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 printmaker 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 meditaciones 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