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THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF COLONIAL EMIGRATION ON NEUCHÂTEL DURING THE "LONG 19TH CENTURY"

Fabio Rossinelli,[I] Ricardo Borrmann[II]

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ABSTRACT

The Economic and Social Impacts of Colonial Emigration on Neuchâtel During the "Long 19th Century"

The Swiss Canton of Neuchâtel was able to develop and become one of the country's economic poles—particularly in the export of watches—thanks to the movement of emigrants to Europe and European immigrants to Switzerland. At the same time, missionaries, explorers, and businessmen left Neuchâtel to travel to the colonial world. Historiography has never linked these two migratory phenomena. This article aims to fill this gap. On the one side, it will provide an overview of the existing historiography. On the other, through some case studies, it will propose evidence and new research approaches. The result will be an invitation to de-Europeanize the history of Neuchâtel in order to inscribe it into the global history of the colonial era.

KEYWORDS: colonial migration, colonial trade, economic development, economic and family networks, de-Europeanization

IZVLEČEK

Gospodarske in družbene posledice kolonialnega izseljevanja na kanton Neuchâtel skozi »dolgo 19. stoletje«

Švicarski kanton Neuchâtel se je lahko razvil in postal eno od gospodarskih središč države – zlasti na področju izvoza ur – zahvaljujoč izseljevanju v Evropo in priseljevanju Evropejcev v Švico. Hkrati so iz Neuchâtla na potovanja v kolonialne države odhajali misijonarji, raziskovalci in poslovneži. Teh dveh migracijskih pojavov zgodovinarji do sedaj niso nikoli povezovali, namen tega prispevka pa je zapolniti to vrzel. Avtorja na eni strani podajata pregled obstoječega zgodovinopisja na to temo, na drugi strani pa s pomočjo nekaterih študij primerov predstavita podatke in predlagata nove raziskovalne pristope. Na podlagi navedenega pozivata k deevropeizaciji zgodovine tega kantona ter k njegovi vključitvi globalno zgodovino kolonialnega obdobja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: kolonialne migracije, kolonialna trgovina, gospodarski razvoj, gospodarske in družinske mreže, deevropeizacija

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INTRODUCTION

Neuchâtel, a francophone canton in Western Switzerland, encompasses a part of the Jura Mountains and shares its northern border with France. The French Empire ruled the region from 1805 to 1814 at the time of Napoleon I. From 1707 until 1805, however, Neuchâtel was a Prussian principality, as it was again from 1814 until the 1848 republican revolution, which marked its ultimate adhesion to the newly formed Swiss Confederation (Jelmini et al., 1991; Jucker et al., 1993). This simple look at Neuchâtel's geopolitical history allows us to see a strongly transnational trajectory. Although the construction of modern Switzerland has only recently been told from a European perspective (Humair, 2009; Holenstein, 2014), Neuchâtel's connections with Europe have been evident for a centuries. Numerous studies on migration covering the 18th to the 20th centuries show how immigrants from the Swiss regions and other European countries contributed to the development of the canton and its municipalities. Less attention, however, has been given to colonial experiences. Although in the last 20 years, new literature has emphasized how Switzerland practiced "colonialism without colonies," the focus has mainly been on what the Swiss did overseas or on the ideological legacies, such as racism, of this experience (Purtschert & Fischer-Tiné, 2015). However, Swiss migration history has given little attention to the economic and social impacts of colonialism in the country (Holenstein et al., 2018).

In Neuchâtel, we find the same problem. Migration historians have mostly been interested in border migration, migration between one canton and another, or migration to neighboring countries when talking about the development of Neuchâtel—while migrants in the colonial world, such as slavers and missionaries, are little analyzed from this perspective. So, in the first part of this article, we trace the broad outlines of what we call a "double historiography" of Neuchâtel's migration history, underlining what we consider as its interpretative limits and proposing new research focuses. In the second and third parts, we analyze the empirical findings of our study into Neuchâtel's global interconnections during the "Long 19th Century," focusing on this canton's colonial imbrications with Latin America and Southern Africa. We will thus show how Neuchâtel, geographically distant from the sea and apparently absent from overseas, shaped and was shaped in its economic and social developments through strong relations with colonialism—the latter defined as a multifaceted phenomenon of exploitation of other peoples and cultures, which can generate lasting repercussions on all those involved (Osterhammel & Jansen, 2021).

NEUCHÂTEL, MIGRATION, AND DEVELOPMENT: FROM A SWISS AND EUROPEAN HISTORY TO A COLONIAL AND GLOBAL HISTORY

We recognize two main historiographical strands that approach the topic of migration in Neuchâtel in the modern era. The first focuses on short-range (interregional, cross-border) and medium-range (continental) migration. This literature primarily emphasizes the movement and settlement (temporary or lasting) of migrants but also addresses the question of how their presence changed the demographic structure of the republican canton, which joined the Swiss Confederation in 1848, and how this contributed to the material development of the territory and its economic activities.

Several historians have used quantitative analytical methods to study the historical demography of Neuchâtel, emphasizing the extroversion and migratory dynamism that began to characterize the region in the 17th century (Cop, 1989; Christ, 1991; Froidevaux, 1999). Between 1750 and 1850, Neuchâtel's overall population increased from 32,000 to 68,000 inhabitants thanks to numerous arrivals from Berne and other regions, as well as from other European countries. In contrast to the demographic increase, the proportion of citizens born in Neuchâtel dropped from 87% to 64% during this same period (Henry, 2011, pp. 102–108). In the Jura highlands, the migration phenomenon was even more pronounced than in the lake areas, probably due to the seasonal and cross-border migrations that marked economic life in the mountains (Daveau, 1959, pp. 186–204, 504–518; Cop, 1993). It was precisely in these mountainous locations that the Swiss watchmaking industry arose thanks to the contribution of a workforce more and more composed of immigrants, starting with the Huguenots who settled in Geneva from France and then emigrated to Neuchâtel.

After revoking the Edict of Nantes in 1685, numerous Huguenot refugees settled in Neuchâtel. Among them were merchants, manufacturers, printers, dyers, and highly skilled artisans already active not only in the watchmaking techniques but also in the so-called Indienne trade. As a result, Neuchâtel became one of the European hubs for both the watchmaking traditions and trading of these highly valued printed cotton fabrics (*Indiennes*). This business required significant capital and was closely tied to the trade in colonial goods, cotton, and slavery. This endeavor was not only about the transfer of technical knowledge and craftsmanship. These developments were also shaped by significant capital flows, particularly directed toward Geneva and Neuchâtel. At the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, Huguenots established Indienne manufactories along the borders of the French kingdom.

