

David Onnekink. *The Anglo-Dutch Favourite: The Career of Hans Willem Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland (1649-1709).* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. 297 pp. \$114.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7546-5545-9.



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From Bentinck to Portland

The house of Bentinck is well known to historians of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. The head of the family was among the country's most important territorial magnates and exercised the political influence which landownership frequently conferred. William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, fourth earl and third Duke of Portland, twice served as prime minister, while Lord George Bentinck, a son of the fourth duke, was a patron and close friend of Benjamin Disraeli. Dr. Onnekink's monograph takes the form of a detailed biographical study of the first earl, the great-grandfather of the prime minister and the founder of the British branch of the dynasty. It is organized in nine, mainly narrative, chapters which are soundly based on archival research, principally in Dutch sources. There are six monochrome illustrations, together with a dynastic table of the Bentinck family, and a useful list of Bentinck's considerable landed and monetary assets. In view of the book's geographical scope, its value would have been enhanced by the provision of at least one map.

Emerging from an Orangist background in Overijssel, Bentinck became the favorite, adviser and indispensable

companion to William of Orange through his skills in military organization (though he was not a distinguished field commander) and in his promotion of the Orange family's interests within the United Provinces. Entrusted with important missions to England and to the Protestant states of Germany before 1688, Bentinck accompanied William on his expedition to England in November 1688 and thereafter played a key role in the consolidation of the new regime in the British Isles. He was at William's side at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 and contributed to the defeat of William's Scottish enemies. During the war years of 1689-97 Bentinck was one of William's most important Dutch advisers—especially after the death of the Grand Pensionary Gaspar Fagel in 1688—and he quickly acquired an English earldom. Lavishly rewarded by William III, he drew upon himself the obloquy frequently associated with court favorites, and the author has some interesting comments to offer on this theme, both in the Dutch and British contexts. The end of the war in 1697, quarrels with William III and the rivalry of another Dutch favorite, Arnold Joost van Keppel, Earl of Albermarle, led to Bentinck's withdrawal from public life, though not until his negotiation with Louis XIV of

the controversial second partition treaty in 1699. Thereafter such political connections as he retained were, not surprisingly, with the Junto Whigs who were committed to the War of the Spanish Succession. Significantly, at the time of his death he resided at Bulstrode, his newly acquired estate in Buckinghamshire.

Although the chapters which examine the political and military episodes of the 1690s are rather dense in construction, contain numerous infelicities of style, and impose heavy duty upon the reader, the book succeeds at several levels. Dr. Onnekink makes out a convincing case for the importance of the wider European context to an understanding of late seventeenth-century British history. He demonstrates the close interaction between Dutch and British politics and shows how Bentinck's value to William III lay in his ability to maneuver to good effect on both sides of the North Sea. He supplements Jonathan Israel's work on the international dimensions of the revolution of 1688 by showing that to Bentinck, at least, the protection of the Protestant religion was a primary motive for William's descent upon England.[1] Dr. Onnekink, in conformity with recent developments among historians of early modern Europe, comments interestingly on the nature and continuing importance of the Court of William III as Stadtholder and as King. One

result of Bentinck's career, however, merits more attention than the author provides. Resentment among the parliamentary classes in Britain at the favors conferred upon him and other favorites such as Albemarle, led directly to the severe constraints imposed by the Act of Settlement (1701) upon the ability of the Hanoverian kings to reward their German advisers. The first two Georges were debarred from granting English peerages or military commands to their fellow Hanoverians and in this respect operated under harsher terms than those available to William III.

Although not entirely escaping from its origins as a doctoral dissertation, Dr. Onnekink's study is an important contribution to the historiography of later seventeenth-century Europe. It integrates British and Dutch history effectively and will be essential reading for historians of late seventeenth-century Britain and of the United Provinces.

Note

[1]. See Jonathan Israel, "The Dutch Role in the Glorious Revolution," in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment. Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 111-112, 120-123.

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