

and economic landscapes. In providing this nuanced examination, the volume offers invaluable perspectives on China's quest for nation-building, emphasizing the critical role of regional initiatives and their contribution to the national level. This regional perspective not only enriches our understanding of China's past and present but also highlights the enduring legacy of localized innovation in the country's transformation.

The Guangdong Model and Taxation in China is a valuable addition to the literature on state-building in modern China. Its multi-archival and multi-lingual analysis of fiscal arrangements in Guangdong warrants attention from scholars and students interested in China's politics and economy from the late Qing to the Republican era.

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Shaping a Dutch East Indies: François Valentyn's VOC empire

By Siegfried Huigen. Boston and Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2023. xvi +362 pages. Hardback, USD \$166.00. ISBN: 9789004524989. Ebook, USD \$166.00. ISBN: 9789004545816.

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Nieuw en Oud Oost-Indiën has been both revered and reviled throughout the centuries. Published between 1724 and 1726, the *magnum opus*, five massive folio volumes covering 5144 pages, of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) clergyman François Valentyn (1666–1727), has been revered as the “VOC Bible” or “first encyclopedia of Asia” providing “a kaleidoscope of historical, geographical, and ethnological knowledge.”¹ Valentyn's “monstrous creation,” however, has also been reviled as the “most disgusting plagiarism” and “intellectual embezzlement,” a “rambling piece of work lacking any method” and “partial potpourri of historical facts and imagination with a complete lack of attention for narrative or geographical consequence, chronology, or importance of certain historical events.”²

Just as Valentyn's patriotic self-proclaimed “Great Work” (*Groote Werk*) was dedicated to exalt the Dutch nation, the Dutch East India Company, his native city of Dordrecht, and preserve his individual honor and reputation as a scholar and translator (see below), Huigen's *Shaping a Dutch East Indies* can

¹See, for instance, Company historian Femme Gastra, as quoted in: Hielkema (2002), <https://www.trouw.nl/home/voc-bijbel-na-drie-eeuwen-weer-uitgebracht~b4f5f98f/>.

²See, for instance, the literary scholar Eric M. Beekman, “F. Valentyn (1666–1727): Meester in het anekdotisch proza”, *Paradijzen van weleer: Koloniale literatuur uit Nederlands-Indië, 1600–1950*. Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1998, pp. 132, and 134; Idem (1988), p. 79.

be conceived as a *Rehabilitationsschrift* intended to restore the tarnished reputation of *Nieuw en Oud Oost Indiën* and its author-compiler, presented by Huigen as “a bookish, late humanist scholar” and more a “‘gratte papier’ [paper-shuffler, my translation] than an explorer” (p. 5).

Huigen, professor of Dutch Literature and Cultural History at Wrocław University (Poland) and Visiting Professor of Dutch Literature and Cultural History at Stellenbosch University (South Africa), has published extensively on the history of colonial knowledge in Asia, Southern Africa, and East Central Europe. Employing both classical rhetoric and modern literary theory as hermeneutical tools of discourse analysis, Huigen analyzes how Valentyn constructed knowledge of the VOC’s empire and the fundamental role that his book played in the Dutch perception of the East Indies as an imperial space used as a reference work by VOC officials before 1800 and Dutch colonial bureaucrats after 1816.

Shaping a Dutch East Indies consists of an introduction, nine chapters divided in three parts, and a brief conclusion, along with an appendix describing the text organization of *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, references, and index. The separate chapters, most of which have been previously published in others forms as articles or book chapters, serve as case studies relating to the chorographies or micro-regional descriptions of which *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* is composed illustrating how Valentyn constructed knowledge of an epistemological domain (such as natural history, ethnography and ethnology, history, geography, and religion) and about a certain territory (first and foremost the VOC province of Ambon).

The “Introduction” includes a cursory discussion of the “history of knowledge approach” and an intellectual biography of Valentyn: his training and education in theology and classical rhetoric at the universities of Utrecht and Leiden, his graduation as *predikant* and two stints as a Dutch Reformed minister in the service of the VOC (1685–1694, 1706–1712), mostly as *predikant* at Ambon, and his later years back in Dordrecht dedicated to working on *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*.

