

Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, VII

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Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, VII, Nieuwe Tijd. Sociaal-economische geschiedenis 1490-1650; overzeese geschiedenis circa 1590-1680; socioculturele geschiedenis 1500-1800 (Haarlem: Fibula-van Dishoeck, 1980, 420 blz., f119,—; ISBN 90228 38080).

Volume VII of the new *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (NAGN) reappraising as it does various aspects of the Dutch Golden Age and of the early modern South Netherlands, subjects highly important from a European and global as well as specifically Low Countries point of view, is certainly a notable event in historical literature. The aim in this, and the companion volumes dealing with other aspects of the early modern era, is nothing less than to change our overall view of the period in the light of what the editors consider to be the most significant advances in historical studies since the appearance, in the early 1950s, of the old *AGN*. As regards editorial approach and organization of the volume this has meant a major shift in perspective, radically different underlying assumptions and propositions and a resolute shift away from the political in favour of the social, demographic and economic.

Given the numerous advances in knowledge and the scholarly distinction of some of the thirty-one Dutch and Belgian contributors to this volume, there was every reason to expect a major new synthesis of lasting value for scholars, teachers and the general public alike. It is disappointing, therefore, that despite several excellent contributions, the work as a whole should be so unsatisfactory. The quality of the contributions is extremely uneven, unfortunately, and the work is further marred by defects arising from the editors' rather questionable approach and from their frequently slap-dash integration of the individual articles. The arrangement of themes and periods for this volume, despite what is said in its defence in the editors' brief introduction, and in A.M. van der Woude's explanatory essay to the early modern volumes, in volume V', is so bizarre and disjointed as to strip the work of all coherence. To make matters worse, while the general perspective and organization have been determined by the editors' staunch commitment to the 'New History', the individual contributions are in most cases conceived quite independently from, and lack any reference to, this wider framework.

Assuredly one basic defect is the editors' firm conviction that the most significant advances in historical studies in recent decades are what Van der Woude calls Braudel's 'gelaagd-structuralistische beschouwingwijze' and the concept of 'la longue durée', the 'secular trend', again fostered by the French *Annalesschool* and by Braudel and Le Roy Ladurie in particular. Of course, it is not to be denied that the views of these historians whose photographic portraits grace the introduction to volume V, have been immensely influential, that these views remain fashionable in many quarters and that they have stimulated much excellent research. It is true also that these historians have consciously sought to transform and revitalize our entire notion of history. But whether Braudel's vision is really a major advance in the sense that it enhances our conceptual grip on the

1. A.M. van der Woude, 'De 'Nieuwe Geschiedenis' in een nieuwe gedaante. Inleiding op de delen V tot en met IX', *NAGN*, V (Haarlem, 1980) 9-35.

processes of historical change is in fact much less certain than the editors of the *NAGN* would have us believe. In recent years, particularly in the English-speaking world, there have been increasing signs of a reaction against the doctrines of the *Annales* school², not least because of the totally inadequate way in which these deal with the interaction between politics and economic life, and, indeed, there are solid grounds for arguing that the serious objections that have been levelled against the Braudel-Le Roy Ladurie approach ought receive even heavier emphasis than they have thus far.

Braudel thought less in terms of the historical process than of historical processes: he visualized a series of overlapping histories, developing simultaneously. At the most basic level, very long-term geographical and climatic shifts, change was too slow to be relevant to a specific period, such as the early modern era. His real innovation was to separate moderately long-term economic, demographic and other conjunctural movements from the short-term fluctuations of history whether these were related to material or to political or intellectual life. Where Braudel systematically separated trends on the one hand from events on the other, Le Roy Ladurie went much further in promoting the moderately long, quantitatively verifiable, trends to the forefront and confining mere 'histoire événementielle' to the margins of historical studies. A fundamental feature of Braudel's vision is that different kinds of historical process have quite different rhythms in time so that there is little point in studying a particular historical period as such. The important thing is to identify the right time-span for the right process. The editors of the *NAGN*, accordingly, have, in volume VII as in the accompanying volumes, assigned totally different periods to different topics, in part with an eye to the basic 'secular trends' that Braudel and Le Roy Ladurie identified for early modern Europe as a whole. Volume V, for instance, begins with a long section 'Het sociaal-economische leven, geografie en demografie, 1500-1800' which is conceived as being basic to a proper understanding of volumes V to IX. Volume VII relates to various periods, but many aspects of these periods are dealt with in other volumes.

