

Stein, Robert, Pollmann, Judith (eds.), **Networks, Regions and Nations: Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300-1650** (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 149; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010, vi + 290 pp., ISBN 978 90 04 18024 6).

According to Robert Stein's introduction, the volume reviewed here grew out of a meeting of scholars from the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom and the United States held in Leiden to discuss the themes suggested by the title, while challenging the received wisdom that the unification of the Low Countries was exclusively a top-down process. The authors of eleven of the volume's twelve chapters undertook to compare and contrast the various types of regional identity that were attached by contemporaries to the different principalities and city-states that came to be included by one means or another in the dynastic agglomeration that culminated in the Seventeen Netherlands formalised by the treaties of 1548-1549. The author also looked for evidence of the development of 'overarching supra-regional' Netherlandish identities in the period before 1621.

The members of the team explicitly rejected the belief, common among modernist historians, that the concepts of 'nation' and 'national identity' and the feelings that underlie them are peculiarly modern phenomena. In the first essay in the collection, Peter Hoppenbrouwers having examined the general question of the applicability of sociological and anthropological concepts like 'ethnicity' and 'nation' to the society under review, concludes that they can be used, albeit with care. Furthermore, he goes on to argue that such identities can most easily be seen through an examination of relationships on the boundaries between them. In the second essay, Robert Stein, adding to this idea the theory that identities are embodied in cultural links between and among populations, shows that a network of such links between towns was established in the increasingly urbanized frontier zone between France and the southern Low Countries as early as the twelfth

century, and that this network was gradually extended northward with urbanization in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries.

The next three essays (Chapters three to five), move from the general to the particular, examining the evidence for the emergence and persistence through the period under review of distinct regional identities in three very different lands. Justine Smithuis leads off with an examination of the materials related to this theme in Friesland, especially the complex of regional chronicles she calls the *Gesta*-cycle. She argues that the Frisians came to constitute an 'imagined community' that saw itself as a 'chosen people' in a 'promised land' with a tradition of lordless autonomy. The second regional study, by Sjoerd Bijker, demonstrates that a similar type of regional identity was established in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century for the duchy of Brabant, through a cycle of chronicles in which the invented eponymous character of Brabon served to link the ducal dynasty (which claimed both Trojan and Carolingian origins), the name and territory of the duchy, and a kind of 'Brabantine nation' associated with them. Finally, in Chapter five, Aart Noordzij examines the development of an anti-Burgundian (and anti-French) identity in the county and later duchy of Guelders, whose princes and political elites remained hostile to their Netherlandish neighbours, and from the later fifteenth century emphasised the Germanic character and loyalties of the principality.

In three of the next four essays, (Chapters six, seven, and nine), Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, Steven Gunn, and Peter Arnade deal with the many different ways in which successive princes of the Houses of Burgundy and Habsburg, in the period before 1560, attempted to promote the existence of a common identity among the subjects of their growing collection of mutually independent and particularist dominions. The three authors show that (like the Valois kings of France whose analogous policies are examined by David Potter in Chapter eight), the princes of the Low Countries employed a wide variety of practices to achieve their ends.

In times of peace, studied by Van Bruaene, these practices included the promotion of an image of an able and devout ruler who was prepared to lend his support to the various self-images and interests of the urban elites, and their distinctive sporting, literary, and devotional associations. In the times of war (especially from 1475-1550) studied by the other two authors, the princes attempted to create loyalty both at the front of battle and on the home front by such means as the distribution of polemical tracts, songs, and war-bulletins, the promotion of processions to celebrate victories and treaties, and the exemplary punishment of cities and towns that failed to support the war-effort in the expected way. The contributors show that down to at least 1477, the focal point of loyalty in the domain remained the person of the prince, but that under the Habsburgs it gradually shifted from the (normally absent) prince to the Low Countries as an entity.

In the final section of the volume (Chapters ten to twelve), the essays of Alastair Duke and Judith Pollmann examine the development in the region of the notions of the *patria* and of the ‘patriot’ whose first loyalty was to his land rather than his prince. Duke shows that a notion of a common culture uniting all of the Seventeen Netherlands had emerged even before the revolt of the 1570s. This notion was based on a shared commitment to traditional ‘liberties’ and a common enmity to France. Pollmann (examining a large body of propagandistic materials) shows that both this identity, and the ideal of a politically united Netherlandish *patria*, survived for some decades after the partition of 1585. In the final essay, Robert von Friedeburg traces the parallel development of the concepts of ‘nation’ and *patria* in the rest of the old *Regnum Allemaniae* – an even larger and more disparate collection of polities – especially after the *Reichsreform* of 1495.

I found all thirteen of the essays to be well conceived, researched, and written, with only a handful of minor deviations from English usage, and no other shortcomings. The collection as a whole addresses the central questions of the formation

of hierarchies of group-identities in the region in a highly sophisticated way, from a wide variety of perspectives, and using an equally wide variety of sources. It has thereby significantly advanced our understanding of the origins and early development of ‘national’ consciousness – not only in the Low Countries, but in Latin Europe as a whole.

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### Nieuwe geschiedenis

Dekken, Marjolein van, ***Brouwen, branden en bedienen. Productie en verkoop van drank door vrouwen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, circa 1500-1800*** (Dissertatie Universiteit van Amsterdam 2010, *Vrouwen en werk in de vroegmoderne tijd*; Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010, 291 blz., ISBN 978 90 5260 361 2).

Het proefschrift van Marjolein van Dekken is de laatste dissertatie uit het grote onderzoeksproject naar vrouwenarbeid in de Republiek aan het Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis in Amsterdam. Van Dekken onderzoekt het werk van vrouwen in de productie en handel van alcoholhoudende dranken tussen 1500 en 1800 in de steden Haarlem, Leiden, Rotterdam en Schiedam en het Brabantse plattelandsgebied De Meijerij. Gildenledenlijsten, vergunningsregisters en belastingkohieren vormen de basis van het onderzoek. Dat vrouwen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden actief waren in de drankproductie is een bekend gegeven, maar systematisch onderzoek was tot nu toe uitgebleven. De studie van Van Dekken voorziet daarin en beoogt vooral de vraag te beantwoorden of vrouwen prominent aanwezig waren in de drankindustrie en of er verandering optrad in de arbeidsmogelijkheden van vrouwen tijdens de periode 1500-1800.

Hoewel er grote fluctuaties waren in de periode was het aandeel van vrouwen in de drankproductie