In Part I (chapters 1–3), Huigen assumes a macro-perspective dealing with issues concerning *Nieuw en Oost-Indiën* in its entirety. Chapter 1, “Describing imperial space,” analyzes the genesis and composition of Valentyn’s work. Huigen first establishes how the book was presented to contemporary readers, then discusses the structure of the text, setting out to show how its extensive and heterogeneous materials were forged through Valentyn’s “authorial voice” into a “more or less coherent” whole (p. 25). Valentyn’s conceptualization of the “Dutch East Indies” was no grand macro-regional design, but rather consisted of a series of “more or less separate” chorographies of widely varying length of the individual VOC establishments aimed at showing “Dutch *Mogentheyty*,” meaning political and military superiority, (regional) hegemony or sovereignty (pp. 32–33, and chapter 5). Within each chorography, a “rather consistently maintained” ordered sequence or fixed content scheme moved from the geography, ethnography, and history, to the religion (especially Protestantism) of the territory (pp. 35–37). For the description (*beschryving*) or *narratio*, invariably consisting of a one-sided presentation of the facts or “so-called antagonistic mode of historical representation” (p. 157), Valentyn made use, among others, of three specific text formats: the chronicle, the list, and the anecdote. The stated panegyric objective was to contribute to “the elevation of my nation, [and] to the glory of the honourable Company of the East” (p. 40).

Chapter 2, “Lobbying for a Bible translation in ‘Low’ Malay,” examines how intricately *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* is entangled with Valentyn’s first major project, the translation of the Dutch States Bible (*Statenbijbel*) into Pasar or *lingua franca* “Low” creole Malay spoken in Ambon as opposed to literary ‘High’ Malay used at Islamic royal courts in the eastern Indonesian archipelago favored by the Batavian presbytery. What Valentyn wrote about the Bible translation in *Nieuw en Oud Oost-Indiën* may be considered the final phase of his, eventually futile, lobbying activities, and an attempt to preserve his image and reputation as a Bible translator (pp. 72–73, 75).

Chapter 3, “The Valentyn case: scholarly authorship at the beginning of the eighteenth century,” examines the “thorny issue” of Valentyn’s reputation and scholarly conduct with the aim of evaluating the type of authorship Valentyn exhibits in his book and arrives at a “more informed view of Valentyn’s casual borrowing” (pp. 82–83) and “cavalier handling of sources” (pp. 91, 96), most notably the various works of the “Pliny of the Indies” Georg Eberhard Rumphius. Countering

the “anachronistic accusations of plagiarism” by twentieth-century scholars, such as Frederik de Haan (1902), Brom (1931), Du Perron (1948), Beekman (1988, 1998), Buijze (2006), and others (pp. 82–83, 109), Huigen discusses Valentyn’s “two modes of dependency”: the “alleged” plagiarism of published works and unfinished manuscripts, most notably his “unsubstantiable utilization of Rumphius’s untraceable *Dierboek*” (pp. 100–101), and the role of collaborators: former and current VOC officials or correspondents and other indigenous informants, and the clerical assistance rendered by his family circle. Though standards of scholarly decency were becoming stricter, Valentyn’s position, Huigen argues, as a relative outsider in the Republic of Letters was ambiguous, remaining stuck in the older “historical” discourse guided by the principle of “creative *imitatio*” (pp. 83, 100). Though to a large extent the work of a compiler was “a perfectly respectable activity,” “Valentyn was not a nominal figurehead author” but had assembled a wide variety of heterogeneous sources, most of which had been drastically modified by Valentyn, and reassembled into “a more comprehensive structure with a uniform arrangement and a distinctive narrative voice, to which he had added passages and whole sections of his own invention” (p. 110). Huigen concludes that *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* represents a case of “aggregate authorship” directed by Valentyn: despite the textual borrowings and the assistance he had received, Huigen considers the representation of the Dutch East Indies in *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* primarily Valentyn’s achievement (p. 111).

Part 2 (chapters 4–8) changes from the macro- to a micro-perspective zooming in on larger and smaller subsections from *Nieuw en Oud Oost-Indiën* by providing thick descriptions of Valentyn’s knowledge production of, among others, the VOC *comptoirs* of Amboina and the Cape of Good Hope, and its trading post in Japan related to the main fields of knowledge production: natural history, ethnography and ethnology, history, geography, and religion.

