

Zitierhinweis

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Jeroen KOCH, Koning Willem I, 1772-1843, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2013, 700 p., ISBN 9789461051844; 39,90 €.

Jeroen VAN ZANTEN, Koning Willem II, 1792-1849, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2013, 600 p., ISBN 9789461051851; 39,90 €.

The commemoration of the bicentennial of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2013-2015 has caused a flood of new publications on the (Northern) Netherlands in the rather neglected early nineteenth century. By far the most widely sold of these publications are the three biographies of the nineteenth-century kings of the House of Orange: William I (1772-1843), William II (1792-1849) and William III (1817-1890) written respectively by Dutch historians Jeroen Koch, Jeroen van Zanten and Dik van der Meulen. The biographies are on the whole excellent books for three reasons. In the first place they are based on new archival research, mostly royal correspondence kept in the Royal archives (Koninklijk Huisarchief) in The Hague but also from far-flung archives in, for instance, Saint Petersburg. Secondly, the biographers treat their research objects from a wider European perspective and not just within a Dutch national context. The House of Orange is regarded by the biographers as essentially a European noble family. Thirdly, the books are admirably well written, equally appealing to professional academic historians as to political journalists and a (Dutch speaking) lay public.

In this review the biographies of the first two kings from the House of Orange, who ruled between 1813 and 1849, will be reviewed. Both lives were to a large extent determined by the turmoil of the revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Both kings lived in a world where everything was constantly changing and nothing seemed certain anymore. Retrospectively, however, the Low Countries received their current-day borders in the first half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, as the Amsterdam cultural historian Joep Leerssen has noted, did national denominations such as 'the Netherlands (Nederland)', 'Belgium (België)' and 'Luxembourg (Lëtzebuerg)' receive their more or less definitive modern meaning.

The biography of William I starts with his childhood as son of the stadtholder William V in the 1770s, a quiet decade before the revolutionary storm broke loose in the Netherlands in 1780s with the Revolution of the Patriots followed by the repressive first Orange Restoration of 1787 (with the help of the Prussian army). William Frederick's prospects of becoming the next stadtholder were abruptly slashed as a result of the invasion of the French revolutionary troops over the frozen rivers and the establishment of the Batavian republic in January 1795. The best part of the book are the dramatic chapters regarding the exile of the members of the Orange family and their wandering through Europe between 1795 and 1813. Never before have these crucial years been examined by a historian in such detail, using new archival material. The author makes it very clear how unlikely a return to the Netherlands had seemed to William in these years, let alone returning as king, ruling over a much enlarged territory.

In great detail the Utrecht historian Jeroen Koch describes the desperate quest of the young and ambitious prince for a throne somewhere in Europe. In succession William bowed to English, French, Prussian and Austrian rulers in the hope of achieving his dream, without much success. After the peace of Amiens, the prince of Orange was especially impressed by Napoleon, who handed him the small former prince-bishopric of Fulda in compensation for the loss of his hereditary lands of Nassau in 1802. The

period of William's rule over Fulda can be regarded as an apprenticeship for his rule over the kingdom of the United Netherlands in 1815-1830. In 1806 Napoleon took away Fulda from William as punishment for his disloyalty, and the prince ended up as a small landowner in Prussian 'New Poland', virtually forgotten in his native Netherlands. Koch analyses the Orange family in exile as a typical European noble family with an extensive international network all over Europe and with the family correspondence as the glue that held the dispersed family together.

As we know, the tables would turn on William. Napoleon's ill-fated expedition against Russia led to the collapse of imperial authority in the Netherlands in November 1813. A provisional government was established that called for the return of the Orange dynasty. On 30 November the prince of Orange, aided by Britain, landed on the beach of Scheveningen. On 16 March 1815, under pressure from Napoleon's Hundred Days, prince Willem assumed the title of 'King William I'. In September 1815 he was enthroned in Brussels as king of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands: a new unitary state comprising the former Dutch Republic, the Austrian Netherlands and the prince-bishopric of Liège. At the Congress of Vienna the Great Powers had decided that Luxembourg was to be connected to the Kingdom through a personal union. Moreover, Luxembourg became a member of the German Confederation with a Prussian military presence, a recipe for conflict between William and the Prussian king. Although uniting these lands under one ruler meant a huge enlargement of the territory of the Dutch Republic, William I – characteristically – was dissatisfied and disappointed as he had hoped for the Rhineland to be accorded to him by the Great Powers in order to be able to rival Prussia as the fifth European great power.

