

features of the economy, notably the poor living standards, for which the low stature of the population provides evidence, and social inequality, so he is not suggesting that the Low Countries functioned as a Utopia in his chosen period. He is also very conscious that the advances did not continue, so that the Low Countries, though full of industrial enterprises in both town and country in the sixteenth century, did not become the cradle of the Industrial Revolution.

The strength of the book is that it is not just an incisive study of a particular part of Europe with its own peculiar characteristics, but it is also providing through a specific example an exploration of the factors which made it possible for an economy to grow. So it is not about an exceptional case, but has universal lessons. Themes which run through the book are the development of an intensive use of land and the specialisation of agriculture. The regional differences within the Low Countries are emphasized throughout, and among the various subdivisions of the Low Countries Holland stands out because the land was used for industrial crops such as hemp and hops, and for livestock, and grain was imported to feed the people living in its towns. The political context runs against the English assumption that a strong centralised state was the ideal environment for economic prosperity. Security of property holding, and a relatively stable currency was still possible in the small and relatively weak states of the Low Countries. Manors dissolved at an early date, and the population enjoyed personal freedom, without restrictions from their lords. Instead much land was held on short term leaseholds, which provided the institutional basis for productive agriculture. People formed useful associations to maintain dykes and manage pastures. Literacy was widespread, which enabled the economy to function in a sophisticated way. Van Bavel has a rural perspective, but he does not neglect the towns, and he draws attention to the economic integration between town and country. He has written with clarity, but does not conceal the complexities, as his central thesis is that commerce,

farming, institutions and social structures, woven inseparably together, interacted to promote growth. This was made possible by the conjunction of the environment, the political and social structures, and the commercial opportunities. Nothing was inevitable or determined, and he makes the point that commercialisation did not lead inevitably to specialisation – only in particular circumstances.

Van Bavel could not deal with every subject and theme in a book which is already of considerable length. Outsiders are aware of important episodes of destructive warfare, especially at the end of the fifteenth century and in 1566-1581, and it would have been helpful to be reassured that these had only temporary economic consequences. And of course the English think of Amsterdam as the focus of trade in commodities from outside Europe, but this 'global' dimension is given little space.

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Krabbendam, Hans, Minnen, Cornelis A. van, Scott-Smith, Giles (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009, 1190 pp., ISBN 978 90 8506 653 8).

There is much of great interest in this volume, a testament to the weight the United States carries in the Netherlands today. Literally. Clocking in at over eleven hundred pages, this tome is a credit to the editors' scope of vision and remarkable skill in getting ninety-four different authors writing ninety-two separate essays (several are co-authored) to adhere to an average length of about eleven pages. The result is impressive. Written by authorities, each essay is an excellent introduction to the current state of knowledge and thinking on the topic. It is also very readable, making the volume highly accessible to non-scholars as well as non-specialist scholars. Specialists might quibble with some bits, but the scholarly quality is good overall. Boldly

cast over four hundred years, the book provides an authoritative overview of a connection that looms larger for the Dutch than Americans, but which has been undeniably important to the shaping of America as well.

The volume reflects the research encouraged by the Roosevelt Study Center in Middelburg, where the editors have studied the previous century and a half of Dutch-American relations, especially immigration and diplomatic relations. The importance of recent events is clear: half of the book covers us-Dutch relations since 1945 in three separate sections: Politics and Security, Economics and Society, and Culture. The remaining three sections cover relations from 1914-1945, the nineteenth century, and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Each section is provided with a useful introductory essay laying out the broad issues and essential information before plunging into the specifics of the various contributions. It is impossible to convey the wealth of scholarship on display here. Apart from immigration and diplomatic relations, there are cultural ties from literature to classical music to product design and, of course, movies; American uses of images of the Dutch and vice versa; religious influences of various kinds; water management; Anne Frank; and all sorts of economic ties. Opening with 'Images of America in the Low Countries until the Seventeenth Century' it closes with 'A Transatlantic Debate about Diversity and National Identity' with in between 'The Waning of Dutch New York', 'Dutch Pioneers and Native Americans', 'The United States and the Netherlands during the Great Depression', 'Dutch Left-Wing Political Parties and NATO', 'U.S. Ideology and the Founding of Business Schools in the Netherlands', and 'The Presence and Impact of Dutch Painters in Twentieth-Century America' just to select one essay from each section.

The importance of the twentieth century, in which the Dutch have depended on Americans for so much, is understandable. From the liberation in 1945 (though us forces only fought and died in south Limburg and south Brabant – the British

and Canadians did the rest, albeit under overall us command) to a barrage of cultural, business, and diplomatic ties, Americans have enabled the Dutch to hold their French and German neighbors (and former conquerors) at a distance ever since neutrality was no longer an option and European integration inevitable. Given that dependence on the Americans, the inclusion of the seventeenth century Dutch colonists in what later became New York seems like an effort to tame the monstrous power of the us by rendering it at least partially Dutch. After all, two us presidents were Roosevelts, descended from those Dutch colonists.