The editors' arrangement of the contents of volume VII then is thoroughly unconventional in terms of traditional historical studies. The coverage of Low Countries economic development is broken off at 1650, leaving the rest of the seventeenth century to be dealt with in a later volume on the grounds that the long phase of expansion that had begun in the late fifteenth century was drawing to a close around 1650, this phase corresponding to what Braudel called the 'long sixteenth century'. The period 1650-1750 in the Netherlands is linked by the editors with the long phase of contraction and depression which supposedly characterized much of Europe during that epoch. But while it is clearly true that the Dutch economic 'golden age' did not coincide with the seventeenth century as a whole, it is surely doubtful whether 1650 is really a sensible point of ending for this major section. Admittedly, the beginnings of decline in some sectors of the economy are discernible from about 1650, or before, particularly as regards Baltic trade, fisheries, the Zeeland transit trade and certain branches of the Dutch textile industry, notably says, rashes and fustians. But these were only some sectors. The fact is that in the aftermath of the treaty of Munster much of the economy, and particularly Amsterdam, not only continued to expand but, in several important respects expanded along new lines, until the 1670s, the spectacular growth in trade with Spain, the Caribbean and the Spanish Indies

2. For a recent presentation of some of these objections, see Lawrence Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative', *Past and Present*, LXXXV (nov. 1979) 3-24.

being the most important of the new phenomena. At Leiden during the 1650s and early 1660s there was a considerable further expansion in total cloth production. Surely the war of 1672-1678, which proved a major economic no less than political turning-point, would provide a far more satisfactory point at which to conclude, especially as the two long chapters on Dutch colonial expansion do conclude with the 1670s. Of course, such an adjustment would fit less well with the Braudelian 'lange 16de eeuw', but one suspects that many scholars will agree that this notion is in any case out of place at least in relation to the northern Netherlands just as it is with regard to various other parts of Europe.

While eight chapters of this volume, on industry, trade, navigation and fisheries, two in each case for either part of the Netherlands, cover the period 1580-1650, the two long opening chapters, dealing with agriculture, cover the whole of the period 1490-1650, a span nearly two and a half times as long. Thus the greater part of the discussion on agriculture but none of the rest of economic history sections in this volume deal with the pre-1580 period. But, as if this and the disparity between the economic and colonial chapters were not disconcerting enough, one is surely totally disorientated by the lack of any evident connection between these sections and the concluding part of the volume dealing with so-called 'socio-culturele geschiedenis, onderwijs en opvoeding, wetenschappen'. Professedly, this last covers the whole of the three centuries 1500-1800, but in fact it attempts an even wider span. In A.M. van der Woude's intrinsically interesting contribution on Low Countries literacy (257-264), most of the data and tables actually refer to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Meanwhile, J. Roegiers' short section on the University of Leuven (301-305) tackles the entire era 1425-1797. While dyed in the wool Braudelians may contemplate such deliberately eccentric periodization with equanimity, one suspects that the majority of readers will be both hampered and annoyed by it. In any case, it certainly fragments the volume in a most unfortunate manner.

But the periodization is not the only aspect of the planning of the volume seriously open to question. The editors have divided the socio-economic sections into ten separate chapters, excluding the two pieces on colonial expansion. The inevitable consequence of including so many contributions is that each is too short and too general while at the same time tending to overlap with other chapters. Obviously, the close connections between trade, navigation and fisheries which together constitute six chapters are such as to pose a major problem of correlation. Would it not have been better, one wonders, to have had fewer contributions but giving more space to each as well as more opportunity for precision and detail. As it is, several key economic issues such as the transit trade of Zeeland, or the flourishing Dutch Rhine trade, or the rôle of the inland provinces in colonial and maritime enterprise, either receive only the briefest of mentions without proper explanation or are omitted entirely. Not that readers who might wish to consult this volume on any particular point will find it at all easy to do so. There is an index but of personal names only, a singularly inapt arrangement in a volume dealing primarily with socio-economic history.

