Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North, eds.

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Between 1602 and about 1800, the Dutch East India Company (the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) operated a vast commercial enterprise that eventually stretched from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan. Dedicated to trade and profit, the Dutch sought commercial advantage by negotiations, including lavish gift-giving, and occasionally by military means. The VOC established Batavia, now Jakarta in Indonesia, as the headquarters of its far-flung Asian network. The company purchased textiles from India, cinnamon from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), silk, tea, porcelain, and lacquer from Formosa (Taiwan) and China, and precious metals from Japan. Much of the trade occurred intra-Asia as the Dutch shipped materials between their different factories (or settlements). Goods that reached Amsterdam often sold for three times more than their acquisition costs in Asia. Savvy VOC investors back in the Netherlands frequently improved their financial and social status. Yet fortunes were also lost when ships sank or when cargos were damaged.

The importation of Asian artistic wares into the Netherlands has been the focus of several recent studies, including *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age*, an exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in late 2015. The excellent volume under review addresses the other side of this issue as the authors ask what measurable impact Dutch art had on the Asian cultures they traded with. Most of the fourteen essays are the products of working seminars held at Princeton University and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Wassenaar between 2008 and early 2010 under the direction of Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Michael North, and Marten Jan Bok. The introduction by Kaufmann and North presents a highly useful overview of the VOC and how its efforts to export Dutch art, especially paintings, and artists met with mixed results often because the Company failed to recognize the differences of distinct Asian cultures.

As conveyed by the book's title, the editors view the resulting cultural exchange as a form of mediation. In chapter 14, Astrid Erll explains the theoretical framework of mediation. Ideas or objects from one country go through a process of production (they are made in one context), transmission (multi-directional networks are involved in moving objects), reception (dependent on local practices by a specific social group at a particular time and place), transcultural remediation (how did an object made in one environment get

adopted, adapted, and used in another cultural setting), and afterlife (the *longue durée* or the long-term implicit and explicit memory of cultural exchanges). As an example of afterlife, Erll cites Yoriko Kobayashi-Sato who claims “the Dutch mediation caused the mental world of the Japanese to shift from a Chinese-oriented culture to a Western-oriented culture” (327).

The essays address the different lands where the Dutch traded or tried to trade. Gary Schwartz (chapter 1) remarks that the Persians did not differentiate the Dutch from other Europeans, all of whom were called *farangi* (Franks). Gifts from the VOC representatives to the Safavid shahs during the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century rarely included Dutch art as they worried about the Shi’ite prohibitions against figural painting. Schwartz discusses several VOC employees, including Philips Angel (1618–after 1664), who served as court painters in Isfahan. Unfortunately, virtually nothing survives of the art they produced. He concludes that both the Persians and Dutch lacked any real interest in each other’s art. Amy Landau (chapter 2) considers how Safavid painters responded to Netherlandish prints. She uses the single-sheet biblical paintings of Muhammad Zaman (*fl.* c.1670–1700) as her case study. He appropriated compositions and biblical themes from Flemish, rather than Dutch, prints. These may have been carried to New Julfa, adjacent to Isfahan, by Armenian merchants rather than by the VOC. An Armenian Bible (1666–68), printed in Amsterdam, contains illustrations by the Dutch print-maker Christoffel van Sichem II (1577–1658) that were, in turn, inspired by the engravings in the Jesuit Jerónimo Nadal’s famous *Evangelicae historiae imagines* and his *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* (Antwerp: Nutius, 1593 and 1594). Local Persian artists then employed these scenes as the models for the decorations of the Armenian community’s churches, such as the All Saviour’s Cathedral, in New Julfa.

Most of the essays address a single country. Martin Krieger (chapter 3) discusses Dutch cemeteries along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts in South India, while Ranabir Chakravarti (chapter 4) examines Dutch cartography as well as images of the Indian coastline and interior. This includes Dutch prints and paintings of the harbor at Surat (Gujarat) or Hendrik van Schuylenburgh’s aerial portrait of the VOC’s factory at Hughli (Bengal) of 1665. Michael North’s comparative analysis of the material cultures of the Cape Colony in South Africa and Batavia in chapter 5 is particularly interesting. The Cape Colony, first settled by the Dutch in 1652, was intended as a permanent colony while Batavia was the VOC’s Asian headquarters. Both had racially mixed populations. In 1679, the Dutch represented only 6.93% (2,227 people) of the very diverse population of Batavia. North uses probate inventories and bequests to study the sorts of artistic objects kept in colonial households. Several wealthy

Batavian residents owned many paintings. Governor-General Baron Gustaaf Willem van Imhoff (1705–50) possessed about 130 paintings including twenty-five portraits of previous governor-generals. He also held Chinese paintings, prints of VOC factories, and, perhaps surprisingly, twelve marble busts of Roman emperors. The 1707 inventory of a junior merchant and VOC cashier in Cape Colony included twenty-one paintings, mainly landscapes and peasant scenes as well as five “spoiled paintings of Cape art.” Increasingly Chinese export art, especially porcelain, is found in both towns. In several instances, it is possible to determine what sorts of pictures hung in specific rooms in their houses. The VOC proved to be the main commissioner of pictures by Dutch artists residing in Batavia.

