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A Silver River in a Silver World

Drawing on a wide and rich array of sources, this book explores the nature and extent of Dutch trade and commerce in the Río de la Plata during three decades of the least-studied century (1650–1750) of Spain's rule in the Americas. In doing so, it raises important questions about trade in colonial South America and how it was impacted by the Dutch. It suggests that these transactions were carried out within the confines of the law, contradicting common beliefs among scholars that this trading was not regulated. This book contributes to a growing literature on contraband trade, administration, networks, and corruption while challenging narratives of exclusively Spanish influence on the Americas.

DAVID FREEMAN is Associate Professor of History at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

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Dutch Trade in the Río de la Plata, 1648–1678

DAVID FREEMAN

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For Rafaela

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Acknowledgments

Give historians an archive and they will start to look for something interesting. That was how this project began for me. I had been assisting my wife, Viviana Grieco, in the Archivo General de la Nación Argentina (AGN) in Buenos Aires, mostly by taking pictures of documents she needed in researching her book. On a break, and to be quite honest a bit bored, I started looking for something for me to do. I began by browsing through an index in Sala IX looking for Dutch-sounding names. I found Alberto Yansen. In time, I followed that seventeenth-century Dutch merchant captain, Albert Jansen, from the AGN in Buenos Aires to the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Seville, to the Stadsarchief Amsterdam, and to the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence. He became, by example, one of the focuses of this book. I feel I should thank him, though I was disappointed when I discovered his involvement in the slave trade.

Many of the ideas fleshed out in this book first saw the light of day in conferences, and I am thankful for the support of innumerable attendees, many of whom I do not know, for their comments and suggestions. With the idea for this book forming in my head, I attended a FEEGI (Forum on European Expansion and Global Interaction) conference in 2012. Standing next to Kris Lane during a coffee break, I said something to him like, “I have this idea for a book. . . .” I am glad I did, as Kris has been nothing but helpful and supportive since then. I am indebted to him for helping me flesh out some ideas as well as reading and commenting on early drafts of the manuscript.

Other conferences followed, RMCLAS (Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies) being a personal favorite. I presented early

sections of chapters at RMCLAS conferences and was welcomed as an odd, Dutch-specialized Latin Americanist. RMCLAS conferences are known for their warm intellectual atmosphere, the natural beauty of their location, and their sociability. I talked to many scholars over the years at RMCLAS, but wish to single out Mark Burkholder, who especially provided invaluable suggestions and encouragement.

I presented an early version of Chapter 5 at the Río de la Plata Workshop at the College of William and Mary. I am thankful to my fellow workshop attendees for both welcoming me as a Ríodelaplattanista and providing me with excellent advice on revising that chapter. These include but are not limited to Kara Schultz, Daniel Domingues, Jeff Shumway, Gabriel Di Meglio, and Alex Borucki. I would especially like to thank Fabrício Prado as both the organizer of the workshop and as someone with whom I had more than one Río de la Plata conversation over drinks. We once showed up at a RMCLAS conference having both written papers in part about the same person. My paper described him a trusted merchant; Fabrício's showed him to be a smuggler.

There are many others to thank. Oscar Trujillo, whom I have not yet met in person, nevertheless answered my questions and passed along a source when I reached out to him. The participants in the Low Countries Seminar at the Institute for Historical Research in London assisted with reinforcing the Dutch perspective of this book. Also in London, Alejandra Irigoin encouraged me to emphasize more the silver world, and her suggestions in that direction proved to be invaluable. Susan Socolow read and commented on early ideas and encouraged me to continue. Lyman Johnson patiently explained the ins and outs of academic publishing and introduced me to what has become one of my favorite restaurants in Buenos Aires. My thanks as well to the staff of Cambridge University Press, and especially Deborah Gershenowitz for her patience and encouragement.

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In writing these acknowledgments, I am struck by how many of those I have thanked can also be called friends. Long hours conducting research in archives and long hours writing can make it a lonely process. However, there was also a lot of coffee, drinks, food, and conversation in the making of this book. I am grateful to the assistance and friendship of so many named and unnamed.