The American-Dutch relationship is a peculiar one, full of envy and contradictions. Dutch colonists were neighbors and contemporaries with the English colonists in North America, but only after being conquered by the English could their descendants help create the independent United States. Ironically, just as the us transitioned from a monarchy to a republic the Dutch headed in the opposite direction. Amsterdam's position as a center of world trade and influence has been supplanted by New York. Henry Hudson brought Manhattan into the Dutch orbit while sailing for the Dutch East India Company, then America helped Indonesia gain independence from the Dutch. Calvinists too conservative for the liberal Dutch state found refuge in the nineteenth century Mid-West, where they founded colleges named Hope and Calvin. Now, arguably, the Dutch look to Americans for patronage and protection while serving the Americans as imperial auxiliaries, if only out of fear 'that lagging behind the Americans would soon relegate its forces to a place outside the world's military elite' (737). Are Americans threatening to colonize the Dutch four centuries after the Dutch colonized the Americas? This volume gives us much to ponder.

Dutch priorities forged this volume. Though what was 'Dutch' could be confusing at various times before 1830, when it included elements of what is now Belgium (not to mention Germany and France). The editors opt 'for a separate Dutch-American narrative' arguing that the case for this 'is a

strong one' (21). The essays emerged out of a series of seminars in the Netherlands. The vast majority of the contributors are Dutch, with a respectable number of Americans, and one submission each from Belgium, Germany, and England. This is not a criticism. Indeed, it is hard to imagine American scholars being willing or able to craft such a volume.

The choice of 'Dutch-American Relations' is at times limited and ahistorical. For example, the editors claim 'relations between the two nations have never been marked by violence, but they have shared plenty of enemies: the Spanish, the British, the Germans, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Russians, and now the Taliban' (20). This diplomatically overlooks the fact that most of the colonial ancestors of the 'Americans' were English who did fight several wars against the Dutch, without which New York would still be New Amsterdam. The volume will remain the authoritative collection on its chosen topic for years to come, even as it can also be seen as an artifact and intervention in the self-same history it has so wonderfully outlined: an interpretation, perhaps a lesson, certainly a gift of scholarship to a relationship more complex than we may have realized. The editors are to be commended for providing us with this terrific opportunity for informed reflection.

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## Middeleeuwen

Brand, Hanno, Knol, Egge (eds.), **Koggen, kooplieden en kantoren. De Hanze, een praktisch netwerk** (Groninger Hanze Studies 4; Hilversum: Verloren, 2009, 228 blz., ISBN 978 90 8704 113 7).

Hanno Brand und Egge Knol ist es gelungen, für einen Sammelband zum Thema Hanse mit dem Titel *koggen, kooplieden en kantoren. De Hanze, een praktisch netwerk* die Crème de la Crème der deutschen und niederländischen Hanseforschung als Autoren zu gewinnen.

Bereits im Titel wird der rote Faden, der alle Beiträge in diesem Buch miteinander verbindet, vorgegeben – das Thema Netzwerke. Auf Basis der in jüngster Zeit intensivierten Verbindung von Hanseforschung und Netzwerktheorie werden die wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und kulturellen Netzwerke im Hanseraum in den Mittelpunkt gestellt und von den einzelnen Autoren unter verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten betrachtet. Das Hauptaugenmerk des Buches, und uneingeschränkt aller Beiträge, liegt auf den Funktionsmechanismen des hansischen Handels. Auch in den Artikeln, die sich stärker mit Fragen der Organisation und Struktur beschäftigen, kommt dieser Blickwinkel deutlich zum Tragen. Dieser konsequent durchgehaltene Ansatz führt zu einer für Sammelbände eher ungewöhnlichen, gerade deshalb aber erfreulichen Kohärenz des gesamten Buches.

Auf 203 Seiten werden in 12 Artikeln alle wichtigen Aspekte der modernen Hanseforschung präsentiert. Dabei gelingt es den Autoren, die Ergebnisse ihrer Forschungen in einer leicht verständlichen Sprache darzulegen. Komplizierte Fachtermini werden, wo sie nicht vermieden werden konnten, erklärt und auch die Anzahl der Fußnoten hält sich in den einzelnen Artikeln in erfreulichen Grenzen. Damit gelingt es dem Buch, eine Brücke zwischen akademischer Forschung und außeruniversitärer Geschichtsvermittlung zu schlagen.

Den Rahmen des Bandes bilden nicht nur organisatorisch der erste und letzte Artikel. Volker Henn führt den Leser in seinem Beitrag zunächst zu den Anfängen der Hanse zurück, wobei er deutlich macht, dass es einen klaren Bruch oder Gründungstermin nicht gab. Rolf Hammel-Kiesow stellt auf der anderen Seite der chronologischen Leiste die unterschiedlichen Rezeptions- und Interpretationsentwürfe, denen die Hanse von nachfolgenden Generationen unterworfen wurde, vor. Der Bogen spannt sich hier von nationalstaatlicher Vereinnahmung bis hin zu Deutungsmustern, die die Hanse als Vorläufer der Europäischen Union verstehen möchten –