Peter Nas (chapter 6) considers different modes of Dutch architecture in Batavia including what he terms the *Indische* style (the adaptation of Dutch building types, such as roof lines, for the Indonesian climate), old Dutch style, and the VOC or company style. Lodewijk Wagenaar (chapter 7) traces the VOC’s history in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where, after expelling the Portuguese, the company administered between 500,000 and 750,000 coastal residents. Galle, the VOC most important town, serves as an architectural case study. The Dutch erected a new Reformed church there only in 1756. Kaufmann (chapter 9) tells a compelling story of the VOC’s failure in Taiwan, which they lost in 1661, and China. Their various embassies to the Chinese emperors, beginning in 1665, failed to secure a permanent port such as the Portuguese had at Macau. Although the Dutch always had to work with Chinese middlemen, vast quantities, estimated at forty-five million pieces, of Chinese porcelain were shipped back to Europe. The Chinese, however, had little interest in Dutch art. Flemish prints distributed by Jesuit missionaries had a greater, if still limited, impact.

Matthi Forrer and Yoriko Kobayashi-Sato together and separately contribute three essays (chapters 10–12) about the Dutch in Japan. The *Dagregisters* or diaries of the heads of the Nagasaki factory, dating from 1633 to 1860, provide a rich source for the VOC’s commercial and cultural interactions with the shoguns in Edo and their representatives. The Dutch, restricted to Deshima, a man-made island adjoining Nagasaki, and the Chinese were the only nationalities permitted access, albeit highly restricted, to Japan. Forrer (chapter 11) surveys the gradual interest by the Japanese in pictures done in the Western manner, specifically images exhibiting linear perspective. As background he examines (251–54) the influence in China of Jesuit painters and prints, such as those illustrating books by Nadal or the Polyglot Bible published by Christoph Plantin in Antwerp. Their impact was largely limited to the Imperial Painting Academy and to official commissions. Through groups such as the Guild of Connoisseurs of Chinese Paintings, established in Nagasaki in 1697, some

Western ideas via China entered Japan where these were developed by Okumura Masanobu (1686–1764), among others. Kobayashi-Sato (chapter 12) considers how Western paintings were appropriated in Japan especially when Shogun Yoshimune (r. 1716–45) received five Dutch paintings in 1730. Satake Shozan (Satake Yoshiatsu, 1748–85) developed the Akita Ranga School or paintings done in the Dutch manner.

The remaining two essays range across the VOC's domain. Marten Jan Bok (chapter 8) draws upon the database of Dutch Asiatic Shipping (www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DAS) to study the European artists employed by the VOC. At the peak in the 1670s and 1680s, the Company averaged fourteen artists in each decade. Most served as draftsmen and cartographers. Only Batavia possessed "something resembling an artistic community" (182), which would include Rembrandt's daughter Cornelia, the wife of painter Cornelis Suijthoff (Suythof; 1646–91). Two grandsons of Frans Hals and one of Jan Steen also worked for the VOC. A few artists, such as Hendrick Arentsz. Vapoer (before 1590–1632), served as court painters in India or Persia. Bok includes an appendix (191–200) listing brief biographical information about ninety-seven artists listed in Company records.

Cynthia Viallé examines VOC gift-giving (chapter 13). Most Asian societies had often complex practices of gift-giving that were expected as tribute or simply as part of the costs of doing business. The expenditures were substantial. In 1688–89, general VOC expenses were 73,349,924 guilders and those for gift-giving were 8,927,362 guilders (295). Offerings made to the great mogul of India, the shogun of Japan, the emperor of China, and the shah of Persia, the highest ranking rulers in Asia, were the most costly. Yet it was customary to distribute presents to business associates and others far down the social ladder. Viallé remarks that the VOC often failed to tailor their choices of gifts to the tastes and expectations of the different lords. Although the VOC received gifts in return, these were frequently of lesser value. The lack of a Netherlandish king diminished their diplomatic status in the eyes of some courts that did not understand the concept of a republic. The Dutch presented textiles, weapons, scientific and surgical instruments, glassware, jewelry, amber, and clocks, among other items. Frequently the objects were not specifically Dutch or even European. Paintings are listed only rarely. In 1687, one Muslim shah requested painted screens "with depictions of large naked women, and charming creatures, painted nonchalantly for enjoyment and not covered with modesty" (299). Only a very few objects, such as the Amsterdam-made brass chandelier with thirty branches (Plate 13.5) presented to Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (r.1623–51), survive.

Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia is a fascinating compilation of thoughtful and well-documented essays. Collectively these offer an invaluable introduction to the VOC's activities across its vast commercial realm. Dutch art and architecture played a role in spreading Netherlandish material culture; however, as many of the authors concluded, its immediate and long-term impacts on Asian societies proved quite limited. Porcelain and other Asian wares imported by the VOC into Europe ultimately had a far broader and more lasting influence.

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