The case of La Chaux-de-Fonds, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2009 for watchmaking urbanism, is emblematic. With a population of around 2,500 people in 1750, 90% of whom were locally born citizens in Neuchâtel, the emerging watchmaking center exceeded 12,000 in 1850, then 36,000 in 1900, half and even more

of whom were not originally from Neuchâtel: France, Germany, and Italy were key countries of origin for migration to La Chaux-de-Fonds (Cop, 1981, p. 121; Barrelet, 1985, p. 42). The Italian community, for example, contributed greatly to the building of La Chaux-de-Fonds to its social, cultural, and political life—including workers' union protests (Perrenoud, 1985; Zosso & Marsico, 2002). So, labor force immigration contributed to the economic development of Neuchâtel's watchmaking industry over the long term (Garufo, 2015).

In his first volume of *Das Kapital*, from 1867, Karl Marx wrote that La Chaux-de-Fonds could be considered "a huge watch factory" (Marx, 1976, p. 462). Watchmaking also developed in the nearby town of Le Locle and, more generally, in Western Switzerland until it became the second most exported production of the country (behind textiles from Eastern Switzerland). Worldwide watch production was 70% in Swiss hands in 1870 and 90% in 1900 (Donzé, 2009, pp. 33–38). Although the main absorbing markets were the European countries, with important breakthroughs into the North American market, the watch trade also expanded elsewhere, such as Brazil and Japan, accompanied by specific entrepreneurial emigration (Veyrassat, 1986; Donzé, 2006). The mode of watch production, however, remained for a long time anchored to the so-called *établissage* (Blanchard, 2011)—an artisanal and decentralized method in which individual pieces were manufactured separately, then assembled in specific ateliers and finally sold through specialized circuits and dealers. All this required a constant presence abroad, with an extensive network of exchanges, apprenticeships, and contacts in a metropolis such as London and Paris. It was a sort of migratory universe in itself (Donzé, 2020, pp. 17–35).

Although one could argue that emigration related to watchmaking was a unique reality, it was not the only form of reason for migration flows from Neuchâtel and the Jura Mountains. Many people went to the borders of Europe or outside the continent for other reasons, necessities or opportunities. Here, we enter the second historiographical strand, which analyses long-range migration flows.

Emigration to faraway countries during the 19th century was, in many cases, motivated by sectoral economic crises (for instance, during the Great Depression) or by precarious life and working conditions, especially in rural areas (Arlettaz, 1975; Widmer, 1992). Similar to the Alpine regions in Ticino and Valais, the Jura Mountains also experienced mass migration movements abroad—to Australia under British rule, to the French colonies in North Africa and to the pre- and post-independence Americas (Cheda, 1976; Henry, 1989; Maye, 1997; Lovis, 2020). The social status of women from modest backgrounds and the lack of perspectives in Neuchâtel and the rest of Switzerland encouraged emigration, especially to the East, where they worked as governesses, carers and instructors, for instance, in the Russian Empire (Maeder, 1993), but also other parts the world. This is the case of the teacher and traveler Lina Bögli (1858–1941), who experienced her social ascension through a ten-year round-the-world journey in which she stayed for some time in various countries under colonial rule to teach in local schools or institutions (Fussinger,

1995). However, this example of female migration was not the only case: Wealthy patrician families from Neuchâtel, as was the case of the sisters Olympe Esther de Pury (1796–1857) and Charlotte Julie de Pury (1800–1862), were sent to the Dutch Empire to gain teaching experience before returning home (Rossinelli, 2023a, p. 97). Furthermore, it was precisely the rich people of Neuchâtel, such as the de Meuron and de Pourtalès families, who emigrated overseas for longer or shorter periods pursuing business activities tightly intertwined and directly profited from enslaved labor and colonial societies. As we would like to demonstrate here, this aspect has been somewhat (and too often) downplayed by the existing literature (Bergeron, 1970; De Meuron-Landolt, 1999; Galofaro, 2024). Others emigrated with different ambitions, pursuing a career in scientific research as colonial mercenaries or even as Christian missionaries (Henry, 2006).

Apart from analyzing a small number of cases, we diagnose two other problems regarding this second historiographical strand: 1) Only recently has it begun to approach the global history of this long-range migration from Neuchâtel in the 19th century as a result of a violent imperial expansion, of which Switzerland, although without official colonies, was an intrinsic part (Rossinelli et al., 2024). 2) Only a few studies have tried to measure how these migrations to overseas destinations, for example, of colonial mercenaries or business families, changed the history of the migrants' places of origin by questioning the foundation of institutions such as museums and the acquisition of scientific and artistic collections (Kaehr, 2000; Glauser, 2005).[1] In contrast to this tendency, the first historiographical strand accords much importance to the effects of migration on Neuchâtel—be they demographic, economic, or urban—and thus seems to subscribe, at least implicitly, to long-standing theories describing the relationship between migration and development (Monsutti, 2008; De Haas, 2010). However, this literature focuses on short-range and medium-range migration and, in so doing, tacitly excludes that Neuchâtel's material development is extremely entangled with global and colonial migration processes.

We aim to absorb the contributions of these two historiographical strands we have analyzed. We draw inspiration from the pioneer studies of historian Béatrice Veyrassat (1993; 2014) because she links the local or regional realities with the national, European, and global dimensions—and in which the private sphere, such as the presence of people and interests from Neuchâtel or Switzerland somewhere in the world, motivated the action of the public sphere. It was precisely in these

1 This issue has mostly been addressed, and only in recent years, by public institutions in Neuchâtel, which, in collaboration with scholars, have proposed initiatives such as a guided tour through the streets of the city aimed at illustrating the material traces of urbanization linked to slavery and colonialism—including the two main centers of medical and psychiatric care, the Hospital de Pourtalès and Préfargier. This project, piloted by Prof. Matthieu Gillabert (University of Fribourg) and active since 2023, is entitled *Neuchâtel – Empreintes coloniales*. See https://www.neuchatelville.ch/sortir-et-decouvrir/visiter-neuchatel/empreintes-coloniales (accessed 28 November 2024).

studies, to which little follow-up has been given, that Veyrassat (2014) attempted to establish a connection between short-, medium- and long-range migration to material effects on the country produced by overseas emigrants to previously little-known connections between the very closed circuit of watchmakers and the broader colonial markets. On the one hand, much information can indeed be found in the existing literature to reconstruct a common migration history of Neuchâtel in the period between the end of the *Ancien Régime* and the beginning of World War I—the "Long 19th Century," according to historian Eric Hobsbawm. On the other hand, it is equally valid that new research in little-explored archives makes it possible to show how the imbrications between migration processes and colonial experiences directly impacted the local and regional history of Neuchâtel.

