

itself, this further undermined grassroots ‘support’ for hierarchy. Europe north of the Alps, and after the invasion of the Lombards also south of the Alps, had institutions at the micro level of family and household that were incompatible with the high level of hierarchy of ancient empires. The most telling example is that rules about heritage – equal division between sons – contributed a lot to the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire. The Church codified this. When during the high Middle Ages the church doctrine of marriage had to be defined, the southern (Bologna) and the northern (Paris) interpretations of this institution clashed, the first one stressing sex as the definition of marriage (and thus including the possibility that women were forced to marry against their will), whereas according to the northern interpretation free will, consensus, was essential for marriage. The Church eventually chose the northern view.

Scheidel gives a long list of ad hoc reasons why empire did not return. This alternative view is perhaps that ultimately the Roman Empire did not return because in western Europe power structures at the micro level were not conducive to empire. The imposition of hierarchy during the Roman empire had not been long and intense enough to create the kind of micro institutions that were compatible with a stable empire, and the invasions of Germanic tribes made matters even ‘worse’. And with the progress of time, these often informal institutions at the micro level hardened into formal institutions such as communes and guilds.

Rome as outlier meant that in the long run empire was the exception, that the normal state of affairs was political fragmentation. In that sense it was not the collapse of Rome, the escape from its empire, that paved the road to modernity, but the experiment of an ‘one-off’ empire in an environment that was – the further one moved to the west and to the north – a poor breeding ground for hierarchy and patriarchy.

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Arthur van Riel, *Trials of Convergence. Prices, Markets and Industrialization in the Netherlands, 1800-1913*, two volumes, PhD Dissertation, Utrecht University, 2018. 809 p.

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Dutch economic historians have long debated the supposed economic ‘retardation’ of the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. Scholars have focused es-

pecially on determining the exact starting date of the country's industrialization, the explanations behind the country's relative economic decline, as well as whether economic growth was balanced across economic sectors.

In *Strictures of Inheritance*, published in 2004, Jan Luiten van Zanden and Arthur van Riel had 'closed' several of these debates.¹ The book synthesized a huge research project to reconstruct Dutch GDP during the nineteenth century. Using these data, Van Zanden and Van Riel convincingly showed that there was in fact economic growth before 1840, that it slowed down (but did not stop) afterwards, and that industrialization in the Netherlands started to take off by the 1860s. Their main argument was that the Netherlands' economy was captured in an inheritance of the pre-Napoleonic era in terms of its political and economic institutions, and that escaping this inheritance had taken until the 1860s.

Van Riel's (two volume!) PhD dissertation reads in many ways as a sequel to this well-received predecessor. While Van Zanden and Van Riel based the earlier book on historical GDP reconstructions, Van Riel now adds an impressive dataset on Dutch commodity and factor prices. On this basis, he reaches conclusions on the real value of GDP during this period, revising the earlier book's conclusion on the state of the economy, although largely keeping its timeline intact. More importantly, Van Riel uses the price data itself as an explanatory variable of its own accord. Besides providing the dataset itself, it is here that the central contribution of this PhD dissertation lies. However, there is little overall difference in the main findings or conclusions between this dissertation and *Strictures*. Rather, the PhD nuances the findings of the previous book, and puts its arguments on a firmer empirical basis.

The biggest differences between *Strictures* and the current work is the way in which Van Riel conceptualizes and incorporates institutions. Instead of putting the country's institutions as such central (although still relying on them for his explanations), Van Riel's PhD aims to study and explain the arrival of Dutch industrialization by means of incentives, which in his case means prices and markets. He has collected and calculated price series based on data from an array of individual firms, international trade, public organizations (such as hospitals), newspapers, government data and censuses of market prices. He combines these to establish price series for a large variety of commodities, both agricultural and industrial. The appendices will no doubt be an invaluable source to economic historians; certainly, we will be making use of these new data in our own research.

1 J.L. van Zanden and A. van Riel, *The strictures of inheritance. The Dutch economy in the nineteenth century*, transl. by I. Cressie (Princeton 2004). For the original Dutch-language monograph, see: J.L. van Zanden and A. van Riel, *Nederland 1780-1914. Staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam 2000).

With this focus on markets and prices, the dissertation is both expansive and narrow. It has an impressive volume: 600 pages of text as well as 200 pages of appendices. Many chapters have their own literature review, and Van Riel regularly allows himself the time and space to fully rebut or nuance certain claims made in the earlier literature. Besides the database as such, these reviews will make his dissertation a useful reference work. With his price data, Van Riel calculates inflation rates and real GDP (chapter 2), reconstructs the incentive structures of agriculture and industry (chapter 3 and 4) and measures the extent of the market integration of the Netherlands (chapter 5). He investigates the structure and incentives on the labour and capital markets and taxation (chapter 6 and 7), and ends with a long study of the country's transformation towards modern economic growth (chapter 8). Future economic historians will find a lot in this dissertation, from estimation of the role of consumption patterns, to coal accessibility, and the role of investment in the Dutch growth pattern.

