

Knapen, B., *De man en zijn staat. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt 1547-1619* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2005, 368 blz., €29,90, ISBN 90 351 2890 7).

A political biography of Oldenbarnevelt by as distinguished and perceptive a journalist as Ben Knapen is bound to attract not just the interest of those who enjoy reading early modern Dutch history but also a considerable number of readers who would otherwise pay little or no attention to this general area at all. One can take it for granted, even before opening it, that the book is lively, politically shrewd and very well written. In part, of course, these are advantages, like a strong breath of fresh air, which one might expect from any non-academic historian with a feel for history and writing and a competent willingness to read up on the subject thoroughly – and all this Ben Knapen certainly has. Historical writing is not and should not be the protected preserve of professional academic historians and indeed sometimes positively needs to be rescued from that potentially overspecialized and too inward-looking breed.

Oldenbarnevelt, moreover, whom Ben Knapen, not without considerable justification, conceives as the veritable founder of the Dutch state and nation, is a perfect choice for such an exercise. Fundamentally important yet insufficiently familiar to the general Dutch public, he provides an ideal historical vantage-point, at a time when national history has gone seriously out of fashion, from which to ask what the real historical origins of Dutch nationhood actually are and what Dutch nationhood originally meant. Furthermore, Knapen has the inestimable advantage of being able to rely on the vast and painstaking but often opaque and disorderly mass of research underlying the last major biography of the *Landsadvocaat*, Jan den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt* (5 vols, 1960-1972). Beyond this, he was further reinforced – as the author himself readily grants in his preface – by the advice and help of an outstanding expert in the field, Professor Henk van Nierop. Oldenbarnevelt, though, for various reasons, and especially the extraordinary complexity of the political and religious circumstances under which he went to work, is no easy historical topic, quite the contrary, so that besides the other qualities he brings to this task Ben Knapen must be congratulated for his courage. There are a hundred hurdles where specialist and non-specialist alike – but perhaps especially the latter – are only too likely to go wrong.

Take for example the *Corte Vertoninghe*, that key document of the Dutch Revolt against Spain, written at Oldenbarnevelt's request by the Gouda pensionary François Francken, in 1587. For this crucial piece of political theory, which has never really been made much of by Dutch educators or the Dutch public, and for quite understandable reasons, ambivalently combines some very forward-looking tendencies, in particular in its epoch-making republican remarks about the inadequacies of monarchy and its strong tendency to popular sovereignty (claiming that the States of Holland received their power from the inhabitants of the province and needed their consent and

approval before starting to rule) with a highly traditionalist particularism and reverence for nobility and social hierarchy. Yet here, as in nearly every other case, the formidable hurdle is adroitly surmounted: Knapen rightly recognizes this particular manifesto as something of exceptional historical and cultural importance while yet accurately reporting its ambiguous character and the reasons why the Dutch public have never taken to it.

Assuredly, this is not a work of research and the sources used are all the familiar published ones. Yet it is intellectually an immensely difficult task even to extract the full picture of what we know about Oldenbarnevelt's statecraft from the familiar sources. If the military and strategic side of things is relatively straightforward and skillfully analyzed, the intricacies of contrasting and often conflicting commercial interests of the Dutch provinces and individual towns, and how these helped shape or temper Oldenbarnevelt's policies, is much sketchier and does perhaps betray the limitations of the non-specialist stumbling occasionally on highly complex terrain. This detracts, for example, from the value of his excessively brief and somewhat oversimplified account of the Dutch-Spanish truce negotiations of 1607-1609 in which Oldenbarnevelt from first to last was the central figure and which brought to an end the first part of the Eighty Years' War. To understand these complex talks one needs to read a considerable amount of material in Spanish (Knapen uses no Spanish sources) as well as Dutch and French and have a rather detailed grasp of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Dutch economy and civic society. Similarly, the recounting of the Republic's religious troubles during the early seventeenth century and the growing schism between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants, though sound enough in broad outline, guided here by the expert work of Van Deursen, here and there also suggests the limitations of the brilliant non-specialist, failing to show, for example, how in cities like Leiden, Haarlem, Amsterdam and Utrecht taking sides for and against the Arminians and Gomarists became entwined not just with contrasting attitudes towards Oldenbarnevelt himself but also conflicting notions of civic interest, problems of local religious plurality, local commercial preoccupations and popular attitudes towards the House of Orange.