MIGRATORY RELATIONS BETWEEN NEUCHÂTEL, BRAZIL, AND THE SLAVE ECONOMY (LATE 18TH CENTURY TO MID-19TH CENTURY)[2]

A family history of union, migration, and business: The transfer of Brazilian fortunes (and debts) to Neuchâtel

Before the new literature on the Swiss involvement in slavery and colonialism was published (David et al., 2005; Fässler, 2005), Switzerland's migration links with the colonial realities were often described as the image of a nation of hardworking, impoverished farmers—particularly from Catholic cantons like Fribourg—who moved to the Americas to work on plantations, often alongside or even in place of enslaved people (Nicoulin, 1973; Ziegler, 1985). The case of Neuchâtel, according to the mentioned new literature, provides a contrasting perspective. It reveals the migration of wealthy bourgeois families to trading metropoles and colonies, illustrating Switzerland's active economic relations with colonial societies. Some central aspects emerge in Neuchâtel's case: family-based trading networks rooted in Protestant solidarity and closely intertwined with the financial system. As historian Christoph Dejung (2024, p. 762) observes: "The advantage of family firms lay in the fact that they were associated with a particular group of people, which ensured continuity in trading relationships. What is more, marriages were used either to establish or to stabilize business ties between different merchant houses. This was a regular practice among European and North American merchants well into the nineteenth century."

The Borel and the de Meuron families are paradigmatic examples of this practice, as highlighted by Dejung (2024), and the economic elite migration to the Americas (Wasserfallen, 1999). As we will see below, in the first half of the 19th century, they

2 This case study, by Ricardo Borrmann, is part of the ongoing SNSF-funded project no. 215068 (2023–2027): "Neuchâtel face à la colonisation: circulations, intrications et mémoire", University of Neuchâtel.

established a sort of private empire in Brazil, exemplifying the connections between family ties, Protestant sociability and commercial networks, large-scale finances, and the colonial world. Additionally, the Borel family's money flows contributed significantly to the changing landscape in Neuchâtel through donations and constructions. Here, the establishment of the Préfargier Hospital stands out because it literally transformed the medical landscape of Neuchâtel during the 19th century (De Meuron-Landolt, 1999).

In this part, we will retrace the paths of the Borel and de Meuron families, which have not yet been extensively studied in the history of economic elite migration. We will explore the ties binding Neuchâtel's bourgeois families to colonial markets, especially Brazil. On a macro scale, this analysis highlights how this case provides heuristic insights into migration history, particularly concerning the intertwining between family connections and commercial ties. Many families examined here also had their direct representatives in the Grand Council of the City of Neuchâtel (Grand Conseil), the most important political decision-making authority in Neuchâtel.

One noteworthy archival record from the State Archive of Neuchâtel references Louis-César-Alexis Borel. According to baptism records from 1842–1854 (*Livre de Baptêmes*), Borel, residing at the Colonie Léopoldine in Bahia, Brazil, baptized his daughter Louise in Villa-Viçosa on March 20, 1843. The document states that Louise was born on February 28, 1842, in the Colonie Léopoldine. This record provides an entry point to trace the Borels' presence in Brazil.[3] Louis-César-Alexis Borel married François Marie and was the father of Charles-Louis Borel (1776–1852). Another interesting record is of one of his brothers, Edouard G. Borel, described as the factory director, "Ed. Borel in Rio de Janeiro."[4]

Antoine Borel (1791–1857) was originally from Neuchâtel, and in 1754, he entered the colonial goods trade in Neuchâtel. He completed his apprenticeship in Basel and then in Paris with the Swiss merchant bankers "Meuron & Coulon" (Galofaro, 2024, p. 260). Antoine Borel then traveled to the United States and Canada from 1816 to 1819 to manage a company involved in cotton purchasing in partnership with Louis de Meuron and other associates from Paris. He then traveled to Cuba and to Brazil in 1819, where he encountered the slave trade and slavery. Later, he partnered in Le Havre with Édouard Borel, the husband of Auguste de Meuron's sister from Bahia. Maurice Borel (1783–1860), Antoine's father, established himself as a merchant and judge in Neuchâtel, working alongside his younger brother Laurent (1797–1861) to distribute goods received from Le Havre in Switzerland. Antoine Borel acquired the mill in Bevaix near Neuchâtel in 1841 and retained it until 1844. This account highlights the Borel family's business activities and the evolution of its capital, which influenced changes in the corporate structures at Borel Frères (Borel Brothers).

3 Archives d'Etat de Neuchâtel (AEN), file "NEUCHÂTELOIS A L'ETRANGER (2) 172", subdivision "BAHIA", document "Louis-César-Alexis Borel".

4 Archives d'Etat de Neuchâtel (AEN), file "NEUCHÂTELOIS A L'ETRANGER (2) 172", subdivision "BAHIA", document "Edouard G. Borel".

In July 1818, Antoine Borel received news of the death of one of his brothers, first from Auguste-Frédéric de Meuron, then from his (and his other brother's) friend and future partner Charles-Édouard Borel, from Le Havre. By August of the same year, Antoine had returned from Montréal to New York, where he received updates from his expatriated friend from Neuchâtel, also called Meuron de Bahia ("from Bahia"), precisely because of his flourishing businesses in the Brazilian Northeastern Province. In the letter, Meuron de Bahia reflected on the death of Antoine's brother Louis and expressed surprise at the upcoming marriage of Antoine's friend, Édouard Borel, to Meuron de Bahia's sister, Henriette-Frédérique de Meuron (Wasserfallen, 1999, p. 104). The sources we consulted are unclear as to whether Edouard G. Borel is the same individual as Charles-Édouard Borel (1790–1855), who married Henriette-Frédérique de Meuron (1794–1876), or whether the "Ed. Borel in Rio de Janeiro" is connected to the original company founded by Antoine and Eduard Borel in Le Havre in 1820 (Galofaro, 2024, p. 261). They likely belong to the same direct lineage, but our current archival research does not allow us to confirm these connections. According to secondary literature, Frédéric-Édouard (1825–1904), one of the seven children of Charles-Édouard Borel and Henriette de Meuron, served as the factory designer in Salvador da Bahia and Rio de Janeiro (Galofaro, 2024, p. 261). He was most likely the one who further expanded the company's business in Brazil. However, additional research is needed to confirm these connections.