Chapter 4, “Natural history for *liefhebbers* in Valentyn’s description of animals from Amboina,” focuses on a section in Valentyn’s work depicting nature in Amboina (Volume III, 1: pp. 153–386) explicitly aimed at a subsection of the reading public, the *liefhebbers* (“enthusiasts”, “amateurs”) of *naturalia* interested in beautiful and pleasing natural objects (pp. 115–116). Huigen also discusses the process of authentication and credibility of knowledge in Valentyn’s treatise: indigenous knowledge always remained subordinate to European perspectives and, in case of divergence, was dismissed as superstition (p. 151).

Chapter 5, “‘Dutch power in those territories’: historical representation in *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*,” focuses on the sections of Valentyn’s work (almost one-third spread over various chorographies) devoted to history, in particular the history of Dutch exploits and conquests in the East Indies, but also to Asian histories with the additional function of proving Valentyn’s expertise in East Indies affairs (p. 167). Valentyn’s “imperialist master narrative,” intended to demonstrate “Dutch power in those regions” (p. 169), was framed around two topoi: the *antiqui-et-moderni* (ancients and moderns) topos with the achievements of modern Dutch seafarers far surpassing those of their predecessors from classical antiquity, and the “Batavia topos” enabling Valentyn to relate the accomplishments of the Dutch in the East Indies to the celebrated, premedieval Batavian period in Dutch history (pp. 175–176).

Chapter 6, “Antiquarian Ambonese: Valentyn’s comparative ethnography and ethnology,” discusses the most ambitious and most extensive (Volume II, 1: pp. 138–189) of the ethnographic accounts in *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (p. 186). Valentyn, Huigen asserts, follows a relatively refined comparative methodology arguably with two aims in mind: to mitigate existing Dutch caricatured representations of the Ambonese, and to generate ethnological knowledge that would, among other things, be useful for biblical exegesis (pp. 188, 202). Valentyn’s philosophy of history, however, a progressive developmental view of peoples and “modern” Dutch beneficial influence on the “first times” Ambonese, also placed him, according to Huigen, in the same intellectual avant-garde category as Bacon, Fontenelle, and Malebranche, providing “a blueprint for a colonial civilising project” (pp. 203, 208).

Chapter 7, “‘This business of our nation’: the questionable conduct of the Dutch in Japan,” occupies a conspicuous place in the whole of *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*. In shrill contrast with Valentyn’s habit

elsewhere in his work of paying tribute to the “laudable” VOC, he offered exceptionally harsh criticism of the VOC’s readiness to submit to the restrictions on Christianity imposed by the shogunal authorities “for the sake of such unholy gain” (pp. 212, 235).

Chapter 8, “‘Waste land’ into ‘earthly paradise’: the geography of the Cape of Good Hope” examines how Valentyn’s chorography of the Dutch Cape Colony (1726, V, 6: pp. 1–160) constructed the Cape as a imagined geographical space within an early modern Dutch and, in a broader sense, European Christian humanist landscape discourse juxtaposing the transformed and “improved” colonial landscape of the Cape and Stellenbosch settlements and the “earthly paradise” of the country estate with the surrounding “horrid and frightening” natural waste land (pp. 251–252).

Part III consists of a single chapter (chapter 9), “A paper empire: *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* as a reference work,” detailing the work’s “long lifespan” (roughly 1750–1850) during which Valentyn’s “paper empire,” a term resembling Nigel Worden’s 2014 “paper empire of the VOC,”³ played a part in administrative and public discourse serving as a common frame of reference for VOC officials and Dutch colonial bureaucrats, both in the Netherlands and East Indies. A “default option for knowledge about the East Indies” largely due to the lack of more recent publications (pp. 282, 294), the book became outdated and redundant after 1850 because of epistemological changes in European geographical discourse and the availability of more up-to-date information (pp. 290, 291, 293). The summary conclusion (6 pages) restates some of the main points covered in the previous nine chapters.