But overall Knapen has fully succeeded in what he set out to do. This book deserves to be and doubtless will be widely read. If it also leaves many major question marks hanging in the air this is decidedly not the author's fault. Oldenbarnevelt has always seemed a deeply enigmatic personality to historians and at the end of this book he remains just as enigmatic as before. Yet the specifics of his character – his tight-lipped, bottled-up uncommunicative exterior, financial hard-headedness, dexterity in negotiation, deep inner insecurity, theological ambivalence, extraordinary political shrewdness albeit flawed by occasional disastrous obstinacy, and very occasional lapses into seemingly uncharacteristic and reckless gambles, are all very effectively conveyed. The account of his steadily deteriorating relationship with Prince Maurits, finally, and that of their final confrontation leading to Oldenbarnevelt's downfall, trial and execution, are, once again, excellent.

Jonathan Israel

Janssen, G. H., *Creaturen van de macht. Patronage bij Willem Frederik van Nassau (1613-1664)* (Dissertatie Leiden 2005, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005, 304 blz., €29,50, ISBN 90 5356 787 9).

Willem Frederik werd in 1640 vrij onverwacht stadhouder van Friesland toen zijn broer Hendrik Casimir sneuvelde op het slagveld bij Hulst. De volgende vierentwintig jaar probeerde hij gestalte te geven aan zijn dubbelrol als graaf en stadhouder. Deze ontwikkeling wordt in dit boek door Geert H. Janssen onderzocht, waarbij hij vooral ingaat op de aard van patronage bij Willem Frederik en de achtergronden en mechanismen die daarbij een rol speelden. Het boek is een bewerkte versie van de dissertatie van Janssen die daar in februari 2005 op promoveerde aan de Universiteit Leiden.

De stadhouders mogen zich in toenemende historiografische aandacht verheugen, en de recente biografie van Willem Frederik van Luuc Kooijmans en de geredigeerde bundel van Simon Groenveld en anderen geven aan dat de Friese Nassaus inmiddels ook de belangstelling van historici hebben getrokken. Onderzoek naar elites en patronage in de vroegmoderne tijd heeft de afgelopen twee decennia een hoge vlucht genomen, maar Janssen wijst erop dat er voor de situatie in de Republiek nog een historiografische inhaalslag te maken valt. Dit heeft vooral te maken met het beeld van de cultuur van de Republiek als egalitair en burgerlijk, waarbij aristocratische netwerken van minder belang lijken. Gedetailleerd onderzoek naar patronage, waar moeilijk greep op te krijgen is voor de historicus, is alleen mogelijk wanneer voldoende relevant bronnenmateriaal aanwezig is. Voor deze studie is uitgebreid gebruik gemaakt van de dagboeken van Willem Frederik, waarin hij enkele malen per week verslag legde van zijn conversaties en gedachten.

De doelstelling van deze studie lijkt bescheiden; de auteur onderzoekt het 'relatiebeheer' van de stadhouder en wil een aantal patronagerollen 'identificeren'. Hierdoor is de studie niet altijd even spannend, en de vrij korte epiloog bevat dan ook weinig verrassingen. De lijvige inleiding, waarin de auteur zijn onderzoek trefzeker plaatst binnen de recente literatuur, is echter uitstekend. Het boek bestaat uit drie delen. In het eerste deel wordt de vroege carrière van Willem Frederik geanalyseerd, de transformatieproblemen van het overnemen van de clientèle van zijn broer, en de opbouw van een machtsbasis in Friesland. Het tweede deel vormt daarvan een spiegelbeeld: de Friese patroon is op zijn beurt cliënt van Frederik Hendrik en later Willem II, die hij in zijn dagboeken 'De Baes' noemt. De twee rollen en sferen worden goed verbonden, hoewel Willem II relatief wel erg veel aandacht krijgt in dit deel. Het laatste deel gaat in op de laatste veertien jaren van Willem Frederiks leven. De dood van Willem II veranderde de positie van Willem Frederik ook. Hij wist zijn machtspositie door handig manoeuvreren te versterken en veilig te stellen voor zijn zoon Hendrik, waardoor de transformatie in 1664 soepeler zou verlopen dan in 1640.

Een clientèle is voor Janssen niet statisch, en het onderhouden daarvan vereist de persoonlijke respons van de patroon tijdens veranderende