
This study, so the author himself on p. XI (‘Preface’), is an ‘interpretative essay’, originally written as a doctoral thesis for the Law Faculty of the University of Melbourne, December 2005. It is meant as the first of a projected series of monographs by the same author on the history of international law as component of geo-culture. The main subject of interpretation in this study is (or seems to be) Hugo Grotius’ text denoted by Wilson (following Richard Tuck) as *De Indis*, largely written in 1604–1606 and published for the first time in 1868 under the title *De iure Praedae*. Wilson is quite explicit on the reasons why he denotes the work as *De Indis*. To stick to the title *De iure praedae* according to him comes to ‘privileging’ the ‘juridical’ (prize of booty) over the ‘political’ (international relations, global governance, Colonialism, see esp. on p. 3); he aims at a ‘discursive shift of the Text from the juridical to the extra-juridical’ (p. 16). Moreover, the title *De Indis* ‘underscores the discursive arc established between the dyadic Texts concerning the Indies, the West for Vitoria’s *De Indis*, and the East for Grotius’ *De Indis*’ (p. 499). And lastly, but of course never decisive for a deconstructivist as Wilson, *De Indis* seems to be in deference to the author’s naming of the manuscript: *De rebus Indicis* (see on p. 4 and 13). ‘For Deconstruction, the question is: how is it that a ‘mere’ editorial intervention [naming the work *De iure praedae* in 1868, GvN] has so thoroughly historically overridden authorial intent, or ‘Presence’?’ (p. 5–6).

As may already be clear from his discussion on the title of Grotius’ work, Wilson’s initial approach to this work and the conclusions he finally reaches express the same ‘shift in thinking about Grotius and his role in establishing the foundations of colonial rule’ as can be found in the works of for instance Borschberg, Keene and Van Ittersum. They all oppose to the more traditional reading of the Grotius tradition of the English School of international relations, that had placed Grotius between the Hobbesian or realist tradition on the one and the Kantian or universalist tradition on the other side. Important issues within the recent critical approach are the context of Grotius’ writing (in *De iure praedae* the context of the VOC in the first place) and his ideas on divisibility of sovereignty, divisible sovereignty being pivotal both for his advocating Republicanism and for establishing and ordering the imperial, colonial world system. Both issues are indeed amply treated in Wilson’s study. What Wilson aims at (see chapter 1) is a critical analysis (‘therapeutic ‘cure’’, p. 21) of the so called Grotian heritage and of international law and international public order. To reach this critical legal interpretation of international law and the Grotian heritage he uses the methodology of Post-Structuralism (chapter 2), more specifically Derrida’s practice of deconstruction, predicated upon the

four pillars of iterability, difference, the (arche-)trace, and the logic of the dangerous supplement (p. 60 ff.). The historical framework Wilson uses as the link between his Post-Structuralist (Post-Colonialist) critique of both 'De Indis' and international law and the early modern interstate praxis is (Immanuel Wallerstein’s) World System Analysis (‘a more persuasive account of the historical evolution of international politics (the praxis ‘base’ of international law) than either of the two mainstream doctrines of realism and Liberalism’, p. 85), using Walter D. Mignolo’s ‘border thinking’ to link Modern World System with Post-Colonialism and Deconstruction. With this theoretical edifice Wilson sets himself the task of writing three parallel (Braudelian) chronologies, each with their own ‘TimeSpace’: the histoire evenementielle [sic] (the textual production of Grotius’ juvenilia, especially ‘De Indis’), the histoire conjuncturale (hegemonic transition from the Spaniards to the Dutch / Republicanism) and the histoire structurale (Early modern world-system, the TimeSpace of la longue duree [sic]). Wilson, on p. 118: ‘the Grotian Heritage serves as the discursive formation of the trajectory of Dutch Hegemony, situated within the arche-trace of the Modern World-System’.

So much for methodology. We have reached page 135, still 400 pages to go. The final result is – in Wilson’s own words (p. 14) a ‘fundamental re-appreciation of the ‘Grotian Heritage’ within the historical development of Public International Law and International Relations’. Wilson tries to show that Grotius is neither the pacifistic nor the progressive author that international legal scholarship has tried to make of him.

In the end, I would say the book is more on (theorizing on) international law and (even more so) international relations and global politics, than on Grotius. A first glance on the Index of subjects would suffice here; incidentally, the Indices are very short and not very accurate. His work will certainly receive critical comments from all fields of research touched upon in this study: history, (international) law, (world) politics, economy, philosophy, and more. This already should be enough to indicate what a job writing this book must have been for the author. One might object to the chosen methodologies – deconstruction, for instance, can be criticized for putting the researcher in the place of the original author of the text; Wallerstein’s World system analysis is just as vulnerable to critique as other theories on international relations, realism and liberalism. The least we can say is that Wilson has been clear about his position. But there certainly is more to be said; I will confine myself here to some remarks as a legal historian.

In a discussion on complicated concepts such as dominium, imperium and proprietas in (late-)scholastic and Grotian thought (chapter 4) it is indispensable to know the original (Latin) texts, for authors’ subtleties can be of major importance for a proper understanding of the (legal) texts. Wilson, however, gives (often abridged) quotations in English translation, sometimes with a Latin word between brackets, sometimes not. Backed up with references such as ‘Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, vol. 38, Q. 66, 68–9’ and ‘Grotius, De Indis, 257’ it is not always easy to trace back the corresponding Latin text. To make it even more difficult for the reader Wilson’s book lacks a bibliography, so that one simply has to turn the pages back to look for the first reference to a certain title. The need to read the original texts is all the more urgent since to me it is not

\footnote{To give just one example: ‘Die Heeren VXII’ (sic) are not only found on p. 138, 234 and 491, but also on p. 232 (as ‘the Heeren XVII’) and p. 233 (as ‘the ‘Gentlemen XVII’’).}

\footnote{For some of the critique see H. Spruyt, The sovereign states and its competitors, An analysis of systems change, [Princeton studies in international history and politics], Princeton (New Jersey) [1994], Part I.}

\footnote{Now that we mention it, Wilson made use of Hugo Grotius, De Iure Praedae Commentarius, Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty, [The Classics of International Law, 22], trans. G.L.