

However, the extent to which this was unique for the place and period, and whether it may be seen as a distinct phase in the socio-economic and political development of Western Europe or even beyond (see pp. 26, 233-234, 242), is a question that is less easy to answer. Soly may be right in presenting this as an exemplary set of cases, but this calls for many more studies of and especially explicit comparisons with other economic hubs in time and space, as he himself remarks on p. 242. For the readers of this journal, the obvious question that arises is to what extent Antwerp's major entrepreneurs differed basically from those of Bruges in the previous and Amsterdam in the next century. My hesitations regarding the implications of this set of biographies are not meant to be a reproach; to the contrary, this magnum opus is an exhortation to make such comparisons and to rethink their potential for generalizations.

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Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis (eds), *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). xii+322 p.
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Apprenticeship has been one of the most critical institutions in economies and societies since antiquity and is still present in many countries. For centuries, generations of young individuals (primarily men) embarked on a contract with a master (usually male). The engagement, which took place involuntarily and through the mediation of relatives and parents, responded to the need to acquire vocational training and to be educated for future life in society. No wonder apprenticeship thus attracted the attention of many scholars. Ever since Adam Smith's propositions about the harmful effects of apprenticeship, conceived as a means of consolidating the monopoly of guilds and limiting competition, historians and social scientists have debated the positive and negative effects of this institution in terms of education, knowledge transmission, and access to the labor market. In the field of preindustrial economic history, a major 'revival' came with S.R. Epstein's seminal article, which appeared in the *Journal of Economic History* in 1998. The essay effectively linked the study of craft

guilds to apprenticeships and technological change for the following decades, opening a debate between guilds' positive and negative effects in transferring human capital and many other aspects. The discussion stimulated a revival of research on the subject, which also has resulted in the digitization of sources, the realization of collective projects, and the creation of quantitative databases (which are the basis for several chapters in the book).

The *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe* editors aim to break out of the dualism about the benefits and harms of the guild system, to try to 'achieve much needed clarity about apprenticeship in its own right' bearing in mind the diversity of apprenticeship in Europe' (p. 4). The effort to go beyond the quagmire of the guild debate is highly commendable, and it is a great stimulus for our research agenda. This program can only be achieved, in their view, by tracing the commonalities through a comparative approach that combines norms and practices, identifying all the institutions that supervised apprenticeship (and thus not only the guilds), the contents of the agreements, the forms of remuneration (wages to the apprentice or incentives to the master), the figures involved, the socio-spatial mobility, the welfare function. Nevertheless, the guilds are always present, even if they are not the focus, yet fitting within a broader range of institutions.

The book is organized into ten chapters, plus an introduction that explains the aims and a conclusion that helps put together the rich puzzle presented. While the first chapter, by Joel Mokyr, sets out some critical elements in the micro- and macro-economic debate of the knowledge economy, the other chapters focus on nine case studies. Some chapters are on single cities and towns such as Madrid (Victoria López Barahona and José Antolin Nieto Sánchez), Turin (Beatrice Zucca Micheletto), Venice (Giovanni Colavizza, Riccardo Cella, and Anna Bellavitis), Hollola (Merja Uotila); others offer broader perspectives on entire areas such as Germany (Georg Stöger, Reinhold Reith), the Northern Netherlands (Ruben Shalk), the Southern Netherlands (Bert De Munck, Raoul de Kerf, Annelies De Bie), England (Patrick Wallis), and France (Clare Haru Crowston and Claire Lemercier). From a temporal point of view, the data mostly refer to the eighteenth century (for Turin, 1750-1800; Germany, 1700-1870; Hollola, 1750-1800; France, 1700-1850) or, in one case, to the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Venice, 1582-1665). This detail is not irrelevant because the context is crucial to understanding apprenticeship and its variables, as the chapter on the Southern Low Countries demonstrates well. Thus,

the time frame under consideration can influence the extent of some conclusions. Moreover, the eighteenth century represents a period of manufacturing and commercial transformation, which, as the French and the Southern Netherlands cases also show, may have influenced the shape of apprenticeship, its greater or lesser flexibility and openness, and its relationship with other institutions.

All chapters rely on archival research and a variety of primary sources, a strength of the volume that provides solidity and richness for the results. While most of the chapters inevitably use apprenticeship contracts (including databases with more than 5,000 records), we would also underline their use of other sources: censuses, court cases, deeds of other institutions (parishes, orphanages, hospitals), and corporate and urban statutes. This element emphasizes the need, in the study of apprenticeship, to cross-reference several sources, so as to fully understand the functioning of this system and avoid the bias of any single source.

