Eric Ketelaar, ***Archiving People. A Social History of Dutch Archives*** (The Hague: Stichting Archiefpublicaties, 2020, 302 pp., ISBN 9789071251481).

Eric Ketelaar's ambitious social history of archiving in the Northern Low Countries, *Archiving People. A Social History of Dutch Archives*, is a fitting survey of a prolific career. Ketelaar is an esteemed archivist and legal historian with decades of experience running both regional and central state archives in the Netherlands. In *Archiving People*, Ketelaar seeks to chart the creation and transformation of archives in the Northern Low Countries as institutions existing within certain social and cultural contexts. The book includes a general overview of the sources and sourcing of Dutch history and a historiographical survey of the archival turn, attempting to place Dutch archival practice in the light of this newly-developed field. Since the late 1980s, theorists have discovered the archive as concept and re-examined the place of archival institutions in the formation of historical narratives. Ketelaar himself played a role in this interdisciplinary discourse. In 1998, Ketelaar coined the term 'archivalization' to pinpoint the archival 'moment of truth' when various socio-cultural factors determined whether a document would be archived. 'Archiving is a social practice' (17b), as Ketelaar put it in a 1999 article.[1] He also introduced a rough dichotomy between archives as symbol ('monument') and legal instrument ('muniment').[2] These theoretical contributions are brought to bear on the Northern Low Countries in *Archiving People*, which moves both chronologically and thematically, zooming in on crucial institutions, junctures, and particularities of Dutch history. It pretends to be neither a comprehensive guide to the archives of the Netherlands, nor a complete telling of the country's history. It does manage to be a compelling example of how the formation of archival repositories and archival culture can help reveal about historical shifts in the surrounding societies.

Across much of Europe in the late Middle Ages, countless secular and lay institutions began to find archiving useful for the conduct of everyday activities, urged on by trends in legal education, the prevalence of cheap paper from the Islamic world, and social tensions arising from the accelerated extraction of agricultural surpluses from the populace. The emergence of new practices of lordship and administrative writing, whether in the form of municipal, ecclesiastical, or princely power, are difficult to disconnect from the swift diffusion and diversification of the forms and uses of documents, especially beginning in the thirteenth century. By the time of the Reformation, the challenge for both politicians and archivists was cogently integrating vast and disparate networks of these pre-existing institutional memories

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of estates, churches, towns, guilds, and more, into an integrated whole: the beginnings of the 'information state'. In Ketelaar's telling, a number of trajectories are relevant to this process: the precocious urbanization of the Northern Low Countries beginning around 1100, the emergence of powerful princely courts, the draining of the polders, the religious and political upheavals that formed the Dutch Republic, the Dutch East Indies Company and the colonial empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like a number of examinations of the European administrative or 'information state' from recent years, the Napoleonic-era reforms of the early nineteenth century are seen as the pre-eminent impetus for a statistically-driven understanding of national populations (27b).

The book introduces the archival turn as understood by archivists themselves. A slight bias towards research in Dutch, German and English is moderated by an illumination of the role of technology in prompting the further documenting and archiving of life that draws especially upon the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Considering the breathless growth of the field since the 1990s, Ketelaar's up-to-date review of the scholarship on archival history is in itself no small achievement; he draws throughout the book on important contributions to the history of archival practice across Early Modern Europe by Markus Friedrich, Alexandra Walsham and Randolph Head, for example. Chapter 1, 'Archiving People', is most notable for narrating the repeated re-invention of the population registry systems of the Dutch state since the late nineteenth century and some captivating episodes of archival violence, sabotage and appropriation around World War II. It also introduces some more socially diffuse elements of archival practice, for example the archival practices of families. Chapters 2 to 5 each focus on an important official institution: churches, states (including but not limited to the estates of Holland), cities, and polders and commons. Subsequent chapters on property, trade, monies and litigation take a more thematic approach. For example, the chapter on litigation highlights the role of notaries in conflict settlement, while that on monies points to the archival backbone of financial practice by both municipalities and businesses. Chapter 10 engages with the legacy of archiving the Dutch colonial empire in the East Indies, including fascinating asides on the forging of maps out of ship captains' logs and the evacuation of archives from Jakarta to the colonial metropole on the eve of Indonesian independence. Chapters 11 to 13 concern changes in archiving technologies and archival personnel that are traditionally of more interest to archivists than to historians, to the latter's considerable detriment it might be added.