The omission of important themes is all the more regrettable in that poor correlation between chapters has resulted in a good deal of superfluous repetition. The reader, having met with one account of the Dutch tariffs and tariff-policy by H. Klompmaker (104) later encounters substantially the same again on the part of J.R. Bruijn (141). Having been provided with one account of the Spanish embargoes against the Dutch (on 106, 116, 119), one meets with another (142) and, subsequently, yet another (152-154). Dutch Baltic trade is likewise described twice in much the same terms (107-III, 145-146). Similarly, substantially the same information on Holland's links with Britain is given twice (117, 150-

151) and the account of Dutch Mediterranean navigation on 119-120 is repeated on 154-155. Indeed, even one of the tables of statistical data, on the structure of Dutch trade in 1636, given on 112, is, quite unnecessarily, repeated on 139.

The two opening chapters, on agriculture, by J. de Vries for the northern and C. Vandenbroeke together with P. Vandewalle for the southern Netherlands, are among the best in the volume. The essay by J. de Vries is a most eloquent account of the transformation of agriculture in Holland, Utrecht, Zeeland and Friesland in the period 1490-1650, as well as of the less remarkable changes in the other Dutch provinces. Of course, the crucial shift, chiefly under the impact of the Baltic grain trade, was the move away from grain production towards stockraising and dairy production, horticulture and specialized crops such as hops, hemp, flax and madder. But these changes together with the acceleration in land reclamation, drainage improvements, and increasing use of windmills and traffic in manures were all due to much more than simply the influence of foreign trade. New credit and investment opportunities, the rapid growth of the towns, the spreading network of canals providing an unrivalled system of transportation, and also aspects of the social structure and legal system, all played a considerable part.

On the other hand, C. Vandenbroeke, as in several recent publications³, stresses rather the continuity in methods, productivity and the overall structure of agriculture in Flanders and Brabant in the same period. It seems a pity that neither De Vries nor his Belgian counterparts discuss the significance of Low Countries agriculture at this time in relation to the agrarian development of Europe as a whole. Flemish and Dutch agriculture was looked on as a model to be admired and emulated by seventeenth-century Englishmen, Frenchmen and others and the question of how far the Netherlands can be said to have been the source of the European 'agricultural revolution' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remains highly pertinent and somewhat problematic. One gains the impression that De Vries and Vandenbroeke would provide sharply contrasting answers but it is a great pity that neither really tackles the issue.

The next two chapters deal with industry in the period 1580-1650 and one might expect more detailed treatment than on agriculture. But these sections, particularly that by L. Noordegraaf on Dutch industry, are most disappointing. In a volume devoted primarily to socio-economic life, and considering that Holland's second and third cities, Leiden and Haarlem, lived from textile manufacture while cloth-making was important also at Delft, Gouda, Kampen, Tilburg, Breda and elsewhere, it is surely totally inadequate to assign scarcely more than three full pages of text to the textile industries. While the sudden upsurge in cloth manufacture in Holland in the 1570s and 1580s is rightly attributed to the disruptive effects of the fighting in the southern Netherlands, almost nothing is said about the great changes in the structure and orientation of Dutch industry in the post-1600 period again resulting from war as well as foreign competition. The most important change is the collapse of the cheaper branches and the progressive shift over to manufacture of high-quality fabrics⁴, but the reader is given no inkling of this at all. A.K.L. Thijs on the

3. See C. Vandenbroeke and W. Vanderpijpen, 'The Problem of the 'Agricultural Revolution' in Flanders and in Belgium : Myth or Reality?', in : H. van der Wee and E. van Cauwenberghe, ed., *Productivity of Land and Agricultural Innovation in the Low Countries (1250-1800)* (Leuven, 1978); A. Verhulst and C. Vandenbroeke, ed., *Landbouwproductiviteit in Vlaanderen en Brabant 14de-18de eeuw* (Studia Historica Gandensia, CCXXIII; Gent, 1979).

