

Runies gives a very good critical comparative discussion of historical mentalities and national mythologies concerning this Dutch episode in Brazil's colonial past.

Here we also find editor Michiel van Groesen's own contribution, on the Dutch 17th century cult of naval heroes and their exploits, beginning and ending with Van Haren's poem of 1769 on the proud episode and the missed opportunity of 'Neglected Brazil' (*Verzuimd Brazil*). Who knows, this poem may well have been the reason why Van Haren's grandson, Dirck van Hogendorp – who had enjoyed a long and adventurous career as a Dutch colonial administrator in Java and Bengal, a colonial critic and reformer at home, then as Dutch ambassador to Russia and as a general in the service of Napoleon, before finally being disgraced back in the Netherlands – went in 1817 to Brazil, of all places, where he spent the last years of his life in exile at the Portuguese royal court in Rio de Janeiro.

There is in this volume an interesting footnote on p. 106, pointing to the connection in the 1930s between the Brazilian poet and essayist Paolo Setúbal, who wrote an historical novel with Johan Maurits as its central character, which was co-translated in 1933 by one of Holland's most important writers on the tropics, the poet J.J. Slauerhoff. Instead of a footnote, this modern Dutch-Brazilian connection would have merited a full article.

All in all, the book offers a very rich collection indeed. It has been published to a high standard by Cambridge University Press, with a beautiful picture on the outside jacket of palms, the ruins of a fortress and a rusty canon on the beach. On the inside, too, there are quite a lot of illustrations, maps and figures, but no colour photographs of the beautiful original paintings by Post and Eeckhout.

REINIER SALVERDA

The Legacy of Dutch Brazil, Edited by Michiel van Groesen, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 363 p.

A Failed Political Experiment

The United Kingdom of the Netherlands 1815-1830

2015 marks the bicentenary of the creation of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Between 1815 and 1830, Belgium and the Netherlands were briefly joined under William I. How did this come about and what went wrong?

Long before the last remains of the Napoleonic Empire were swept away at Waterloo and the little French emperor was banished to Saint Helena, the European superpowers had already begun to redraw the map of Europe. Great Britain was particularly in favour of creating a buffer state on the northern French border. The idea of merging the Northern and Southern Netherlands and thereby countering French expansionist tendencies actually dates back to 1805. British Prime Minister William Pitt found a willing ear in his Russian ally. In the Eight Articles of London, signed in June 1814, the superpowers secretly agreed to implement the unification, under the leadership of King William I. This agreement was then ratified at the Congress of Vienna. With the appointment of William I, the superpowers sought a return to peace, order and prosperity after two decades of power struggles and upheaval.

William reigned over the United Kingdom of the Netherlands between 1815 and 1830, ruling the land as if it were his own. The 'Functionary King' inundated the people with royal decrees, in the firm belief that he knew the way to prosperity and happiness. He wanted obedient and industrious subjects, and the church, the education system and the press were all expected to serve his government. Only industrialists and merchants were permitted some freedom of movement. He supported these members of society, sometimes even with his own capital.

William saw it as his mission to form the two combined regions into an 'intimate and complete' (*intime et complète*) amalgam, as set out in the first of the Eight Articles of London. His policies provoked misunderstanding and discontent, especially in the South, and led to short-term resistance. The main

opposition was in response to his steps regarding religion, language, the education system and the press. His reforms aimed at modernising the economy met with more understanding. He commissioned extensive infrastructure works, earning him nicknames such as the Merchant King and the Canal King, not least because of the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal, which was dug under his rule. He also lent support to entrepreneurs such as John Cockerill, a Briton who modernized the steel industry in Liège. The King managed to raise the funds necessary to finance these activities through the creation of several banks and credit institutions. However, his fiscal policy led to a great deal of protest. Over their many centuries of separation, North and South had developed separate taxation systems, which the King saw it as his job to harmonise. The tax authorities in the United Kingdom acquired the persona of a greedy, interfering official. Opposition to the monarch's fiscal policies was particularly strong in the South, where the population felt exploited and discriminated against. Recent historical research seems to support this perception: there were indeed quite large remittances from the South to the North. When the economic situation worsened, so too did general dissatisfaction.