1 Eric Ketelaar, 'Archivalisation and archiving,' *Archives and Manuscripts* 26:1 (1999) 54-61.

2 Eric Ketelaar, 'Muniments and Monuments: The Dawn of Archives as Cultural Patrimony,' *Archival Science* 7:4 (2007) 343-357.

A book of this scope is bound to have its oversights. At times, the chapters' sub-sections resemble origin stories with important data points thrown in, and are less driven by arguments or relation to the central themes of the book (see 36b). The lack of references to the work of Peter Arnade, Paul Bertrand, Brigitte Bedos-Rezak and a whole swath of French and Belgian medieval and early modern historians of the symbolic power of documents are rather significant omissions. The book furthermore contains a number of typographical errors and a few broken hyperlinks; minor oversights that may have helped streamline the text, which is nonetheless organized into a very attractive e-book (it is not currently available in print). Considering the commitment to social history stated in the opening pages, this reader hoped to find more about guild archives, though Ketelaar's treatment of the archives of other horizontal associations such as polders and commons is commendable, and rare. Obviously, even an explicitly social-historical approach such as Ketelaar's runs up against the limitations of official archives for writing social history. Precisely for this reason, historians of archives and historians of the Low Countries might reconsider work by scholars like Ann Laura Stoler, Arndt Brendecke, or Sylvia Sellers-Garcia, who study the archives of colonial empire. Ketelaar does describe in some detail the multiple levels at which the colonial enterprise was documented, copied, and passed along in captain's legers, local bureaus, and central bureaus in the metropole and abroad. I suggest a more substantive treatment of Ann Laura Stoler's work on colonial governance in the Dutch empire could have been applied to archival practices within the colonial metropole, rather than simply reading colonial history 'along the archival grain'. In particular, they might consider applying the conclusions of this research to a deeper understanding of institutions in the metropole.

But Ketelaar's greatest challenge in writing such a book is integrating a social history of archives into a survey of the documentation practices of the key official institutions of the Dutch state and society. This tension is illustrated in the choice of Rembrandt's life as an introductory device in the book's prologue. Lavish and often broke, the artist (1606-1669) left no archive of his own. Yet scholars have managed to trace his affairs through numerous guild, municipal, notarial, and state registers. This places in stark contrast the predominantly transitory and ephemeral nature of the types of early modern documentation used in everyday life – guild membership tokens, state-issued permits, receipts, unfilled forms – with the remarkable durability of parallel documentation kept in official archives. Only a handful of official leper and orphan certificates (37b-38b) survive, for example, and in some sense they mattered little: they could be checked and reproduced from the equivalent registers held by churches, cities, guilds, or national institutions. This highlights an enormous imbalance between the archival memory of (mostly) state institutions versus that of individuals. Ketelaar further accentuates this contrast between the ephemeral nature of documents and the sedentary nature of an archive by illuminating moments at which documents exit the

archive and circulate *in situ* as 'living documents.' When a deed changes hands during a visit to the property in question; or surveyors crisscrossed a village polder taking notes in their 'perambulator' (*ommeloper*) booklets, which are occasionally stained with mud (131b); when all lepers were forced to wear the badges issued at Saint James' Chapel in Haarlem (37b).

But does sketching the movements of documents outside the archive make a social history of the archive? Perhaps this gets it backwards, and documents must in fact leave the archive to enter social history? The same is ultimately true of Ketelaar's broader gestures at an archival history from below. Archives document the Dutch people, certainly, but this does not make the Dutch an archiving people as much as it makes the Dutch state an archival one. Ultimately, writing the social history of archives has proved elusive for historians; Ketelaar's findings perhaps mostly affirm some of the better-established points of archival history – that archives are 'civic symbols and touchstones of collective memory,' for example (116a). Still, Ketelaar's elegant book preserves the best of the centuries-old professional practice of archivists involved intimately in historical research and public-facing work. We can only hope that historians of archives will more frequently ask what work the archive itself is doing in our narratives, as opposed to simply reflecting or documenting developments elsewhere in society and the state. Ketelaar has given us a valuable landmark in such a project.

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