4. On this, see Charles Wilson, 'Cloth Production and International Competition in the Seventeenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. XIII (1960) 209-221.

industries of the South Netherlands is a little better and gives slightly more space to the textile industries, but curiously his chapter is a good deal shorter (ten pages as against nineteen) than that of Noordegraaf so that again not nearly enough is said in view of the importance of industry in the life of the country. Astoundingly, there are barely two lines on Liège and its district, then one of the most advanced, diversified and dynamic industrial zones in the whole of Europe.

The two chapters on commerce are no less disappointing and this is especially regrettable in that it was via their flourishing commerce that the Netherlands made their greatest impact on Europe and the wider world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. H. Klomp maker's contribution on Dutch trade scarcely even attempts to point out, much less explain, the various great shifts in the structure of this world-encompassing phenomenon during the period 1580-1650. His description is further marred by a series of slips and mistakes. What he terms, curiously, the 'Spanish system', the embargoes re-introduced in 1621 excluding the Dutch from trade with Spain, Portugal and southern Italy was in force not 'from 1621-1630', but from 1621 to 1647 (99). The *Konvooien en Licenten*, the Dutch customs imposts, were not re-adjusted to the war-time level fixed in 1603, in 1625, as he states (104), but in April 1621 (the same mistake is repeated by J.R. Bruijn on 141). In claiming, quite wrongly (112), that the Dutch river trade with Germany was of only marginal significance, he cites data for 1627, apparently unaware that such trade was only permitted by the Dutch authorities for three months during that year as a result of the 1625-1627 ban under which the States General sought to retaliate against the river blockade then being enforced by the Spaniards in north-west Germany as well as in the South Netherlands. The latter which is mentioned in another context was initiated not in 1623 (114) but in July 1625. In stating (116) that after 1646 the Dutch regained a significant but not preponderant share in Spanish trade, he is much further from the mark than was Difereé, writing at the beginning of the century⁵. In fact, the Dutch totally dominated trade with Spain in the years 1648-1660 and far outstripped the English, though perhaps not the French, until after 1700.

The article by E. Stols is a little better but again somewhat lacking in analysis and interpretation. The main factors shaping South Netherlands commerce in the 1590s and first half of the seventeenth century were the Dutch naval blockade of the Flemish coast, Dutch customs policies, the increasing dependence of the South Netherlands on trade with Spain and its colonies and the effectiveness of the Spanish measures excluding Dutch ships and goods from Spain and, for a while, from Portugal. The Spanish Netherlands at that time was a beleaguered fortress and inevitably its maritime and commercial life was to a high degree shaped by its circumstances. But very little of all this is conveyed to the reader. Stols mentions the great increase in the inland river trade with Dutch territory, but fails to explain that the entire phenomenon, like so much else in the economic history of the Low Countries in this period resulted (contrary to the views of the Braudelians) essentially from political and military factors, in particular the Dutch naval blockade, the Dutch war-time tariffs and the closing to the South Netherlands of the route, via Calais, during the Franco-Spanish war of 1635-1659.

The piece on Dutch navigation by J.R. Bruijn, who has eighteen pages at his disposal, suffers, as has been remarked above, both from overlapping with other chapters and from

5. H.C. Difereé, *De geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen handel lol den val der Republiek* (Amsterdam, 1908) 204-208.

a number of errors. His statement, in reference to Dutch navigation to the Iberian Peninsula that 'zeer weinig is bekend over de jaren 1621-1648', seems inexplicable in view of the works by Alcalá-Zamora, Baetens and other recent publications⁶. His assertion that Dutch shipping was little affected by the Iberian embargoes during the years 1621-1648 (154) is certainly entirely wrong and there has for several years been abundant published material demonstrating quite the contrary. Salt was shipped by the Dutch not from Lisbon (154) but from Setúbal and Aveiro. The Dutch did not ship wine from Oporto (154) for during this period there was as yet no significant exporting of wines from northern Portugal. As regards Mediterranean trade, the States-General issued its placard regulating the 'straatvaart' not in 1623, as stated here (155), but in October 1621. His remark that Venice and Genoa were 'van minder betekenis' than Livorno as centres of Dutch commercial activity in Italy is seriously misleading as both were actually of fundamental importance.