Auguste-Frédéric de Meuron married a member of the de Pury family, founded Meuron & Cie in Brazil in the 1830s and his legacy, as we said, financed the Préfagier Hospital in Neuchâtel. Édouard Borel, in his turn, worked for eight years with his Parisian relatives, the Meurons, who married later Auguste-Frédéric's sister Henriette-Frédérique de Meuron, intertwining the two already interconnected families' capitals inextricably. As Wasserfallen (1999, p. 104) states: "The couple Edouard and Henriette-Frédérique Borel-De Meuron inherited the remaining portion of the Meuron estate in Bahia […] which included the Château de Dully (where we will see Edouard's widow residing in the 1850s–1860s)."[5]

This inheritance included the estates founded by Meuron in Brazil, enduring until the 20th century (Wasserfallen, 1999, p. 167). Édouard and Henriette-Frédérique's marriage solidified a business empire, generating substantial revenue from South American imports, such as coffee, tobacco, and dyes. Antoine Borel's initial 5,000-franc loan from Ballif-Hunziker of Bern enabled his partnership with his friend Édouard, whom he met through Meuron de Bahia, culminating in a 100,000-franc contribution by 1833 (Wasserfallen, 1999, p. 43). This inheritance and loan underscores Borel's family's fortune and deep connections to Brazil.

Auguste-Frédéric de Meuron's influence was foundational. Galofaro (2024) states he had the biggest fortune in South America, and Wasserfallen (1999, p. 43) highlights that his endeavors were "a strategic alliance based on the bonds

5 Translation from the original French by the authors.

of trust essential for the successful development of business." In 1816, Meuron de Bahia partnered with David-Henri de Meuron in Lisbon to establish a trading post in Bahia. Although initially unprofitable, these associations laid the foundations for Meuron's future commercial success in Brazil (De Meuron, 1991; De Meuron-Landolt, 1998, p. 200). By 1819, he had established independent enterprises in Salvador da Bahia, expanding with subsidiaries in Rio de Janeiro (1832) and Pernambuco (1836) (De Meuron-Landolt, 1998, p. 199). Brazil's economy at the time relied heavily on enslaved labor, a fact central to understanding Meuron's profitable enterprises and, indirectly, the Borels' growth in capital and wealth later. Meuron's background is crucial to understanding the funds that flowed later to the Borel's enterprises. Henriette Frédérique Meuron-Borel formed a general partnership with her son, Édouard Borel, to manage the manufacturing operations in Bahia, Pernambuco, and any potential rights in the Rio branch. Established in 1856, this company operated until 1886 under the name Borel & Cie, successor to Meuron & Cie (1892, 1896–1913) (Galofaro, 2024, p. 135).

Further documents from the "Pierre-Abram Borel funds" in the State Archive of Neuchâtel shed light on another of the Borel branch family's commercial operations. The "Transfer of the plantation in Léopoldine" details the passing of a plantation from Charles-Louis Borel (1776–1852) to his sons, accompanied by an inventory of enslaved laborers.[6] Léopoldine is a Swiss German colony founded in 1818 in Brazil's province of Bahia (Galofaro, 2024, p. 149) and was formed by three big plantations called Riacho d'Ouro, Pombal, and Helvécia (Galofaro, 2024, p. 153). Pombal is one of the properties owned by Charles-Louis Borel and passed over to his two older sons in 1827:

> We, the undersigned Charles Louis Borrel, father, residing in Colombier near Neuchâtel in Switzerland, and his two eldest sons, Eugène and Gustave, agree to the following:
>
> Borrel, father, transfers to his two aforementioned sons all the assets, or property, consisting of land, mechanical buildings, enslaved persons, livestock, furniture, fabrics, and provisions owed to the said Mr. Borrel, father, in the balance sheets of the years 1826 and 1827, closed on November 30, 1827, by the former company Borrel, Béquin & Huguenin in Pombal, Brazil.
>
> This transfer takes place at the same valuations at which these various items appear in the books of Borrel, Béquin, and Huguenin. Eugène and Gustave Borrel will become jointly and severally accountable and indebted by a promissory note, with

6 AEN, file "BOREL PIERRE-ABRAM-15," document from 30 November 1827 signed by Eugène Borrel, Gustave Borrel and Charles Louis Borrel. In the original documents we used, their last name appears with a double "r", so we have maintained the original spelling here.

> interest at five percent per annum, for the amount of this transfer, in favor of Borrel, father, as of November 30, 1827.
>
> The land, crops, leisure facilities, tools, and buildings of the plantation will serve as collateral for Borrel, father, until full repayment of his claim. Eugène and Gustave Borrel will have twelve years, that is, until December 31, 1839, to repay the capital in the manner they deem most suitable to their father's interests, whether through deferred payment orders at the price of Bahia or Rio sent to Switzerland, or based on the advice they obtain from informed merchants regarding the most advantageous repayment method for Borrel, father.[7]

Another document of the same file, "Acknowledgment of debt by Alexis Borrel," outlines debts totaling 900,000 reis, a significant sum tied to their colonial ventures.[8] These records unravel just a small part of the financial and social-familial networks linking Neuchâtel's bourgeoisie with the colonial economy. Charles-Louis Borel (1776–1852) was originally from Colombier and decided to establish himself in Brazil after considerable financial losses during the years 1813–1817, as Veyrassat (1993, pp. 134–135), citing sources from the State Archives of Neuchâtel, shows:

> My successive losses in 1813, 1814, and 1815, and my disasters in 1816 and 1817 have not only consumed the savings of an entire previous lease but have also left me in debt with eight children, unraised – our sons and four daughters […] On the other hand, in Brazil, a path is opening up for the Swiss who wish to dedicate themselves to clearing land and cultivating cotton, sugar, and coffee, and His Majesty the King of Brazil […] will favor and protect the Swiss there, granting them land to clear.9

With the support of Meuron & Cie, Charles-Louis Borel managed to acquire his lands in the district of Porto Seguro (the property he would name Pombal) (Galofaro, 2024, pp. 150–151). He entrusted two partners, Pierre-Henri Moulin from Colombier and Philippe Huguenin, along with his 15-year-old son Eugène, were tasked with establishing an agricultural settlement (focused on coffee) in the district in 1819. Charles-Louis Borel's other sons, Gustave Adolphe (born 1808) and Charles-Henri Borel, would join the enterprise in 1823 (Galofaro, 2024, p. 151). Borrel, the father, visited them between 1826 and 1828. In 1829, it seems he purchased enslaved

7 AEN, file "BOREL PIERRE-ABRAM-15," document from 30 November 1827 signed by Eugène Borrel, Gustave Borrel and Charles Louis Borrel. All the archival manuscript documents quoted in this part were translated from the original French by the authors.

