

Recensies

G. Asaert, e.a., ed., *Maritieme geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, I, *Prehistorie, romeinse tijd, middeleeuwen, vijftiende en zestiende eeuw* (Bussum: De Boer Maritiem, 1976, 369 blz., f 95. — in serie, f 115. — als los deel, ISBN 90 228 1947 7); II, *Zeventiende eeuw, van 1585 tot ca 1680* (*Ibidem*, 1977, 389 blz.).

As a member of the 'Comité van aanbeveling', I should be able to claim some responsibility for the planning of this important and innovative work. But candour compels me to admit that I had nothing to do with it, beyond figuratively affixing a belated *nihil obstat*.

The need for a new standard maritime history in the broadest sense of the term, is sufficiently obvious. The classic works of De Jonge, Backer Dirks, and Mollema, all concentrated on the purely naval aspects, with sea-battles as their centre-pieces. Admirable in their respective days and generations, they are now outdated in most respects. The time has come for a standard work of more encyclopedic scope, embodying the results of recent research in many fields with which those writers had little or no concern. Judging by these first two volumes, the *Maritieme Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* will fully supply this want.

The whole work will comprise four volumes, of which the first two have already appeared. Volume III will deal with the eighteenth century and with the first half of the nineteenth, thus covering the change from sail to steam. The fourth volume will cover the second half of the nineteenth century and down to the present day. Where terminal dates are given, they are, of course, approximate, and contributors have some leeway on either side.

The structure of each volume is thematic, save for the first three chapters of vol. I, where the relative scarcity of source-material before the early fifteenth century has led the editors to adopt a chronological sequence to c. 1400. The thematic structure is followed for the remaining (and longer) portion of volume I, and the same themes are handled in the same sequence in the following volume. Each volume opens with a general introduction, followed by chapters in fixed thematic sequence, beginning with an analytical description of the various types of ships in the period concerned. Then follow chapters on ship-building and shipwrights; ship-owning, and harbours; maritime insurance and maritime law (though these two sections are missing from volume II, and will be covered in volume III, for reasons not explicitly stated). Then come chapters dealing with the social-economic conditions of seamen ashore and afloat; navigation and seafaring, beginning with charts and instruments; the fisheries, both coastal and deep sea; the admiralties and naval administration; the various forms of maritime warfare, including privateering and

piracy. In short, a very comprehensive coverage. A critical and selective bibliography for each chapter is given at the end of each volume. The bibliographies make no claim to completeness, but they take account of all important recently published work, including books and articles in several languages. They form a most useful guide to further reading. As such they have enabled the editors and contributors to omit footnotes to the text, since this is a work of *haut vulgarisation* and not a pioneer publication of original and specialised research.

The contributors are mainly Dutch and Belgian, but include three foreigners. They are all established experts in their respective fields, and they have admirably discharged the assignments which have been given them. The numerous illustrations have been very carefully selected, and great pains have been taken to ensure their immediate relevance to the text – something not always apparent in ‘coffee-table’ books of this kind. They range from the very familiar to the totally unfamiliar (at least to this reviewer . . .). Line-drawings, sketch-maps and plans, help to clarify the text in appropriate places. Incidentally, some of the birds’-eye views of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century towns reproduced here, seem to rival twentieth-century aerial photographs in accuracy. The quality of reproduction is very high, including the colour-plates. Paper, typography, and layout are also of the highest standards. All this is inevitably reflected in the price (Dfl. 95 before publication, 150 after). Though high, this is reasonable enough, considering the wealth of information and illustration, to which the reader can frequently and advantageously return for consultation, in all probability for many years to come.

Regarding the two volumes now under notice, the fall of Antwerp and the closing of the Schelde clearly symbolise the shift of maritime power and influence from the South to the North. The resultant extraordinary maritime expansion and flowering of the Dutch Republic during its ‘Golden Century’ is covered in volume II. The shift is also reflected in the weighting of the respective contributors. Belgians slightly predominate in volume I; whereas volume II is almost entirely written by their northern colleagues. This work designedly omits any detailed consideration of inland craft (whether on river, canal, or lake), save where some account of them is needed to explain the development of coastal or ocean-going shipping.

Readers who approach these sumptuous volumes with high expectations will not be disappointed. This reviewer is primarily interested in the seventeenth century, so he learned more from the first volume; but both contain much fascinating textual and pictorial information, as indicated above. The contributors are fully aware of the great importance of social-economic factors as integral parts of maritime history. They have accordingly made full use of such invaluable works as J. A. Van Houtte’s *Economische en sociale geschiedenis van de Lage Landen* (1964), J. Craeybeckx, *Un grand commerce d’importation: Les vins de France aux anciens Pays-Bas* (1958), and the invaluable *AAG-Bijdragen*, typified by A. M. Van der Woude, *Het Noorderkwartier* (1972), and J. A. Faber, *Drie Eeuwen Friesland, 1500-1800* (1972).