The chapters on William's life as king of the Netherlands are, as Koch notes, for the most part not based on new archival material, but form a masterful synthesis of existing literature. Nonetheless, these chapters also contain some important archival findings, such as the remark by William I that the constitution of 1814/1815 was essentially a 'toy' to keep his subjects 'satisfied'. Letters by his daughter-in-law, Anna Paulowna, the sister of Tsar Alexander I and wife of the future William II, also lead to new insights into the operating of the royal family. The chapters dealing with the administrative rule of the king are less satisfactory. Although William was famous for his involvement in the smallest administrative detail, Koch does not engage himself with observations by for instance Niek van Sas and Els Witte on the Restoration state that allowed for other agents than the king in the government of the United Kingdom.

Koch's biography of William I, although funded by the 'Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds', is certainly not a hagiography. On the contrary, Koch's William I is a somewhat unsympathetic character: over-ambitious, mean, insecure, cowardly, ungrateful, domineering, always wanting to be in control and unfaithful to his wife (one of the more spectacular findings of the author is the discovery of illegitimate children). With apparent pleasure, Koch dwells on the mistakes and failures of William and especially his many quarrels with his eldest son, the future king, William II. A dysfunctional relationship between the Orange ruler and his eldest son and heir seems to be a recurring feature in the history of the house of Orange in the nineteenth century. The true heroes of this biography are the women of the Orange family, above all the king's mother Wilhelmina and his sister Louise. They seem

to have true political wisdom and moderation and strongly contrast with their male counterparts.

The biography of the second king, William II, by the Amsterdam historian Jeroen van Zanten, is just as well written but contains even more new insights based on meticulous archival research. Van Zanten typecasts William II, who has been rather neglected by Dutch historiography, above all as a romantic figure. In contrast to his father, who preferred to administer the country from his desk according to enlightened rational principles of progress and who worked long hours, the second William was restless, instable, sentimental and melancholic. William II was above all a very 'undutch' king who felt more at home in the Southern parts of the United Kingdom than in the Protestant Northern parts. The young prince had had an international upbringing in Berlin and England. Above all, he was marked by his experience as a soldier in the British army in the wars against Napoleon on the Spanish peninsula, in which he demonstrated considerable personal courage. William especially became famous through his role as 'hero of Waterloo', a battle in which he has been personally wounded: the source of many myths after 1815. Like most war veterans, he found it difficult to adjust to a regulated and 'normal' life as prince of the Netherlands after peace had been established. From being an asset William became a liability for his father when he was linked to plots aimed at overthrowing the French monarchy and embroiled in scandals in the 1820s.

The first years of William II's rule, after his father was forced to step down in 1840, were rather successful. The new king also proved to be an important patron of the arts in The Hague. The crisis of 1848, which led to the granting of a liberal constitution, forms another exciting chapter in the biography. According to Van Zanten, William's behaviour was rather inconstant and he was not very loyal to his own supporters. Based on new archival source material, the biographer tries to solve the old historiographical puzzle why William II, who had become more conservative in the 1840s, asked a small group of radical liberals to draft a new constitution rather than the moderate and conservative liberals. Van Zanten argues that first of all, William had always had liberal leanings from his early days as soldier in the English army. Secondly, the king's behaviour can to a certain extent also be explained by the fact that he was put under pressure by shady figures who blackmailed him with regard to his homosexual relations (which apparently did not affect his marriage to Anna Paulowna). Van Zanten convincingly gives a new interpretation of the establishment of the 1848 constitution from the perspective of the king. This constitution signified the end of a political system in the Netherlands dominated by the institution of the monarchy and hailed the new parliamentary era, even though Van Zanten has argued in an earlier book that the roots of parliamentary rule can be traced back to earlier decades.¹