8 AEN, file "BOREL PIERRE-ABRAM-15," document from 30 November 1827 signed by Eugène Borrel, Gustave Borrel and Charles Louis Borrel.

9 Translation from the original French by the authors.

individuals for 1,500 to 2,000 francs in France to support the Swiss settlers or the tanners, according to Galofaro (2024, p. 151).[10]

A diplomatic history: integrating Switzerland into the Brazilian empire via Portugal and emigrants from Neuchâtel

What is particularly interesting here are the relatively unexplored connections between the colonial world—in this case, Brazil—and diplomacy. Records at the State Archives of Neuchâtel indicate a significant number of Swiss diplomats working in Brazil to support Swiss settlers, especially prominent Swiss merchants in the region, while also benefiting from these trade networks themselves. Such is the case of Paul Jacques-Albert, Jacques-Henri Gretillat, and Charles Perret-Gentil, described as the Trade Consul of the Confederation (Consul de commerce de la Confederation) in Rio de Janeiro. Perret-Gentil was granted a "Letter of Full Powers" to negotiate and sign the Special Treaty on Trade Relations on June 18, 1842.[11] This document was signed by the Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation in Bern. Perret-Gentil served as Consul General in Brazil from 1840 to 1853. In Brazil, he became interested in the issue of Swiss immigrants in the Empire and advocated for organized immigration to the coffee plantations in western São Paulo. In 1851, he acquired a large portion of the Superagui Peninsula on the coast of Paraná, where he founded the Colônia de Superagui.[12]

Documents on diplomatic exchanges between Brazil and Switzerland, mediated via the Portuguese Consul in Switzerland, reveal intriguing negotiations. Two letters discuss the possibility for Switzerland to exploit land in Brazil with the aim of accessing colonial resources. These resources included sugar, coffee, and tobacco, among others. The letters also mention Swiss settlers potentially receiving assistance from Portugal to develop these lands. The prospect of extraordinary profits from these ventures is highlighted, and the "right to possess negros" is explicitly mentioned. There is no way of affirming that Bern and the Swiss diplomacy were not aware of

10 The conditional is obligatory in this case, since Galofaro's passage is not very clear. She attributes (without detailed reference) this information to Veyrassat, but we found no direct reference to Borel in her book (Veyrassat, 1993, p. 135). At the same time, Galofaro (2024) consulted many new archives in Rio de Janeiro that shed light on the presence of Neuchâtel migrants in Brazil.

11 Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty no Rio de Janeiro (AHIRJ), archival code P18-M33_1842-06-18, "Carta de Plenos Poderes conferida a Charles Perret Gentil, Cônsul-geral da Suíça, para conferida negociar e firmar o Tratado Especial sobre Relações Comerciais, em 18 de junho de 1842. Documento assinado pelo Chanceler da Confederação Suíça."

12 Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty no Rio de Janeiro (AHIRJ), archival code P18-M33_1842-06-18, "Carta de Plenos Poderes conferida a Charles Perret Gentil, Cônsul-geral da Suíça, para conferida negociar e firmar o Tratado Especial sobre Relações Comerciais, em 18 de junho de 1842. Documento assinado pelo Chanceler da Confederação Suíça." This information was taken from the AHIRJ database: https://atom.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php/p18-m33-1842-06-18 (accessed 12 December 2024).

Swiss colonizers profiting directly from a slave-based economy such as Brazil was until the end of the 19th century:

> Brazil today offers a vast territory to Swiss industry. As the Consul of Portugal in Switzerland, I have the honor of presenting these opportunities to Switzerland. The Swiss will be treated as Portuguese nationals naturalized as Brazilians and will benefit from free land grants. His Most Faithful Majesty will cover the travel expenses for poor Catholic families, assist them in settling, provide them with livestock and seeds, and support their needs during the first two years.
>
> Swiss individuals wishing to cultivate colonial goods such as sugar, coffee, cotton, tobacco, and indigo will be granted lands suitable for these crops. Depending on their capital, they will receive concessions of varying sizes and, like the Portuguese, will be allowed to employ enslaved labor.[13]

This is a confidential note presented by the Consul of Portugal in Switzerland to the "most honorable Lords, Presidents, and members of the Council of State of the Canton of Neuchâtel, according to the authorization of his Court." In the note, he also states that:

> The initial negotiations, initiated by the Canton of Fribourg, limit the first expedition to one hundred families, mostly from this canton. If successful, other expeditions will follow.
>
> His Most Faithful Majesty will only accept honest individuals. The cantonal governments will be asked to select families based on royal criteria and provide certificates of good conduct.[14]

Although the cases of elite families such as the de Meurons and the Borels do not precisely match the requisite of being Catholic, they certainly had the means to establish themselves in Brazil with their own resources, buying land and enslaved labor, as shown above. Since the economic situation was hardly favorable during the decades to come, many Swiss sought to emigrate. In 1854, it was estimated that 15,000 to 18,000 Swiss emigrated—a considerable number given the population at the time (Wasserfallen, 1999, p. 91). Most crossed the Atlantic to settle in the United States or South America, particularly Brazil. When accusations of the mistreatment of

13 AEN, archival code RE AEN 4ACHA-15, "Correspondance avec l'étranger: Lettres du Brésil": letter from the Portuguese Consul in Switzerland to the members of the government of Neuchâtel, 10 June 1818. Translation from the original French by the authors.

14 AEN, archival code RE AEN 4ACHA-15, "Correspondance avec l'étranger: Lettres du Brésil": letter from the Portuguese Consul in Switzerland to the members of the government of Neuchâtel, 10 June 1818. Translation from the original French by the authors.

Swiss settlers in Brazil arose, the Federal Council sent Johann Jakob von Tschudi on a special mission to advocate on their behalf in 1860 (Bartoletti, 2024).

