

expect those living on or near farms having easier access to food than those in cities. Cox also notes that her data suggests that most children who did not die could, and did, recover in the immediate post-war years, something she credits to the lifting of the blockade after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and to domestic and international food aid supplied to German children post-1918.

Cox's careful and measured tone is apt when it comes to her analysis of nutritional data – which is limited and biased. Unfortunately, she applies that same tone to other chapters in the book which deal with the legal and moral background of the blockade and with a history of international aid to Germany – chapters that demand, according to this reviewer, that the author takes much more on a position on the topics than simply reviewing the available literature without offering anything by way of conclusion. Moreover, apart from the similarities in tone, these chapters tend to read like they should be in a different book than the statistical analyses presented in others; they make almost no reference to each other. The book's last chapter, especially, stands out: it focuses on German children's views of international relief efforts by (mostly American) agencies, relief organizations and NGOs, which is interesting in and of itself but present such a shift in content that is hard to see how it connects to the carefully weighed arguments in the statistical chapters. That the book lacks a conclusion reinforces the impression that it lacks cohesion.

Despite this, Mary Cox's *Hunger in War and Peace* is an important addition to key debates about the global Great War and its impact on food production and consumption, especially in Germany. The book would have benefited from a more coherent integration of the various types of source materials – statistics, ego documents, government records – and from bolder conclusions, but its core chapters are admirable examples of historical-statistical analysis and will greatly benefit continuing debates on economic warfare and food deprivation.

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Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Women, Work and Colonialism in the Netherlands and Java. Comparisons, Contrasts, and Connections, 1830-1940* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). 283 p. ISBN 9783030105273.

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This book investigates women's economic activities in two parts of the Dutch empire: Java and the Netherlands between 1830 and 1940. It explores how

women's contributions to household income developed in both Java and the Netherlands, how these developments were connected, and how they related to colonial policies. This interesting and ambitious study forms an original contribution to the history of Dutch imperialism by bringing together the fields of colonial, economic and gender history.

The book poses three main research questions: (1) How did household work patterns and women's economic activities develop in both regions?; (2) To what extent were these developments shaped by colonial policies?; and (3) How did women's work contribute to the household as well as to the wider economy? Van Nederveen Meerkerk approaches these questions thematically in her chapters, examining the so-called Cultivation System (a system of forced labour in colonial Java), textile production, consumption and living standards and norms and social policies respectively. This innovative approach enables her to analyse how and why women's economic contributions to household incomes in Java and the Netherlands increasingly diverged, for example by illuminating the complex consequences of colonialism on the textile industry in Java and the Netherlands, and the gender-specific division of labour therein.

One of the key contributions of this study is the argument that the so-called Cultivation System caused a divergence in living standards with contrasting consequences for women's participation in the household economy. The profits of this forced labour system caused the Dutch state to relieve the tax burden on the Dutch population in the mid-1840s, so that the purchasing power of Dutch households significantly increased, including that of lower and middle class income households. As a result, women's economic contributions to household income became less important in the Netherlands, and the male breadwinner ideology took root. In Java, by contrast, living standards stagnated or deteriorated, and colonial policies as well as increasing Dutch demand for 'tropical commodities' including sugar caused women's economic activities to continue to be as important if not more important to keep household incomes at subsistence level. As a result, the male breadwinner ideal was 'not feasible' for the majority of the population in Java. (p. 260)

Despite the study's valuable contributions to Dutch imperial history, it is problematic in a number of ways. Most importantly, it does not demonstrate a sustained and critical understanding of (Dutch) colonialism as an exploitative economic system underpinned by violence and coercion that denied the sovereignty and liberty of the indigenous population. Although Van Nederveen Meerkerk makes some brief and crucial remarks about the 'economic considerations' ultimately driving colonialism, legitimized by 'a language of "othering"' (p. 239), throughout the book she does not critically and consist-

ently engage with this understanding of colonialism as a system of economic exploitation legitimized by a racist ideology, as reflected in her word choice, use of sources, and argumentation.

