

Companies and Trade

Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during
the Ancien Régime

edited by
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This book, the third volume in the series "Comparative Studies in Overseas History", contains a number of essays about the function of the great Companies of Trade in the European Expansion in Asia and the Atlantic world during the 17th and 18th centuries. Nowadays it is generally recognized that the Companies played a crucial role in the opening of new markets and the widening of the economic boundaries of the world of the *ancien régime*. The central question of this book is how the Companies actually achieved these things. Was it because of their organization, their relations with the state, their trade-policy, or because of their ability to make use of the economic potentialities in the overseas world? In order to answer these questions, the editors argue that in such a comparative study the Companies should be seen against the background of the social political and economical system of the regions that comprised their theater of action.

The contributions to this volume have consequently been divided into two major themes: the Companies as instruments of trade and expansion, and the adaptation of the Companies to the trading world in Asia.

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RACISM AND COLONIALISM

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In this book the central question addressed is the relationship between ideology and social practice with particular reference to one of the most crucial cases in modern history, namely the racist system of thought that developed in nineteenth century Europe and the colonial societies under European domination from the same period. It is the sustained comparative nature of the investigation of this interaction between ideas and social reality that is the distinctive feature of the work. Therefore it contains a long section on the growth of this ideology within Europe and on its European application from the seventeenth century on. The relationship between this ideology and the development of modern imperialism is examined with particular regard to antisemitism. Thereafter the work is concerned with the establishment of racially defined systems of social stratification in various parts of the colonised world and, in one of the most novel parts of the book, with the extent to which the ideas brought in from Europe were accepted, modified, rejected or utilised by the colonised peoples themselves. In so doing it tests the applicability not only of the conceptual distinction between ideology and social reality, but also of such concepts as "estate" and "class" in the context of colonial societies.

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