Before this journey on behalf of the Swiss Confederation (1860–1862), Von Tschudi traveled to the Americas in 1838–1842 and 1857–1858. Besides Brazil, he had lived in countries such as Chile, Peru, and Argentina. The several years he spent overseas as an emigrant and scientific researcher enabled him to bring home many botanical and ethnographic collections and sacred objects, some of which were returned by Switzerland to Bolivia in the 21st century (Bartoletti, 2024). Neuchâtel inherited hundreds of these objects: the Museum of Natural Sciences in Neuchâtel and some of the great families of the city, such as the Coulons, financed the travels of von Tschudi, who often used Neuchâtel watches as currency in his overseas dealings (Bartoletti, 2026). The development of Neuchâtel's cultural patrimony and its watchmaking exports were thus unsuspectedly connected thanks to long-range migration.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO SOUTHERN AFRICA: HOW THE COLONIAL WORLD CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEUCHÂTEL (FROM THE MID-19TH TO THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY)[15]

Migratory connections between Neuchâtel's watchmaking and colonialism

The export of Swiss watches to Latin America in the "Long 19th Century" was often initiated by travelers and migrants such as von Tschudi and, above all, by numerous businessmen and watchmakers from Neuchâtel who experienced a long-range migration. People like Auguste Leuba (1798–1860) from Buttes and Henri Grandjean (1803–1879) from Le Locle, the focus of the following paragraphs, represented this migration/export combination. They enriched themselves by diversifying their economic activities and favoring the import of colonial raw materials extracted mainly in Brazil through systemic colonial violence that some authors have associated, for this emerging industrial era, with a "second slavery" (Tomich & Zeuske, 2008). Thanks to these paths, they could also invest time and money in public projects or political careers.

Of the abovementioned actors, Leuba and Grandjean, historiography has traced some biographical outlines. The former emigrated to Rio de Janeiro in 1822, where he founded the watchmaking firm Auguste Leuba & Cie and was then joined in 1828 by a homonymous man from Buttes who took over the management of the business, enabling the founder to return home in 1832. After returning to Switzerland,

15 This case study, by Fabio Rossinelli, is part of the completed SNSF-funded project "Migrations and development in mountain borderlands of Switzerland and Slovenia: a comparative perspective (18th–20th centuries)" (no. 192201, 2020–2023), Università della Svizzera italiana.

Leuba settled in Le Locle, where he actively participated in the local and cantonal political scene: he took part in the republican revolution of 1848, which arose from this town; he became a member of the provisional government, and then State Councilor of Neuchâtel (Guye-Bergeret, 2024). His descendants also played an essential role in the politics of the canton and the country (Klauser, 2007), investing in the railway development of Neuchâtel like their ancestor (Godet, 1912, p. 158) and securing business in Brazil at least until 1908 (Veyrassat, 1995, p. 20). What was this business? The production and sale of watches in Rio de Janeiro, of course, but also the export of other Swiss products to Brazil, for example, embroidery and spirits; and finally, maybe above all, the import of Brazilian coffee to Switzerland, for which a branch was opened in Santos, a coastal city close to São Paulo, and another in Paris around 1844 (Veyrassat, 1993, pp. 416–417). Two points should be emphasized at this stage. Firstly, the national historiography of the Swiss economy has given little attention to import aspects from the colonial world (Bairoch & Körner, 1990). Secondly, international—and especially non-European—historiography has highlighted how coffee production and exploitation in Brazil during the "Long 19th Century" was based on a system of violence and enslavement that went beyond the official abolition of slavery in 1888 (Bivar Marquese, 2013). It was, therefore, by relying on such exploitation that the Leuba watchmaking family integrated an overseas economy for generations, from which they profited enough to move their business from a family dimension to a multinational one through this migratory trajectory (and return migration) Auguste Leuba and his sons were able to launch themselves into politics in their own country and work for its development—just as it was the case with Swiss colonial mercenaries like Louis Wyrsch (1793–1858), co-founder of the unitary state of Switzerland in 1848 (Schär, 2022).

Similar to Auguste Leuba, the watchmaker Henri Grandjean had a similar path: he experienced a social ascent by emigrating from Switzerland to Brazil and other Latin American countries between 1823 and 1831 and found in the overseas market a source of income that allowed him to return home and establish himself there as a watchmaker, philanthropist, and politician—taking part, just like Leuba, in the Neuchâtel revolution of 1848, but also later financing railways, watchmaking schools, social activities, and housing constructions to connect the town of Le Locle to the rest of the canton and country. Again, Grandjean and his brothers—and their father before them—took advantage of the conditions in Brazil under imperial rule, extracting raw mineral materials useful for the production of watches in Le Locle and trading with the Brazilian emperor Pedro I. As in the case of Leuba, Grandjean operated in other market spheres, for example, agricultural exploitation in the Andes of Peru, which passed into a more liberal system under British informal imperialism post-1824 (namely after Peru gained its independence from Spain) (Rossinelli, 2023b, p. 108–113).

Far from being limited to Latin America, the emigration of watchmakers out of Neuchâtel also arrived in other countries and territories, such as the Ottoman Empire

(in the region that is now Turkey)—and this generated material consequences in Neuchâtel. It was the main theatre of the watchmaking enterprise David Lebet & Fils Victor, or simply, Lebet & Fils, which specialized in the Ottoman watch market from Buttes and founded a branch in Constantinople (today's Istanbul) around 1845, managed by migrants of the same family, like Alphonse Lebet (1819–1892) (Guye-Bergeret, 2024). The generations of this family, whose watchmaking activities were initiated by David-Louis Lebet (1778–1847) and his son Louis-Victor Lebet (1800–1877), became part of the complex imperial context of Turkey, where a Swiss colony was established around 1850 (David, 1999). Other migrants from Neuchâtel participated in the life and administration of this colony, such as Edouard Huguenin (1856–1926), who, returning home two months a year, continued to take a "moral and financial interest in the local life of Le Locle" (cited in: David, 1993, p. 81).[16] Still unpublished sources in the Neuchâtel State Archives show how the Lebet fortune favored buying and selling land in Buttes through brothers and other close family members who remained at home.[17] At the same time, in 1861, the aforementioned Louis-Victor Lebet purchased the site known as Le Gor du Vauseyon for 50,000 Swiss francs—a sum equivalent to the annual salary of 77 workers in the Swiss textile industry at the time (Historical Statistics of Switzerland, n. d.).[18] The property was crossed by a watercourse suitable for mills and located near a large villa, La Maison du Prussien, where Lebet lived. This complex, which he sold in 1884, is now a tourist site in Neuchâtel and the Jura region (Garin & Graef, 1987, pp. 34–36).