Based on Dutch imperial archival sources (Dutch censuses, marriage records, colonial reports, plantation archives, industrial surveys, and even colonial household budget studies) and predominantly Dutch (and English) secondary literature, the author does not sufficiently reflect on the standpoint of the Javanese women she is writing about, nor of contemporary Indonesian readers. I could not help but wonder how they would feel about the apparently neutral framing of the Cultivation System in which between 8 and 11 million Javanese 'were involved' (p. 61), and the choice to cite 'the inventor' of this system without unpacking this citation, while not including Indonesian scholarship of the system (e.g. Kartodirdjo and Suryo 1991), nor the Indonesian name of *Tanam Paksa* (Forced Planting) under which this system is remembered in Indonesia. The uncritical use of terms like 'coolies' (e.g. p. 176, 182, 195, 200) or phrases such as the 'need for cheap/child/scarce labour' (p. 4, 104, 237, 263), without using quotation marks, qualifications like 'perceived' or 'so-called', or any disclaimers or unpacking of these terms, does not carefully communicate the oppression, racism and pain encapsulated in these terms. This is not to say that Van Nederveen Meerkerk does not reflect on the extractive, exploitative side of Dutch colonialism or the so-called Cultivation System at all, indeed she argues this very system enabled Dutch wealth, yet my point is that she does not do so in a careful and consistent manner.

The conclusion, where Van Nederveen Meerkerk distinguishes between the 'intended' and 'unintended' consequences of colonial policies, furthermore fails to critically examine 'economic considerations' as a core driver of colonialism. For example, she writes that Javanese living standards 'did not improve much' from 1900 onwards 'despite the efforts of the colonial government to improve the well-being of the indigenous population through the Ethical Policy' (p. 263). Such a statement does not reflect up-to-date historical research (e.g. Bloembergen and Raben 2009) that critically examines the intentions behind the so-called 'Ethical Policy', to which Van Nederveen Meerkerk herself refers shortly in another section of her book (p. 235).

Moreover, this book on women's work and women's contributions to household income does not engage with feminist methodologies, nor does it analyse unpaid household labour. The author justifies this by stating that 'unpaid household tasks are very hard to pin down in the historical records' (p.7), but the implications of this omission for the wider claims of this study remain unspecified. And while the author pays due attention to the impact of Dutch ideologies and perceptions on women's work, Javanese perceptions and atti-

tudes towards women's work are only very briefly addressed. In comparing, contrasting and connecting women's economic roles in the Netherlands and Java, Van Nederveen Meerkerk makes an original contribution to the field of Dutch imperial economic history. However, such Dutch research could benefit greatly from feminist and decolonizing approaches to knowledge production that are more considerate of and sensitive to colonized peoples' and women's perspectives.

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Jan Willem Veluwenkamp and Werner Scheltjens (eds.), *Early Modern Shipping and Trade. Novel Approaches Using Sound Toll Registers Online* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018). 243 p. ISBN 9789004371774.

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The registers of Elsinore's Sound Toll (Denmark) scarcely need an introduction. They are one of the best known sets of primary sources on Europe's maritime transport and trade from the beginning of the sixteenth well into the nineteenth century. For the past one hundred years, economic historians have mined from these serial records to obtain information on the flows, volumes and value of intra-continental trade, and to assess the increasing exposure of European markets to all sorts of products coming from overseas. In turn, political, diplomatic and military historians have also taken an interest in the Sound Toll registers because they provide evidence on the reach and effectiveness of the 'mercantilist' (for lack of a better term) policies of pre-industrial European states.

While everyone but the non-specialist scholar might assume that these primary sources have yielded all the information and insight they could, the authors of this edited volume show that there is still much to be done with them. The volume makes use of a novel database of the Sound Toll registers, the STRO (Sound Toll Registers Online), patiently compiled over the past decade as part of a project based at the University of Groningen and Tresoor, the Frisian Historical and Literary Centre, in Leeuwarden (www.soundtoll.nl). The main goal of the editors of *Early Modern Shipping and Trade* is to establish the STRO as the reference tool for the study of the Baltic trade in the *longue durée*.

As the editors claim in the introduction (and the volume's contributions confirm) the STRO supersedes previous summaries of the Sound Toll registers, such as the seven volume 'Sound Toll Tables' (*Tabeller over Skibsfart og Varen-*