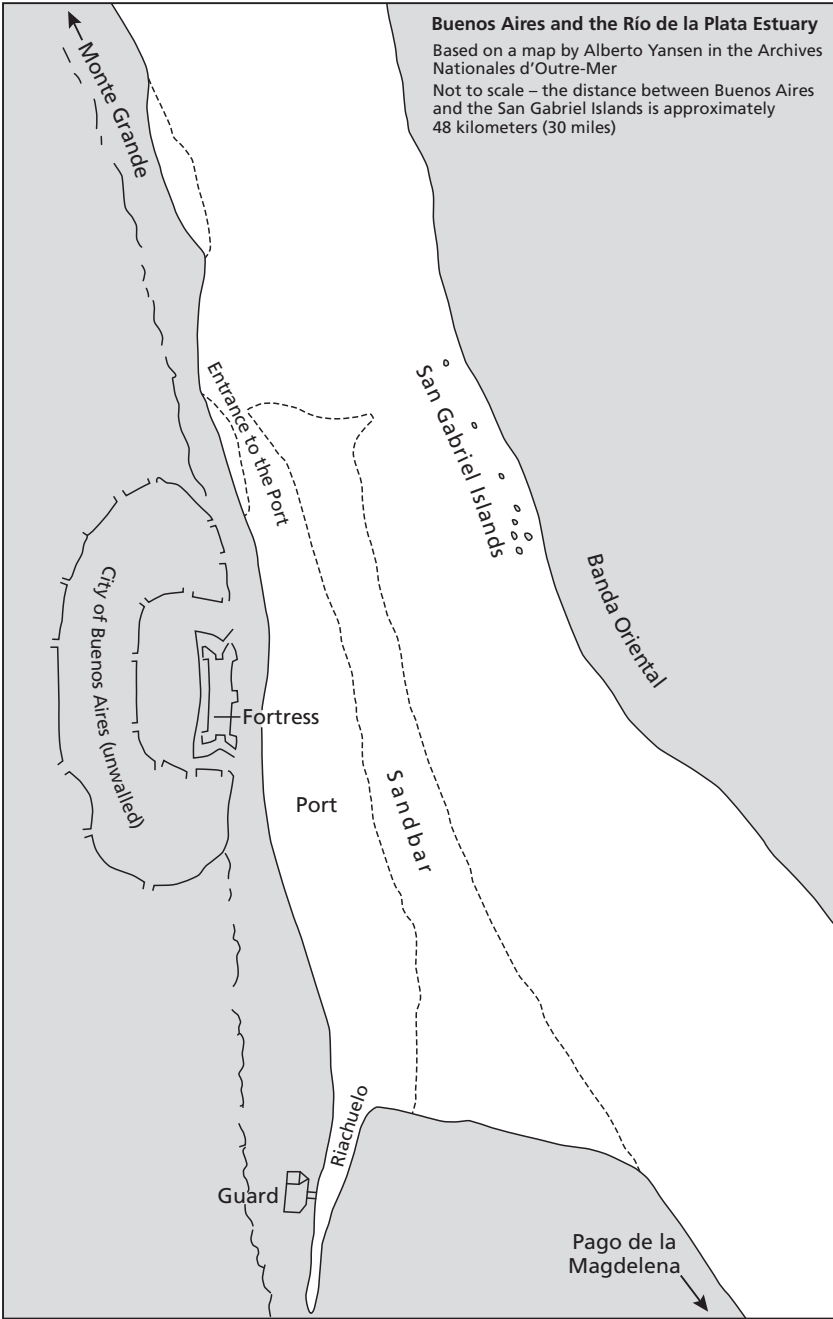
Finally, my thanks to Viviana Grieco for her support and assistance throughout this project. In future, I will look at this book and think of the days we worked side by side in the AGN in Buenos Aires, myself in the seventeenth century and Viviana in the eighteenth century. A late lunch often followed, the best were at the Salisbury (now gone) across from the Instituto Ravignani, where we would talk excitedly about what we had both found that day. Then down the street to the YMCA where our daughter, Rafaela, swam and played all day, before making our way back home. For a historian, those were idyllic days and I wish to thank Viviana and Rafaela for being a part of this book.

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MAP 2 Buenos Aires and the Río de la Plata Estuary

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