Until now, we have mentioned how the emigration of watchmakers to distant lands—in particular to Latin America and the Near East—had an impact or at least an influence on the development of the Canton of Neuchâtel (facilitating political careers, public and private investments, or own use of the resources generated), a historiographical field that is still little addressed is the direct relationship between watchmaking and colonialism (Scheurer, 1998; Scheurer, 2001). More specifically, the import or trade of raw materials from Africa that are useful for watchmaking production in Neuchâtel is still largely underestimated.

Between the late-19th and early 20th century, part of the cantonal elite took an interest in emigration to the African continent, encouraged by the years of the Berlin Conference (1884–1885), which also saw the creation of a Geographical Society in Le Locle (Société neuchâteloise de géographie). There was much excitement around the project that Paul Perrin, a Neuchâtel trader who had emigrated to the Transvaal with his brother Jules in 1872, launched in Switzerland via the geographical societies when he returned in 1886: he promised, through the foundation of a

16 The original source is an obituary that appeared in *Le Véritable Messager boiteux de Neuchâtel pour l'an de grâce 1927*, p. 45. Translation from the original French by the authors.

17 AEN, archival code G165-G169, "Actes notariés". They are Alphonse (1789–1864) and Victor (1779–?), two brothers of the founder of Lebet & Fils, David-Louis Lebet (1778–1847).

18 Average of the entry "Spinner, Weber, Drucker, Sticker" for the years 1860–1865. The calculation was made on 300 working days per year.

Swiss–African Company, to encourage emigration and trade to Southern Africa with a focus on the import of gold, which, along with silver and platinum, was the main component of watch production. Watchmakers in Neuchâtel were the main workers of precious metals, for example, in minting, foundries and goldsmiths; leading political figures in this canton then pushed through two national laws, in 1880 and 1886, to improve Switzerland's economic competitiveness in this sector. Federal Councilor Numa Droz, also from Neuchâtel, encouraged Paul Perrin's migration and trade project—who had previously sent geological samples of soil from Southern Africa from the Transvaal to Switzerland (Boillat, 2016; Rossinelli et al., 2024, pp. 16–21).

Although Perrin's project was not realized, several Neuchâtel families or enterprises, such as the watchmakers DuBois, relied on it to plan an emigration to the Transvaal. With a long migratory tradition, this family from Le Locle founded the first watchmaking factory in Switzerland in 1785, DuBois & Fils, which was run for two centuries from father to son, establishing branches inside and outside Europe. The Transvaal gold became so much a part of the migratory and entrepreneurial strategies that two DuBois brothers, Philippe (born in 1866) and Jean (1869), emigrated and settled there in 1887 and 1891, respectively, until the end of the century. With the support of relatives in Le Locle and Frankfurt am Main—the latter being home to the mother's side, the Andreae family, who headed the Deutsche Gold- und Silberscheideanstalt (German Gold and Silver Refining)—Philippe and Jean DuBois became part of the transnational networks of colonial exploitation in Southern Africa. They built a million-dollar business in the gold market with their own mining installations in places such as Johannesburg, Pietersburg, and Pretoria. Investors from Neuchâtel took advantage of this entrepreneurial emigration by pocketing 8% dividends for ten years, while the family had direct and unmediated access to the precious metal that was the basis of watchmaking production (Rossinelli, 2023b, pp. 116–117; Rossinelli, 2025, pp. 83–85).

The hidden role of missionaries from the Jura Mountains

This case study opens the door to several other actors who tend to be excluded from the "classic" emigrants who contributed to the development of Neuchâtel: missionaries. These were either collaborators of the DuBois brothers in their mining enterprises, such as the missionary Honoré Schlaefli (1858–1940), or competitors, such as Paul Berthoud (1847–1930), both from the Jura Mountains and both active in the Geographical Society based in Le Locle.[19] Many emigrants from Neuchâtel were in the service of the Swiss Mission (Mission romande), such as Arthur Grandjean (1860–1930) and Alexandre-Henri Junod (1863–1934), who contributed to the stabilization of relations between white entrepreneurs and black workers—themselves often

19 Archives cantonales vaudoises (ACV), archival code PP 1002 O 08.51-08.60, box no. 38476: letter from Fehr & Dubois to Paul Leresche, 13 May 1893.

migrants (Crush et al., 1991)—in the goldmines of Southern Africa (Schaufelberger, 1985). Grandjean wrote numerous essays on the work of the Swiss Mission, highlighting how this reality in the African continent had represented a development of organized solidarity in Switzerland (Grandjean, 1917) and how "a Swiss colony in the North of the Transvaal"[20] had been created thanks to the missionaries (many of whom came from the Jura Mountains) which allowed them to encourage Switzerland to establish bilateral relations with the Boer government (Rossinelli, 2024). Junod, for his part, contributed to the study of the "primitive races" of the black people of Mozambique, who often emigrated and worked in the mines of Southern Africa under European control. He published dozens of studies in Switzerland and Europe that had a major impact on the spread of an imperial culture, stimulating racial segregation in the 20th century and struggles for independence. Last but not least, a large part of the collections of the Ethnographic Museum in Neuchâtel came from Junod (Harries, 2007).

Georges Reutter (1875–1946), a doctor originally from La Chaux-de-Fonds, also contributed to this museum's collection when he emigrated to Barotseland (today's Western Province of Zambia) on behalf of the Paris Mission. Distinguished for disseminating the use of quinine as a sanitary method to prevent malaria in the South African colonies (Mackintosh, 1974, p. 276), Reutter was also a prolific photographer whose material was used to stimulate the mission's fund-raising efforts (Peggie & Burke, 2014) in which several Neuchâtel actors occupied key positions since 1824. Reutter's still unpublished travel diary, kept in the archives of the Neuchâtel Ethnographic Museum, reveals how missionary emigration created a lasting connection for the people of the Jura Mountains with colonial Africa.[21] Thanks to our cross-referencing of this source with other documents (in particular collected in the database on the Paris Mission: Pampana & al., 2022), we have attested that the Neuchâtel missionary David-Frédéric Ellenberger (1835–1920), who emigrated to Basutoland (today's Lesotho) in 1860, was the father of Alfred Ellenberger (1863–1929) and the latter pioneered the money transfer system of this country in 1901 via the British "Standard Bank" (Maliehe, 2021, pp. 74–75). On another front, Reutter had the opportunity to meet in the mission station of Paul Germond (1835–1918) and his son Louis Germond (1861–1941), the former Swiss consul in Pretoria, who seems to have engaged in the Second Transvaal War (with his family) on the side of the Boers

20 Archives cantonales vaudoises (ACV), archival code PP 1002 O 3/5, box no. 39079: "Une colonie suisse au N[ord] du Transvaal," handwritten document by Arthur Grandjean, undated (but between 1888 and 1896).