H.A.H. Boelmans Kranenburg's piece deals with the Dutch fishing industry and, appropriately, emphasizes the importance of the herring fleets and trade in herring. There is assuredly much that is interesting in the essay and, as far as it goes, it is accurate. But there are grave drawbacks to treating the Dutch herring industry in the 1580-1650 period in *Annales* fashion, as a more or less constant structure rather than viewing it from a more specifically historical point of view. There was, in fact, a sharp rise and then fall in the fortunes of the herring fleets - strong growth until 1620 followed by a marked contraction after 1625⁷ and the rapid change in circumstances is what most needs to be brought out. Nothing is said here either about this basic rhythm or its causes which were the post-1621 salt shortages in the Dutch provinces and the Spanish attacks on the herring fleets which began in 1625. The impact on Enkhuizen, Schiedam, Delfshaven and other fishing ports of these developments was little less than shattering.

Besides the two essays on agriculture, the most valuable sections of this volume are F.S. Gaastra's masterly account of the Dutch East India Company to 1680 and E. van den Boogaart's contribution on the West India Company. It is a suprising feature of Dutch historical literature that there is still no adequate full-length general synthesis on Dutch activity in Asia during the seventeenth century. Until recently, even serviceable summaries were lacking. The latter gap, thankfully, has now been filled, partly by CR. Boxer's most interesting short work which concentrates on the Company's organisation, personnel and institutions⁸ and by Gaastra's recent work⁹. After covering the familiar ground, describing the setting up of the Company and its organisation, he provides a badly-needed outline of the Company's expansion as a power in Asia and then analyses the structure of its trade both within Asia and as between Asia and Europe. His tables and data are both new and useful and, for the benefit of non-Dutch readers, it is much to be hoped that this essay will be soon reprinted in an English or French version.

6. See José Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, *España, Flandes y el Mar del Norte (1618-1639)* (Barcelona, 1975); R. Baetens, *De nazomer van Antwerpens welvaart* (2 vols, Brussels, 1976); J.I. Israëli, 'A Conflict of Empires: Spain and the Netherlands, 1618-1648', *Past and Present*, LXXVI (1977) 34-74.

7. A recent work which confirms earlier evidence about this is G. van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam* (Schiedam, 1975) 104-106.

8. CR. Boxer, *Jan Compagnie in oorlog en vrede* (1977).

9. See also F.S. Gaastra, 'De verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: de groei van een bedrijf', *BMGN*, XC1 (1976) 249-272.

Van den Boogaart's contribution also provides some good material though in this case, the balance of the piece is somewhat less satisfactory. After recounting the Dutch invasion of Brazil at considerable, possibly excessive length, he devotes remarkably little space to the Dutch role in the Caribbean. It is perfectly true that by 1650 Dutch commercial activity and the Dutch possessions in the Caribbean had not yet assumed anything like the significance that they were to subsequently, during the second half of the seventeenth century. But in view of the fact that Netherlands Brazil was a relatively brief venture while the Guyanas, Curaçao and St Eustatius not only remained in Dutch hands for centuries but were to be of fundamental importance in the economic life of the region until the end of the eighteenth century, it is surprising to find only a few lines on the early history of these colonies.

The final part of the volume, dealing with education, scholarship and science in the period 1500-1800, displays, as has been said, scarcely any thematic connection with the foregoing sections and indeed relatively little of this last part relates to the years 1580-1650. The whole section comprises only about 120 pages and yet there are no less than nineteen individual contributors some of whom have only three or four pages at their disposal. Much of the material is undoubtedly interesting and useful but it is compressed into a desperately short space. Sections on literacy and popular education are followed by contributions on the universities and then separate pieces on philosophy, law, economic thought, historical writing and the study of the classical languages, oriental languages, cultivation of the vernacular, study of geography, natural history, mathematics and various other sciences. One is left wondering whether there is really any point in covering such diverse and wide-ranging topics with such merciless brevity. One piece which does, or at least ought to have a direct bearing on the main part of the volume is that by A.C.M. Bots on Dutch economic thought under the Republic (320-324). But then, of course, much of this piece too deals with the eighteenth century and what there is on the seventeenth is too brief and appears to have been written without reference to the contents of the chapters on economic history. This author's assertion that by comparison with neighbouring nations the Dutch attached little importance to mercantilist arguments and the use of the state to stimulate trade and industry is one of those frequently heard, conventional, commonplaces which is in fact perfectly absurd. Willem Usselinckx was one of the most militant mercantilists in early seventeenth-century Europe and the Dutch provinces and towns repeatedly engaged in fierce battles over tariff policy, the regulation of river trade and the issue of how far to afford protection to Dutch industry.