The establishment of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands put the traditional religious balance under considerable pressure. The South had a large Catholic majority and a church that was organised very much as an established church. In the North, the Reformed Church was traditionally very influential. William I was convinced that the churches would prove an important tool for creating national unity, but they would have to make very large concessions. This led to opposition from the clergy, which Willem interpreted as subversion of his policies. In the South, the King's church politics had a mixed reception. In liberal and anti-clerical circles, there was initially very little protest against curtailment of the power of the church. In church circles, dissatisfaction was high, based on the prevailing impression that 'Dutch' Protestants were imposing their ideas. However, when William introduced



Aula of Ghent University, founded by King William I in 1817. The Aula was completed in 1826. © Michiel Hendryckx

uniform seminary training in 1820, the liberals joined the church in opposing it, describing it as a restriction on freedom of expression and religion. This would eventually lead to an 'unholy alliance' of Catholics and liberals united in opposition.

William I declared Dutch to be the national language of the United Kingdom. The imposition of a single language was another attempt to foster unity and national sentiment, but also to form a barrier against French expansionism. This was no problem in the Northern Netherlands, where Dutch had long been the language of government and education, but not so in the South, where French was the more prestigious language. In 1823, a general 'Dutchification' of education, administration and the judiciary took effect. In Flanders, the policy was largely observed and the switch to Dutch was relatively smooth. In Wallonia, however, where Dutch was almost completely unknown, the changeover was less smooth. William tried all kinds of methods to boost knowledge of the language. He even established a Dutch chair at the University of Liège in 1817. But ultimately the results of all these measures were still very meagre

and protests against the introduction of Dutch as the language of government grew. It was perceived as a restriction on the freedom of language and was a source of annoyance in Wallonia in particular.

The authoritarian regime of William I and the series of controversial measures that he issued increased the unrest in the South of the United Kingdom. On August 25 1830, rioting broke out in Brussels after a performance of the opera *La Muette de Portici*. The fact that this led eventually to the independence of Belgium had to do with a number of coincidences, and the revolt was certainly not upheld across the whole country. Although an independent kingdom of Belgium was never really the main issue of the uprising, nevertheless independence was declared on October 4, and a provisional government appointed. In June 1831, Leopold, Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, took up office as the first King of Belgium. The Netherlands continued to make claims on the lost territory until 1839, when, under pressure from the European powers, King William I was finally forced to recognise the situation.

Was the United Kingdom of the Netherlands a political experiment doomed in advance to failure? Historical writing that has emerged since independence confirms this idea, but there are many counterarguments. The fact remains that King William I and the executors of his policies failed to seize many opportunities to form the United Kingdom into a real nation.

DIRK VAN ASSCHE

Translated by Rebekah Wilson

A book about the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, published by Ons Erfdeel vzw, is due out in 2015. This article is based on a number of texts from this book.

'A Thankless and Vexatious work' **One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the** **'Fat Van Dale'**

Language-lovers in the Netherlands and Flanders have been in conspicuous high spirits recently. The year 2014 saw the celebration of the best-known defining dictionary of Dutch: the *Van Dale Groot Woordenboek van de Nederlandse Taal* (Van Dale's Large Dictionary of the Dutch Language), also known as the *Grote Van Dale* (Large Van Dale) or, more fondly, as the 'Fat Van Dale'. Its popularity is apparent from the book *Verhalen over taal* (Stories about Language), a hefty volume of columns, anecdotes and short stories revolving round the Van Dale and Dutch in general¹. It was published by the Van Dale company which, in addition to the 'Fat Van Dale', also publishes some more slender versions of the same dictionary, as well as translating dictionaries. A poll was also organised, with voting open for almost a month, to find the best of one hundred and fifty so-called 'Van Dale Jubilee Words', Dutch words that first appeared or became common between 1864 and 2014. The most votes went to the word *bolleboos*, which means 'someone who is very gifted, who excels in something'.

The climax is still to come, however. In September 2015 a new paper edition of the 'Fat Van Dale' will be published (including a CD-ROM, of course). The previous paper edition was published in 2005. It has however been updated digitally every six months. By tradition, the editors of the new edition will again be both Dutch and Flemish. One of their most delicate tasks is the choice of words that have never previously appeared in this dictionary, but which now do have the right to an entry. This usually puts them to a severe test and in recent years pressure has been exerted from outside to include certain words.

The Van Dale dictionary owes its name to Johan Hendrik Van Dale (1828-1872), a teacher in Sluis (a small town in Zeeland-Flanders, just north of the Dutch-Belgian border). His parents