

with it a week after its release – and future scholarship can build upon the framework by more directly considering the correlations and causal effects of institutions and their capacity to shape epidemic disease dynamics. It is a starting point for more refined analyses at micro- and meso-scales where confounding variables can be more easily controlled and quantitative data is available at a higher resolution.

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Wouter Waldus, *Turfvaart op de Zuiderzee. Scheepswrakken in Flevoland, 1550-1700* (Utrecht: Matrijs, 2024). 176 pp. ISBN 9789053456033.

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This new publication by Wouter Waldus is a revised and accessible version of his Leiden doctoral dissertation (2021). It focuses on early modern shipwrecks found in Flevoland, the reclaimed land of the former Zuiderzee and, in particular, on vessels that transported peat. While the economic and social history of the Zuiderzee and its role in the rise of Holland's Golden Age has been extensively studied, Waldus addresses a crucial but underexplored aspect: the logistics of peat, the vital fuel that heated the households and industries of the booming urban centers of the western Netherlands. By integrating archaeological evidence from shipwrecks with economic and social history, Waldus offers both a fresh lens on maritime logistics and an important contribution to the wider historiography of Dutch socioeconomic development.

The opening sections of the book situate the Zuiderzee in the period 1550-1700 as a maritime crossroads, essential not only for fisheries and international trade but also for supplying basic resources to Holland's cities. Waldus demonstrates convincingly that peat – often overlooked compared to bulk goods like grain or timber – was a linchpin commodity in this system. His analysis highlights the centrality of resource flows in enabling Holland's urban expansion, drawing attention to networks of supply that supported both local economies and long-distance ventures.

The core chapters examine peat extraction, transport, and trade in detail. Waldus's accessible writing makes complex socioeconomic structures approachable, while offering insights into skippers, insurers,

legal frameworks, and market prices. Particularly valuable is his discussion of trade routes across the Zuiderzee, showing how peat moved not only into Holland but also into other regional economies. These sections bring to light the lived realities of trade, from the organization of fleets to the financial risks borne by traders. His reconstruction is rich with a healthy balance between archaeological data and written sources touching various aspects of the early modern economy related to peat transport.

One of the book's most compelling contributions lies in its archaeological focus. Chapter 5 explores shipwrecks in detail, discussing construction techniques, innovations, and the gradual adaptation of ship types from the late medieval period into the nineteenth century. Particularly striking is the evidence for the introduction of the spritsail and other design innovations which textual or iconographic sources alone could not reveal. Waldus's clear exposition demonstrates the unique value of shipwreck research for economic history.

The use of text boxes throughout – highlighting individual wrecks, technical terms, or sailors' belongings – offers the reader a well-structured guide through the material. This balance of micro-histories and macro-level interpretation is one of the book's major strengths.

In a short concluding chapter, Waldus reflects on shipwrecks as sources, emphasizing how they enrich our understanding of peat transport, shipbuilding, and the social history of the Zuiderzee. His argument that these wrecks should be considered endangered heritage – threatened by drying soils and land use – is persuasive and urgent. The book therefore has significance not only for scholars but also for heritage policy makers.

The book is well supported by endnotes, a substantial bibliography (mainly in Dutch, but with key English works), a glossary, and an index of place names. Its wealth of illustrations – artworks, archaeological photographs, and technical drawings – make it accessible even to non-specialists.

One limitation is linguistic: while the book is written in Dutch, its contribution would be of clear value to an international audience. The abundant visual material and references help mitigate this obstacle, but an English summary or translated version would greatly expand its reach.

*Turfvaart op de Zuiderzee* is a well-researched, accessible, and significant study of a neglected aspect of Dutch maritime and economic history. By focusing on peat transport, Waldus sheds light on

the infrastructural backbone of Holland's rise, while demonstrating the analytical power of shipwreck archaeology. The book will be of interest not only to maritime archaeologists and historians of the Dutch Golden Age, but also to policymakers concerned with the preservation of fragile archaeological remains. Waldus has produced a richly illustrated and thought-provoking study that deserves a wide readership.

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Lars Behrisch, *Democracy's Double Helix. Participation, Equality, and Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025). 330 pp. ISBN 9781316516317.

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In human DNA, two genetic strands are closely intertwined, forming a uniform pattern without ever merging. Since they run antiparallel, there is tension between them and the possibility that they may separate. Historian Lars Behrisch uses this image to illustrate the two 'original roots' of democracy that he distinguishes and follows in his new book: political participation and equality.

The book deals with the long-term development of representative democracy in Europe and the United States from the late Middle Ages to the American and French Revolutions, with a view toward the present. With the first 'root', political participation, Behrisch addresses a specific field of practices: the involvement of people in institutionalized decision-making processes, that is, in forms of regular consultation and/or constitution which do not depend on the will of a single ruler, with special norms and legitimacy. He describes in considerable depth a whole spectrum of pre-modern state developments: Participation without Monarchs (Swiss Confederacy, Netherlands), King-in-Parliament (England, Poland-Lithuania), Monarchs and Estates (Sweden, Holy Roman Empire, Spain), Negative Participation (France), Monarchs without Participation (Russia).

As different as these early modern political entities were in many respects, they generally had a pluralistic character and a conservative attitude. The right to participate was fought for and defended by hierarchically structured groups. Rebellions were not aimed at expanding popular participation, but at preserving the status quo.