21 Archives du Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel, Entrée 1977: six notebooks representing the diary of Georges Reutter between 25 January 1902 and 28 April 1904, preserved in an envelope stating "Copié par [copied by] Mr. Henri Perret." The notebooks contain a total of 207 pages and are numbered consecutively.

and then fled to Lesotho in 1902: Edouard Costançon.[22] Already a settler in Algeria, he was a close collaborator of missionaries and businessmen in Southern Africa and contributed to the success—as did his successor at the consulate, Carl Fehr—of the entrepreneurial emigration of the DuBois watchmakers and their gold business, mentioned earlier (Rossinelli, 2024).

All these actors and events related to the African continent during colonization affected the local realities of Neuchâtel. New research on this topic is needed. It will be possible to show how watchmakers became directly integrated and interested in the colonial world and how missionaries did not only have an impact in the colonies but also at home—even collaborating with the watchmaking business. The categories of watchmakers and missionaries are rarely seen as migrants. However, they are fully part of the development of Neuchâtel due to migration—which was based not only on Swiss or European geography but also on a global and colonial one.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have argued, the analysis of the migration history in Neuchâtel seems to be based on a "double historiography." The first focuses on short-range and medium-range migration, emphasizing its role in the Canton's demographic, economic, and social development. The second, more recent and limited, examines long-range migration but tends to disconnect these movements from the processes of development of Neuchâtel. This dichotomy limits our understanding of the impact of migration on the area of origin.

The case studies presented in this article show that this historiographical separation is unfounded. The example of the Meuron and Borel families illustrates how their transatlantic connections, based on the slave economy of Brazil, passed through regional, European and global networks and how all this directly influenced the development of Neuchâtel—via transfers of property from one family generation to the next, or investments in the health sector. The example of the watchmakers Leuba, Grandjean, Lebet, and DuBois, who emigrated to the imperial and colonial world of Latin America, the Near East, and Southern Africa, also shows that their stays on foreign lands had an impact on the economic and social life of Neuchâtel. Moreover, far from being a separate migratory body, the missionaries did play a part in this, contributing to the activities and stability of the Swiss and Neuchâtel people, particularly in the Transvaal, Lesotho, and elsewhere—not forgetting their key role in the development of museums and collections in Neuchâtel.

What we have shown through our own completed or ongoing research are, in fact, only case studies—based, however, on traditional literature (read with

22 Archives du Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel, Entrée 1977, p. 48 (31 March 1902). The report of this military engagement appeared in several Swiss newspapers, like *Le Journal du Jura* (26 January 1900), p. 3.

fresh eyes), on recently published works (which present current findings) and on as-yet-unpublished archives (which have yet to be explored). This invites us to continue research in this field and to change the paradigm of migration history and the impacts of migration, broadening the range of analysis in a more inclusive way to historiographical terrains that are still marginal and separate. To overcome the current limitations of historiography, it is essential to rethink the history of migration by systematically integrating its colonial and global dimensions. Neuchâtel, by its geographical location and specific historical features, is a perfect illustration of the need to re-examine these interactions. This case study may inspire similar research in other peripheral or mountainous regions of Europe, often perceived as isolated or disconnected from broader historical processes (Viazzo, 1989, p. 12) from broader historical processes, despite their relevance to world developments in the "Long 19th Century."

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POVZETEK

GOSPODARSKE IN DRUŽBENE POSLEDICE KOLONIALNEGA IZSELJEVANJA NA KANTON NEUCHÂTEL SKOZI »DOLGO 19. STOLETJE«

Fabio Rossinelli, Ricardo Borrmann

Avtorja v prispevku obravnavata zgodovino migracij v švicarskem kantonu Neuchâtel v »dolgem 19. stoletju« z regionalnega, evropskega in globalnega vidika. Neuchâtel je bil zgodovinsko vključen v evropske migracijske tokove in globalne kolonialne procese, zato so na njegov razvoj močno vplivali migracijski tokovi iz bližnjih in oddaljenih delov sveta ter njegove povezave s kolonialnimi sistemi, čeprav Švica ni imela uradnih kolonij. Avtorja osvetljujeta, kako so te migracije vplivale na gospodarski in družbeni razvoj te regije, hkrati pa izpostavljata pogosto spregledan vpliv kolonialnih povezav.

Kanton Neuchâtel je bil pomembno središče migracij iz bližnjih in oddaljenih delov sveta, zlasti po prihodu hugenotov iz Francije po preklicu Nantskega edikta leta 1685. Ti priseljenci so prispevali k razvoju urarstva, ki je postalo ključna gospodarska panoga v regiji. Industrijski razvoj Neuchâtla je bil povezan s kolonialnimi surovinami, kot so bombaž, kava in tobak, ter s kapitalom, pridobljenim s kolonialno trgovino in izkoriščanjem.

Neuchâtel je bil zlasti prek bogatih družin, kot sta bili de Meuron in Borel, ki sta trgovali v Braziliji in južni Afriki, vpet v globalne kolonialne mreže. Te družine so vlagale v lokalne projekte, kot so bolnišnice, s čimer so pomembno prispevale k razvoju kantona. Vendar pa sodelovanje s kolonialnimi državami ni bilo omejeno le na trgovino. Švicarski urarji so svoje izdelke izvažali po vsem svetu, iz kolonij pa so uvažali surovine, potrebne za njihovo proizvodnjo.

Tradicionalne zgodovinske obravnave kantona Neuchâtel se osredotočajo predvsem na lokalne migracije in pogosto zanemarjajo vlogo migracij iz oddaljenejših držav ter njihov vpliv na razvoj kantona. Avtorja zato pozivata k »deevropeizaciji« zgodovine Neuchâtla za boljše razumevanje povezanosti kantona z globalnimi in kolonialnimi procesi. Pri tem poudarjata, da migracijski narativi Neuchâtla nimajo zgolj lokalnega ali evropskega značaja, temveč so tesno prepleteni s kolonializmom in globalnimi povezavami. Kot trdita, bi bilo za celovitejše razumevanje migracijskih in gospodarskih zgodovin treba podrobneje raziskati te medsebojne vplive. Neuchâtel predstavlja nazoren primer regije, katere identiteta se je izoblikovala pod vplivom globalnih in lokalnih procesov, ki so vplivali na razvoj kantona, pa tudi njegove širše okolice.

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