In his eagerness to rehabilitate the reputation of Valentyn and *Nieuw en Oud Oost-Indiën* and refute the “anachronistic accusations of plagiarism” by modern scholars, Huigen goes to great lengths to demonstrate the authenticity, authorship, and coherence of Valentyn’s distinctive, if hidden, “imperialist master narrative” (pp. 179, 182). In the end, however, even he is forced to point out its inaccessibility and “strikingly uneven structure” (p. 24) and portray his protagonist foremost as a “bricoleur” involved in knowledge creation based on recycling extant materials (p. 152) and tending towards antiquarianism, “a form of early modern historiographic discourse not primarily interested in telling a story, but rather with the provision of information” (p. 156).

The authenticity of Valentyn’s narration, the parts of the text where he does act as an autodiegetic narrator describing his own observations and experiences, “eye-witnessing” or even “flesh-witnessing” (p. 44) in the case of his forced participation in a military campaign in the surroundings of Surabaya in 1706, is mainly limited to the Indonesian archipelago, and especially to Ambon where he lived for a long time in Kota Ambon (Ambon Town) (pp. 11, 24, 26). With his avid aversion of traveling by sea (pp. 12, 18), diagnosed by Beekman as thalassophobia or “pathological fear of the sea,”⁴ Valentyn’s first-hand experience of the rest of the VOC’s trading empire, including the Cape of Good Hope, was that of a sojourner observing from a mere “visitor’s perspective” (p. 244).

Huigen also asserts that Valentyn attempts to maintain coherence in the order of chorographies were thwarted by the publisher’s desire to market volumes of roughly equal size, while accessibility of the volumes was further complicated by the lack of continuous pagination, and the absence of a general table of contents mitigated, if only partially, by various navigational tools (pp. 47–48, 272–274).

Whereas Valentyn, being a chorographer rather than historian, “did not care about historical narrative” (p. 293), Huigen’s main emphasis is on discourse analysis and the construction of knowledge in *Nieuw en Oud Oost-Indiëni*, and consequently quickly glances over historical contexts: the Javanese wars of succession and the dissolution of the Mataram Sultanate (p. 45), the dynastic history of the “Great Mughals” in India (p. 164), the *baku-han* (“compound state”) pendulum between the forces of centralization and localization defining Tokugawa Japan (p. 212), the “great transformation” of the Cape Colony between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (p. 242), and so forth, either receive short shrift or are not mentioned at all.

Nevertheless, *Shaping a Dutch East Indies* serves as a masterful and incisive literary analysis of a seminal work in the history and construction of Dutch colonial knowledge and administrative

³Nigel Worden, “Cape slaves in the paper empire of the VOC”, *Kronos* 40 (2014), pp. 23–44.

⁴Beekman, *Paradijzen van weleer*, pp. 131, 138, and 146.

discourse. Huigen is to be congratulated with revisiting the “thorny issue” of Valentyn’s “Great Work,” complicating and challenging the modern scholarly *communis opinio*.

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A History of Economic Thought in Japan, 1600–1945

By Hiroshi Kawaguchi and Sumiyo Ishii, translated by Ayuko Tanaka and Tadashi Anno. London: Bloomsbury, 2022, p. 288. Hardback, £85.00 GBP, ISBN: 9781350150133. Paperback, £28.99, ISBN: 9781350198692. Ebook, £26.09, ISBN: 9781350150140

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The two authors explore not only famous thinkers and economists but also *bugyo* officials (councilors during the Edo Period) and entrepreneurs from the modern period, through the study of historical documents they left behind. Many translated quotations from the original text provide readers with opportunities to touch direct messages made by historical personas.

Much Western scholarship has ignored Japanese economic thought while presenting their accounts as global histories of economic thought and economics. Kawaguchi and Ishii affirm that Japanese economic thought is distinctive and important, and as such their voice resonates strongly among non-Japanese historians. They decided not to touch on research written in English on the topic, strengthening the freshness of the work to those who have studied only in English and other European languages. While the book is a translation of Kawaguchi *et al.* (2015), it excludes two chapters on regions outside of Japan, by Gramlich-Oka (“Study of Japanese Economic Thought in North America and Europe”) and Liu (“Study of Japanese Economic Thought in East Asia”).

This book thus comprises twenty-three of the original chapters, along with a new Introduction. These chapters are coordinated and divided into seven modules. The authors elucidate early modern Japanese Confucian learning as well as Japanese learning from the Ken-en-gakuha, Kogakuha, and Kokugakuha schools. Of note, they emphasize that many modern Japanese social scientists and