Although both biographies give much attention to the European dimension, they might be criticised for their - perhaps inevitable - Dutch perspective on the history of the United Kingdom. Luxembourg hardly plays a role in these works. Very few Dutchmen realise that William I and William II were also the sovereign rulers of Luxembourg. Almost all of the many books published as part of the commemoration of the

¹ VAN ZANTEN, Jeroen, Schielijk, Winzucht, Zwaarhoofd en Bedaard. Politieke discussie en oppositievorming, 1813-1840, Amsterdam 2004.

bicentennial of the Dutch monarchy in 2013-2015 use the northern Netherlands as their more self-evident framework. Those books that also take into account the southern Netherlands hardly refer to Luxembourg. This is even true of a volume intending to bring together the Northern and Southern perspectives, *Het (on)verenigd Koninkrijk 1815-1830-2015. Een politieke experiment in de Lage Landen* (Ons erfdeel 2015), edited by Remieg Aerts and Gita Deneckere. Luxembourg surprisingly is not even mentioned in the register of this volume. (The fact that Luxembourg formally did not belong to the United Kingdom is not a sufficient excuse for this omission.) It is of course not unexpected that outcomes determine the writing of history. It would, however, make for better history-writing if the history of the reign of William I and William II was written not only from the North-Western Dutch (Holland's) perspective, but also from the perspective of the South-Eastern parts.

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Stephanie SCHLESIER, Bürger zweiter Klasse? Juden auf dem Land in Preußen, Lothringen und Luxemburg (Industrielle Welt. Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises für moderne Sozialgeschichte, 89), Köln/Weimar/Wien, Böhlau 2014; ISBN: 978-412-22362-5; 79,90 €.

Das vorzustellende Buch, eine 2010 unter der Betreuung von Lutz Raphael an der Universität Trier entstandene Dissertation, ragt angesichts seines konzeptionellen Zuschnitts aus der inzwischen bestehenden Vielzahl von Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte deutlich heraus. Thema ist das so genannte Landjudentum im Saar-Mosel-Raum, dessen vergleichsweise starke jüdische Besiedlung aus territorialherrschaftlichen Faktoren noch vor 1815 herrührte: In Lothringen wirkte die Politik der französischen Könige und der Herzöge von Lothringen (bis 1766) nach, im Süden der nach 1815 so genannten preußischen Rheinprovinz das charakteristische Ensemble von Kleinherrschaften, deren Besitzer Geleitsrechte aus ökonomischen ebenso wie aus Statusgründen reklamierten. Allein im Großherzogtum Luxemburg verweisen die vormärzlichen Siedlungsstrukturen von Juden nicht auf das Ancien Régime, sondern auf die französische Revolutionsherrschaft, unter der im 1795 eingerichteten Département des Forêts erstmals wieder Juden zugelassen wurden (S. 13).

Zu den manchen guten Gründen für das ‚Setting‘ der Arbeit zählt, dass von 1792/1794 bis 1814/1815 unter französischer Herrschaft ein einheitliches Recht für die Juden dieser „linksrheinischen“ Gebiete bestanden hatte. Dessen Diffusion in Folge der de facto ausgebliebenen Gesetzgebung des Wiener Kongresses (Artikel 16 der Wiener Bundesakte) war nach 1815 die Voraussetzung für je spezifische Emanzipationsverläufe. Die Frage, wie die rechtliche Emanzipation die Lebenswelt der Juden und dabei ihr Verhältnis zu den durchweg katholisch geprägten Umgebungen veränderte, steht im Mittelpunkt der Arbeit (S. 24). Ihr zugrunde liegt ein staatenübergreifender Untersuchungsraum, in dem Schlesier fünf Dörfer in der Tiefe untersucht (s. die Karte S. 40). Deren Auswahl erklärt sich abgesehen von der Überlieferungssituation (S. 43, Anm. 88) vor allem durch die jüdische Siedlungspräsenz und die allgemeine Ortsgröße (sämtlich unter 2.500 Einwohner): Gemünden und Illingen in der Rheinprovinz, Boulay und Grosbliederstroff in Lothringen, Ettelbrück im Großherzogtum Luxemburg.