic portrayals and public debate seem, however, to ignore is the role played by foreigners (being non-subjects of a specific king or republic) in exploiting the empires of other countries. It is thus pertinent to enquire to how and why Dutch entrepreneurs (being those taking risks in matters of trade or production, introducing innovations, making decisions based on information that others did not possess and searching for opportunities where most perceived risk) participated in exploiting the English, French and Iberian empires, as Dutch firms are particularly prominent in the European colonial landscape. Since Dutch entrepreneurs engaged in exploiting the resources of those other countries, what is the future of the public debate in the Netherlands, and Europe at large, regarding a shared responsibility for the colonial past?

The answer(s) to these questions can be found in the multiple public and private archives that house extensive collections of the firms that operated from the Dutch Republic into the four largest empires in Western Europe. By combining original and recently uncovered archival sources pertaining to the relevant men (and some women), businesses and activities and their relationships with fellow traders, investors and political powers *in situ*, this project carries the seed to radically change commonly held perceptions regarding Dutch colonial participation and how these perceptions are often filtered into the public debate. This socio-economic entanglement of empires may have resulted, I hypothesize, in a shared European culture of exploitation that is impossible to disentangle within public debates that remain nationally bound. Furthermore, and unsurprisingly, Dutch entrepreneurs were not unique in preferring the empire of others to earn their fortunes.

Please email Professor Tamar Herzog for more information: therzog@fas.harvard.edu