To sum up, this lavishly illustrated volume is of questionable conception, indifferently edited and not a little disjointed. The various contributions are very uneven in quality. Even so, the whole is partially redeemed by the three or four best pieces which together ensure that the work will be taken seriously in the world of historical studies.

Loon en arbeidsmarkt in Nederland, 1800-1850. Een overzicht en uitblik

R.W.J.M. BOS

Een beschouwing naar aanleiding van het verschijnen van R. T. Griffiths, *Industrial Retardation in the Netherlands 1830-1850* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1980, xviii + 235 blz., f67,50, ISBN 90 247 2199 7).

In 1976 publiceerde Bairoch een vergelijkend overzicht van (schattingen van) het nationaal produkt in alle Europese landen¹. Hieruit blijkt dat deze grootheid gemiddeld per hoofd (tegen 1960 U.S. dollars en prijzen) in Nederland omstreeks 1830 bepaald gunstig afstak in vergelijking met andere landen. Met het Verenigd Koninkrijk (\$ 346) deelde Nederland (\$ 347) de eerste plaats, op ruime afstand gevolgd door België (\$ 295). In 1850 was in deze situatie wel enige, maar niet veel verandering gekomen. Toen ging het Verenigd Koninkrijk (\$ 458) alleen aan kop, gevolgd door Nederland (\$ 427) en België (\$ 411). Uitgaande van de juistheid en onderlinge vergelijkbaarheid van deze schattingen zou zich in Nederland tussen 1830 en 1850 een economische groei van omstreeks 23% hebben voorgedaan. Toch wordt de economische situatie van Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw door historici in het algemeen als ongunstig beoordeeld. Hetgeen Jan de Vries over de Republiek opmerkte, namelijk dat deze 'remained rich long after it had ceased being prosperous'², wordt ook op de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw van toepassing geacht.

Het nationaal produkt vormt inderdaad een indicatie voor de (relatieve) welstand van een land, maar het zegt niets over de verdeling hiervan over bevolkingsgroepen. Voor Nederland is echter over de verdeling van het nationaal inkomen nauwelijks iets bekend³. Mede door het vrijwel ontbreken van adequaat statistisch materiaal is het ook een moeilijk thema. Men mag aannemen dat dit een belangrijke reden was waarom onderzoekers de aandacht hebben gericht op het loonniveau als een belangrijke factor achter de levensstandaard van de arbeiders en als één van de elementen van de inkomensverdeling. Het loon is echter meer dan een vorm van inkomen. Lonen maken ook deel uit van de produktiekosten en zijn een resultante van processen die zich op de arbeidsmarkt afspelen.

1. P. Bairoch, 'Europe's Gross National Product: 1800-1975', *Journal of European Economic History*, V (1976) 273-340.

2. Jan de Vries, 'An Inquiry into the Behaviour of Wages in the Dutch Republic and the Southern Netherlands, 1580-1800', *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae*, X (1978) 92.

3. Uitzonderingen op deze regel zijn L. Blok en J.M.M. de Meere, 'Welstand, ongelijkheid in welstand en censuskiesrecht in Nederland omstreeks het midden van de 19de eeuw', *Economisch- en sociaal-historisch jaarboek*, XLI (1978) 175-293, en J.M.M. de Meere, 'Inkomensgroei en -ongelijkheid te Amsterdam 1877-1940. Een schets', *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis*, XIII (1979) 1-46.