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Thompson, Mark L.

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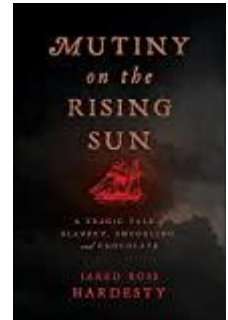
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Jared Ross Hardesty. *Mutiny on the Rising Sun: A Tragic Tale of Slavery, Smuggling, and Chocolate.* New York: New York University Press, 2021. xii + 267 pp. \$25.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4798-1248-6.



Reviewed by Mark L. Thompson (University of Groningen)

Published on H-Early-America (November, 2022)

Commissioned by Patrick Luck (Florida Polytechnic University)

Over the last twenty-five years historians have revealed not only that smuggling was endemic to the early modern Atlantic world but that in a real sense smuggling *constituted* it. Although metropolitan officials might have imagined their dispersed empires as tightly bounded legal, political, and economic orders subject to their own control, in practice trade routinely flowed across colonial and imperial boundaries with little regard for the mercantilist rules (or rulers) that nominally constrained and regulated it. Merchants, captains, sailors, settlers, and local officials collaborated on a massive scale in this “informal,” “contraband,” or “illegal” trade that provided goods to consumers at lower cost, fostered the growth of shipping and related trades, garnered wealth for its organizers and facilitators, and promoted interdependencies across diverse locations and populations.

Most of the recent historiography on smuggling either has taken a macroscopic transatlantic view or has focused on a particular colony or set of colonies. Often the colonies in question have

been Dutch.[1] In *Mutiny on the Rising Sun: A Tragic Tale of Slavery, Smuggling, and Chocolate* Jared Ross Hardesty draws on this Dutch and Atlantic research but offers something new: a micro-historical account of a single smuggling venture and the wide cast of characters who were involved in and touched by it. If most contraband trade was a prosaic affair that attracted little notice, this ill-starred voyage from Barbados to Suriname in 1743 proved in several respects to be quite the opposite, as it led to murder trials, official investigations, gory printed accounts, and transcontinental legal wrangling. Working from the long paper trail that followed in the *Rising Sun*'s bloody wake, Hardesty and a team of researchers in New England and the Netherlands (in particular, Ramona Negrón, a doctoral candidate in history at Leiden University) have been able to trace out the story in many directions through extensive archival research. The result is a detailed account that weaves together multiple historical threads into a well-constructed narrative.

Although the book calls itself a tragedy, it borrows its form (and appearance) from true crime with a splash of gothic horror. The dust jacket is printed in muddy black and brown tones with blood-red accents (while the cloth cover beneath is bright red with golden print along the spine). True to form, the introduction begins with an apparently placid but foreboding scene—the *Rising Sun*'s boatswain steering the ship on a calm June night—but by the third page the captain, supercargo, and clerk have been stabbed about twenty times, chopped with an axe, sliced with a cutlass, and, in the case of the captain, thrown overboard, “scream[ing] as he plunged into the dark abyss” (pp. 3-4). Along with the introduction, an epilogue, two appendices, and more than fifty pages of endnotes, the book has six chapters that explore the contexts and aftereffects of the violent mutiny and offer close investigations of the individuals who were involved. Four focus on the key actors in the story: “The Captain,” “The Cartel,” “The Cargo,” and “The Crew”; while two concluding chapters narrate proceedings after the mutiny (“Endings”) and their resolution (“Aftermaths”). The first appendix briefly addresses Hardesty's use of circumstantial evidence to argue that the *Rising Sun* was engaged in “a clandestine slave trading voyage” (p. 177). The much longer second appendix includes selections of English printed accounts about the mutiny as well as full transcriptions and translations (by Negrón) of the testimony that Dutch officials in Suriname recorded during their investigations in 1743.

The epilogue, meanwhile, offers a fascinating account of the origins of the book, which began as an earnest effort to learn more about the namesake of “Captain Jackson's Historic Chocolate Shop,” a tourist attraction and heritage site associated with the Old North Church along the Freedom Trail in Boston. In a strange turn of events, the research for the book (sponsored in part by the candy company Mars Wrigley Confectionary) actually led to the shutting down of the chocolate shop. Research by Hardesty, Negrón, and fellow

Leiden historian Karwan Fatah-Black had revealed that as well as being a cacao smuggler Captain Newark Jackson was also a slave owner and a slave trafficker. Today the eighteenth-century Clough House that once marketed historic chocolate is home to a colonial-style print shop and an artisanal gift store. Captain Jackson's lurid past has been well scrubbed away.