It is not possible to summarize each chapter. Instead, I would like to highlight some common themes. First, systematically, many authors emphasize the ‘flexibility’ of the apprenticeship contract, both within and outside the guild system. Secondly, the chapters reveal the lack of automatism between the end of the apprenticeship term and the craftsman’s future career as a master. Many apprentices did not become masters, as in Madrid and the Northern Netherlands. Third, the variability of the remuneration is also worthy of consideration: while in some cases it is the master who receives payment, primarily young people are set up as the actual wage earners (even if the amount they receive is meager), demonstrating that the system balanced the needs of the master and those of the apprentice. A fourth recurring element is that urban and guild institutions have little capacity to enforce contracts: the main aim was to solve conflicts or renegotiate the agreements on a new basis. The fifth element is geographical mobility: young people in some areas (like England and Germany) find a way to learn a trade or support themselves or their families through apprenticeships. The sixth element is that there were several alternatives to guild apprenticeship, such as charitable institutions, family, and kinship networks. Although difficult to quantify, this phenomenon became important considering the subsequent appeals to the public authority to join the guilds or to be allowed to practice the trade. Finally, the seventh element is the limited role of women within the guilds, though more frequently present in charitable institutions or family networks.

The book provides an exciting array of case studies and a promising purpose: going beyond the guild debate around the beneficial or harmful effects of guild apprenticeship. However, this approach presents some critical issues as well. While trying to work past the guilds debate, the reader is inevitably brought back to it by several articles. The relative absence of guilds toward apprenticeship means that their primary purpose was not to provide adequate skills training, as frequently argued. Furthermore, while it is true that the diverse origin of apprentices is evidence of a non-endogamy in the system, children and relatives of the masters still enjoyed numerous privileges, as pointed out in several essays. The lack of openness toward female apprenticeships in the guilds resulted in the exclusion of women from the most qualified and remunerative trades. The juxtaposition of such diverse cases is a great resource. However, it presents some contrasts regarding institutional access and its effects on the labor market. The flexibility shown in resolving conflicts is incongruous with the often costly recourse to the courts. The low rate of apprenticeship completion in some areas (e.g., England and the Northern Netherlands) contrasts with the high rate in other realities, such as seventeenth-century Venice and early modern Germany. While it is not easy to understand the phenomenon wholly, another essay with a less optimistic perspective – even on periods before the eighteenth century, when guild control was sometimes greater – would have helped to provide a more comprehensive picture.

The book offers several stimulating theses. One of them, concerning the Southern Netherlands, links apprenticeship to the individual's need for status identification. The chapter shows well how apprenticeship cannot be understood only 'within the trade', but in the broader social and political context, in the process that leads the individual to become a *freeman*. Rules on minimum standards, tests to become a master, and maximum numbers of apprentices per master were introduced out of social and political concerns to distinguish 'false' from 'regular' masters, to limit unlawful entry into the labor market, and to distribute apprentices over many masters (pp. 237-238). Moreover, the progressive decline is linked to the gap between learning and access to freemen's status, with significant consequences on the actual number of contract registrations. The chapter by De Munck *et al.* is meaningful since it links the story of the apprenticeship to the need to certify the presence of individuals within society and the topic of social belonging. This connection with other spheres of society and politics is also present in

many other essays that emphasize how individual choices are linked to family and community strategies. Fortunately, this book will stimulate further research and debates rather than ending an important chapter in the historiography of early modern economic and social history.

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Gert Oostindie (ed.), *Colonialism and Slavery. An Alternative History of the Port City of Rotterdam* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021). 247 p. ISBN 9789087283704.

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In *Colonialism and Slavery. An Alternative History of the Port City of Rotterdam*, editor Gert Oostindie marks an important contribution to the field of city histories by offering a volume that not only explores Rotterdam's historical connections with enslavement and colonialism, but also provides contemporary context as to how these legacies are entwined into the city's physical and cultural landscape. Oostindie's introduction tells us that the book is composed of eight chapters, which are mostly edited versions of chapters in *Het koloniale verleden van Rotterdam*, a three-part series resulting from an investigation by the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies from 2018 to 2020. The introduction includes the primary conclusions from this research (pp.11-14). *Colonialism and Slavery* goes on to follow a logical chronology that details the city's colonial and enslavement history, physical legacies of this involvement, inhabitants' reception to colonialism, and finally social and cultural legacies in a postcolonial city. The book provides a re-evaluation of Rotterdam's colonial past and postcolonial present, revealing the many forms that these legacies take throughout the modern city.

The book commences with historical outlines of Rotterdam's involvement in colonialism and slavery by Gerhard De Kok and Alex Van Stipriaan, respectively. De Kok provides an impressive quantitative analysis of the finances of the East India Company taken from national archives and persuasively argues that Rotterdam was immersed in the Netherlands' wider colonial projects from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, contributing to its status as a global port city. Van Stipriaan considers the city's involvement in enslavement through an