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J. R. Jones. *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century.* London and New York: Longman, 1996. xi + 242 pp. (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-05630-5; $70.33 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-582-05631-2.

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Three Little-Known Wars

Most wars that attract a continual stream of historians have some outstanding feature: they may have shaped, or erased, a civilization, they may have introduced a new technology, or they may have been dominated by a single ruler or general. The three wars fought–almost exclusively at sea–by the British and Dutch between 1652 and 1674 have not attracted much attention, and J.R. Jones, a former professor of history at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, intends to provide an overview for today's readers.

Unfortunately, it is hard to know who those readers will be. *The Anglo-Dutch Wars* is a daunting book, packed full of valuable information and insights, but I found it very hard going. It is the outgrowth of a course on seapower which Jones taught at East Anglia for twenty-six years, and it assumes a great deal of knowledge on the part of its readers. First of all, to follow the events as Jones recounts them, one must have a good knowledge of British history during perhaps the most turbulent time in its modern history. These wars began just after King Charles I had been executed by rebels led by Oliver Cromwell, who ruled England as a Commonwealth. This short-lived experiment was followed by the Restoration, and Charles II fought the Dutch as well. In the Netherlands, the late 1600s was also a period of instability, with the Dutch Republic, lacking a central govern- ment, constantly worried about the return of the House of Orange to power. The twenty-three years covered by this book was a period of such rapid change that each of the three wars was fought between, not just different fleets led by different admirals, but between different "Englands" and different "Netherlands."

For the reader primarily interested in military history, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars* does provide much useful information. Along with the short chapter devoted to the course of each of the three conflicts, Jones has sections on the geography and logistics of these wars–aspects that set them off from the distinctly different, and much better known, naval wars of the Napoleonic Era. For one thing, unlike the Age of Nelson, the Anglo-Dutch wars were fought in almost exactly the same area where the British and German fleets met, and failed to meet, during World War I. The fighting sometimes reached down the Channel to the French coast, but most of the maneuvering was in

the stormy strip of water–now a ferry route-separating England and Holland on the North Sea. Jones shows how the weather, much colder then than now, kept ships in harbor for most of the winter, dictating a fighting season similar to those used by land armies.

Jones also does a good job of emphasizing how seventeenth-century ships could simply not do what became common in the Napoleonic era. They were smaller, less was known about keeping provisions and ammunition viable over time, and the crews were not paid or disciplined in the way that they would be a century later. This meant that English and Dutch ships could stay at sea for only a matter of weeks before they ran out of powder, the ships' companies became too short due to illness, or the ships themselves began to fail from the wear and tear of seakeeping.

In terms of ships, Jones shows how the British enjoyed, from the outset, the advantage of larger ships, heavier guns, and better tactics. Only occasionally were the Dutch, with their better seamanship and better use of shoals and winds, able to avoid defeats or score a victory. The lesson–learned by both sides and other nations as well–was that only the "Great Ship," a vessel able to carry dozens of the heaviest cannon, would matter in wars to come. Speed and handiness were useful, but could not put a larger ship out of action.

The Anglo-Dutch Wars left me unhappy with myself, and the book. I was disappointed that I had forgotten, or never learned, so much Early Modern European history that I could not follow much of Jones's terse explanation of the political and economic forces behind the war on both sides. Indeed, one of his major interests is refuting an economic determinist argument that ascribed the wars entirely to English merchants' desire to usurp Dutch trade advantages. Perhaps this is military history as it should be written–providing all of the social, political, religious and economic forces that shape most wars. But that demands a great deal from readers.

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