At the same time, readers will likely find the focus on prices and markets somewhat constricting. The dissertation unfortunately lacks some of the argumentative conciseness and rhetorical flair that made *Strictures* such a joy to read. It also does not incorporate some core (political) economics of the previous work. For all the institutional explanations that he inherited from the earlier book, Van Riel does not try to understand or estimate transaction costs in the Dutch economy, nor does he look at how economic life outside of markets was organized. As Ronald Coase's work has long ago stressed, most economic exchange does not actually occur in markets, but rather in family units, firms and state organizations – for good reason.² Furthermore, as William Baumol has demonstrated, a good understanding of human action does not merely look at how economic actors respond to incentives within the rules of the game, but also to the incentives to subvert or move outside them.³ Why compete in a market if easy wealth can be achieved through other means, such as getting the state to help you?

Van Riel missed the opportunity in this dissertation to respond to his earlier critics. Even though both Harry Lintsen and Wantje Fritschy had lamented the lack of interaction with technological history in the earlier book, technological history is again largely lacking here.⁴ Much in the dissertation is made

2 R.H. Coase, 'The nature of the firm', *Economica* 4 (1937) 386-405.

3 W.J. Baumol, 'Entrepreneurship. Productive, unproductive, and destructive', *Journal of Political Economy* 5 (1990) 893-921.

4 H. Lintsen, 'Review van Jan Luiten van Zanden en Arthur van Riel, Nederland 1780-1914. Staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling', *NEHA-bulletin* 14:2 (2000) 306-308; W. Fritschy, 'Binnenlandse constituties of buitenlandse omstandigheden?', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 117:3 (2002) 344-351.

of the taxation of coal compared to peat, and the arrival of steam technology. However, Lintsen argued that in the Netherlands, steam had strong competitors in windmills and watermills up until the 1880s, and was not a real competitor in most industries until major technical innovations in steam technology around 1850.⁵

The bottom line: this is a valuable PhD dissertation which deserves a wider readership, not least because it adds new evidence and nuance. But for this wider readership to be enticed to read this work, Van Riel may need to revise it for publication. At the very least it needs to be substantially cut down to size!

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Anneke Geyzen, *De smaak van thuis. Erfgoed en voeding in Vlaanderen tussen 1945 en 2000* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2018). 186 p. ISBN 9789462701274.

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Anneke Geyzen deed uitgebreid onderzoek naar voedingserfgoed. Ze verdedigde in 2014 haar proefschrift *Culinaire vererfgoeding in Vlaanderen tussen 1945 en 2000. Een historisch-gastrolinguïstische analyse*, aan de Vrije Universiteit Brussel. De publicatie onder bespreking *De smaak van thuis. Erfgoed en voeding in Vlaanderen tussen 1945 en 2000* is een gecondenseerde neerslag van haar doctoraatsonderzoek.

Wat is nu eigenlijk de 'Smaak van thuis?' Is die voor iedereen anders? Geyzen vertrekt vanuit de toegenomen aandacht voor erfgoed en linkt dit ook maatschappelijk, onder meer aan het fenomeen van globalisering. Het resultaat is een boeiend boek. In zes hoofdstukken gaat de auteur de uitdaging aan om de band tussen voeding en culturele identiteit uit te lichten door middel van predicaatanalyse en *close reading*. Hoe 'talig' is de (erfgoed)keuken? En hoe worden de gebruikte begrippen al dan niet vrijwillig ingezet om identiteit te geven aan het culinaire erfgoed. Geyzen verzamelde meer dan 40.000 recepten in een databank. De bronnen die zij hiervoor consulteerde zijn hoogst interessant, namelijk drie vrouwenmagazines: *Het Rijk der Vrouw* en *De Boerin/Bij de Haard/Eigen Aard* en *De Stem der Vrouw*. De databank is impressionant op zich, evenals de gastrolinguïstische methode. Dat de vrouw het dagelijks koken op zich nam in de periode tussen 1945-2000 is een premisse en dit had

5 H.W. Lintsen and E. Homburg, 'Een land met stoom', in: H.W. Lintsen (ed.), *Geschiedenis van de techniek in Nederland. De wording van een moderne samenleving 1800-1890*, vol. 6 (Zutphen 1995) 191-279.