The story of Captain Jackson and the *Rising Sun* lives on in Hardesty's deeply researched account, which makes good on its promise to show the connections between chocolate, smuggling, and slavery. In retelling the mutiny as the story of a true crime, Hardesty is keen for the reader to view Jackson and his associates in Boston, Barbados, Paramaribo, and London as engaged in activities that were both illegal and immoral—that is, illicit in both senses of the word. This stance certainly seems justifiable given that the contents of the ship at the time of the mutiny included not only (smuggled) cloth, sugar, coffee, and cacao, but also fifteen African captives, most of whom were children who had been captured and then sold as slaves to the *Rising Sun*'s sponsors by Akan slavers at Anomabu, a port town along the Gold Coast (as Hardesty describes in the third chapter). The *Rising Sun*'s voyage between Barbados and Suriname was in fact an extension of its previous slave trading voyage to the Gold Coast.

In this respect, the voyage represents a single example of a broader phenomenon with greater effects. “Slavery was the glue that held the smuggling ring together,” Hardesty writes, and “slavery lay at the heart of this world of smuggling” (pp. 72, 5). Tropical commodities as well as the laborers who produced them were bought and sold through these contraband networks. Smuggling, he argues, was rooted in the “exploitation of bound African and Indigenous bodies” whose violently expropriated labor ultimately “generated the wealth that laid the foundation for a modern industrial, capitalist economy.” By joining together Atlantic commerce with Atlantic slavery, smug-

gling ventures such as the *Rising Sun*'s were fundamental to "the rise of racial capitalism" (p. 5).

In this light Hardesty offers a more sympathetic portrait of the murdering mutineers than the outwardly respectable victims who led the voyage and were poised to profit from it (such as church-going chocolatier Captain Jackson, the focus of the first chapter, and his business partners, whose activities are profiled in the second chapter). Piecing together different and sometimes contradictory accounts of the sailors' backgrounds in the fourth chapter, Hardesty suggests that because the mutineers were described as "Portuguese Negroes" and "mulattoes" in English and Dutch accounts, they may have attacked their English officers in response to the exploitation they had experienced as non-white and/or non-English maritime workers within the transatlantic slave trade. Although Hardesty acknowledges that the mutineers probably planned to sell the enslaved children along with the ship's cargo when they reached their intended destination at Orinoco, he also implies that the mutiny represented a sort of rebellion against racial capitalism. The argument here is suggestive on the whole but also speculative in many particulars. Likewise, while the broader historiographical claim about smuggling's link to racial capitalism is both provocative and timely, it also raises questions about the historicity and sweeping breadth of a concept whose boundaries are not especially well defined.

A more fundamental problem is the framing of smuggling itself. Hardesty commonly uses terms such as "illicit trade" and "illegal trade" interchangeably as synonyms for "smuggling." In this usage he follows many other historians, to be sure. However, much of the recent work on smuggling also employs more neutral-sounding labels such as "informal trade," "irregular trade," "contraband trade," "clandestine trade," "intercolonial trade," or "interimperial trade," as well. These terms highlight the fact that the character of the trade was often determined less by its actual

forms or objects of exchange than by its relationship to the various political and legal frameworks that different officials may have applied to it. Indeed, the scholarship on smuggling makes clear that smuggling was an everyday part of life all over the Atlantic world and an accepted, even legitimate, part of life in many of those places, too.

Even as Hardesty seeks to represent Captain Jackson and his associates as secretive lawbreakers, his own account reveals that they were considered criminals neither at home in New England, where their trading activities were considered both legal and licit, nor abroad in Suriname, where Dutch officials seemed to have abetted their trading activities and applied negligible penalties after the fact. In this sense, the repeated references to the voyage's leaders and sponsors as "ringleaders" of a "cartel" and "smuggling ring" inaccurately reflect how they were understood in their own time and also distort our understanding of how intercolonial smuggling actually worked. These qualifications aside, the extraordinary and multidimensional way in which Hardesty and his collaborators have reconstructed this episode makes this book a significant and novel contribution to the historiography of smuggling in the early modern Atlantic world. At the same time it is an engaging read that vibrantly renders the lives of its historical characters in vivid detail and with great pathos.

Note

[1]. See, for example, Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998); Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Karwan Fatah-Black, *White Lies and Black Markets: Evading Metropolitan Authority in Colonial Suriname, 1650-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2015);

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