Whereas earlier works on maritime history, as mentioned previously, concentrated heavily on sea warfare and on voyages of discovery, the balance is here redressed, though not unfairly so. For example, in volume I the activities of the seabeggars and the warfare in 1568-85, which are so copiously narrated by older historians, are here briefly recounted on pages 326-335. More space is devoted to ship-building and shipwrights (155-179) and to maritime insurance (206-219). Fair enough. Similarly, in volume II, the three great wars with England, which are amply covered in previous works, are summarily dismissed on pages 346-354. Even in these few pages, more lines are devoted to criticising Obdam

as a fleet commander against Sweden in 1658, than to any of the great Anglo-Dutch sea-fights. The greatness of De Ruyter is (rightly) taken for granted; but a convincing word is put in for the undeserved neglect of the versatile Laurens Reael.

In contrast, we are given vital information about the life on board merchantmen, war-ships, and Indiamen; methods of recruiting; comparisons of rations and pay-scales with workers ashore and afloat, sometimes in tabular form; incidence of mortality and disease, etc. For most of the seventeenth century, the largest employer was the VOC (9,000 sailors in 1644, and 15,000 c. 1680), though this figure was briefly exceeded by sailors serving in the navy during the summer campaigns of the Anglo-Dutch Wars. It is clear that the Indiamen, and to a lesser extent the Navy, were largely manned by a proletariat living on the edge of subsistence, and including large numbers of foreigners from countries where poverty was even worse. On the other hand, the men manning the whalers, and the merchantmen to the Baltic and Mediterranean, were usually better paid, better fed, and better treated, with a better chance of adequately maintaining families ashore and seeing them more often. Throughout the seventeenth-century, there was a surplus of labour ashore and afloat. Consequently, there was no lasting labour unrest, nor any systematic efforts to improve the often appalling conditions aboard the overcrowded Indiamen and warships.

The high standards set and achieved by these two volumes give every confidence that the remaining two will be equally informative. The editors explicitly disclaim that the *Maritieme Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* will constitute the last word on the subject for all time. But it will certainly remain the standard work for a great many years. It can be warmly recommended as a sound and enjoyable investment.

C. R. Boxer

A. N. baron de Vos van Steenwijk, *Het geslacht de Vos van Steenwijk in het licht van de geschiedenis van de Drentse adel* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976, 490 blz., f 95.-, ISBN 90 232 1273 8).

Dit is een schitterend uitgegeven, genealogisch werk over een geslacht, dat in vele perioden van de vaderlandse geschiedenis belangrijke ambten heeft vervuld en grote diensten aan het volk heeft bewezen. De opzet is zoals men die van een genealogisch werk mag verwachten. In twaalf hoofdstukken worden de twintig generaties, die van de twaalfde eeuw tot de huidige dag te onderscheiden zijn, uitvoerig beschreven; iedere persoon krijgt een aparte paragraaf, voor zover de gegevens dat toelaten, waarna ze in bijlage I tot stambomen worden gegroepeerd. De vele mededelingen over de leden van het geslacht De Vos van Steenwijk vormen een waardevolle bijdrage tot de sociale geschiedenis en belichten ook politieke gebeurtenissen. Wij kennen bijvoorbeeld de strijd, die Kampen heeft moeten voeren op het eind van de vijftiende eeuw tegen de heren De Vos van Putten, die dan als niet veel meer dan roofridders worden voorgesteld. Hier krijgt men het relaas van de andere kant verteld en dat is in veel opzichten verhelderend. Ik moet evenwel een gewichtig voorbehoud maken. Het geslacht Van Steenwijk stamt uit Drente, dat staat wel vast. De gegevens betreffende dit gewest uit de middeleeuwen zijn uitermate schaars en het is de schrijver te vergeven dat hij gebruik maakt van het systeem van *Leitnamen* om ook voor deze vroege tijden tot sluitende genealogieën te komen. Maar dan moet hij wel het hypothetische en onzekere van deze methode laten uitkomen en dat doet hij niet. Als men de namen uit de historisch beter gedocumenteerde periode bekijkt, is het duidelijk, dat er dan veel minder vastheid in de voornamen bestaat dan er wordt aangenomen voor de