Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia

Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (eds.)
Founded in 2000 as part of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the Amsterdam Centre for Study of the Golden Age (Amsterdams Centrum voor de Studie van de Gouden Eeuw) aims to promote the history and culture of the Dutch Republic during the 'long' seventeenth century (c. 1560-1720). The Centre's publications provide an insight into lively diversity and continuing relevance of the Dutch Golden Age. They offer original studies on a wide variety of topics, ranging from Rembrandt to Vondel, from Beeldenstorm (iconoclastic fury) to Ware Vrijheid (True Freedom) and from Batavia to New Amsterdam. Politics, religion, culture, economics, expansion and warfare all come together in the Centre's interdisciplinary setting.

Editorial control is in the hands of international scholars specialised in seventeenth-century history, art and literature. For more information see www.aup.nl/goudenleeuw or http://cf.uba.uva.nl/goudenleeuw/.

The publication of this book has been made possible by grants from the Barr Ferree Publication Fund, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, the Ernst Mortiz Arndt University, Greifswald, the De Gijselaar-Hintzenfonds, the Gravin van Bylandtstichting, and the Louise Thijsen-Schoute Stichting.

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek, Amsterdam
Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

© All authors / Amsterdam University Press b.v., Amsterdam 2014

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.
Contents

Preface 7

Introduction 9
Mediating Cultures
*Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North*

1 Terms of Reception 25
Europeans and Persians and Each Other's Art
*Gary Schwartz*

2 Reconfiguring the Northern European Print to Depict Sacred History at the Persian Court 65
*Amy S. Landau*

3 Dutch Cemeteries in South India 83
*Martin Krieger*

4 Coasts and Interiors of India 95
Early Modern Indo-Dutch Cross-Cultural Exchanges
*Ranabir Chakravarti*

5 Art and Material Culture in the Cape Colony and Batavia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 111
*Michael North*

6 *Indische* Architecture in Indonesia 129
*Peter J. M. Nas*

7 The Cultural Dimension of the Dutch East India Company 141
Settlements in Dutch-Period Ceylon, 1700-1800 – With Special Reference to Galle
*Lodewijk Wagenaar*

8 European Artists in the Service of the Dutch East India Company 177
*Marten Jan Bok*

9 Scratching the Surface 205
The Impact of the Dutch on Artistic and Material Culture in Taiwan and China
*Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann*
10  The Dutch Presence in Japan
   The VOC on Deshima and Its Impact on Japanese Culture
   Matthi Forrer and Yoriko Kobayashi-Sato

11  From Optical Prints to Ukie to Ukiyoe
   The Adoption and Adaptation of Western Linear Perspective in Japan
   Matthi Forrer

12  Japan's Encounters with the West through the VOC
   Western Paintings and Their Appropriation in Japan
   Yoriko Kobayashi-Sato

13  “To Capture Their Favor”
   On Gift-Giving by the VOC
   Cynthia Viallé

14  Circulating Art and Material Culture
   A Model of Transcultural Mediation
   Astrid Erll

Illustration Credits

Index
Preface

This book is the result of years of planning, research and writing. It initiated out of discussions held after a session of the Twentieth International Congress of Historical Sciences, Sydney, Australia, whose papers have been published in *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400-1900. Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections*, ed. Michael North, Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, Vermont, Ashgate, 2010. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North ideated a research program that would continue the direction suggested in their introduction to that volume.

The Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS) granted funds that enabled many of the authors of essays in the present volume and other scholars to come to Princeton University in March, 2008 to participate in a planning seminar. This was followed by a similar seminar supported by the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) held in Wassenaar, October, 2008. The support of PIIRS and NIAS is here gratefully acknowledged.

The seminar participants then formed a theme group “The Reception of Netherlandish Art in the Indian Ocean Region and East Asia, and its Impact on Asian Cultures”, organized by Michael North and Marten Jan Bok, for which the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) provided a host in Wassenaar from September, 2009 to January, 2010. Papers by members of the theme group and several other guest scholars were presented at a symposium held at NIAS in January, 2010; in most instances they represented preliminary versions of what appears in the present book. For the invitation to NIAS we would like to offer our warmest thanks to its rector Prof. Wim Blockmans.

Without his inspiration and energy the theme group would never have come into existence. We still remember the intensive research and lively discussions of the group and other NIAS-fellows. Consequently another colleague from NIAS and subsequently scholars elsewhere were asked to contribute to the collection of essays in this volume.

From the beginning this book has been a collective undertaking, which could not have been realized without the active assistance of several people and institutions in addition to those already mentioned or cited in the essays. Gary Schwartz “Englished” the texts of the non-native speakers. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann would like to acknowledge the assistance of Cynthia Huong, Cary Liu, and Jamie Kwan with texts in Chinese; of the Spears Fund of Princeton University, the Academia Sinica, Taiwan Normal University, the National Taiwan University and colleagues in those institutions who supported his travel and assisted his research on two trips to China and Taiwan; to Chen Liu for her assistance in China; and to Elizabeth Osenbaugh and Jamie Kwan for general research and production aid.

Michael North is indebted to Alexander Drost und Jörg Driesner for archival research in the Arsip Nasional (Jakarta) and to Antonia Malan, Laura Mitchell, Susan Newton-King and Nigel Worden for their help and comments in his research on Cape Town, and acknowledges his greatest debts to the members of the Greifswald team consisting of Doreen Wollbrecht, Robert Riemer, Hielke van Nieuwenhuize, Friederike Schmidt, Sven Ristau, Eric Ladenthin, Richard Höter, Maik Fiedler and Jörn Sander, who bore the brunt of work on the final production of the book with great commitment. They not only
edited the manuscript and read the proofs, but also compiled the index.

We are grateful for grants in support of the publication from the Barr Ferree Publication Fund, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Ernst Moritz Arndt University, Greifswald. Finally we would like to thank the De Gijselaar-Hintzenfonds, the Gravin van Bylandtstichting, and the Louise Thijsse-Schoute Stichting for their financial support.

Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North
Princeton and Greifswald, Winter 2014
Introduction

Mediating Cultures

*Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North*

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) has long attracted the attention of scholarship. Its lengthy history, widespread enterprises, and the survival of massive amounts of documentation — literally 1,200 meters of essays pertaining to the VOC may be found in the National Archives in The Hague, and many more documents are scattered in archives throughout Asia and in South Africa — have stimulated many works on economic and social history. Important publications have also appeared on the trade, shipping, institutional organization, and administration of the VOC. Much has also been learned about the VOC and Dutch colonial societies. Moreover, the TANAP (Towards a New Age of Partnership, 2000-2007) project has created momentum for research on the relationship between the VOC and indigenous societies.

In contrast, the role of the VOC in cultural history and especially in the history of visual and material culture has not yet attracted comparable interest. To be sure, journals and other travel accounts (some even with illustrations) by soldiers, shippers, and VOC officials among others have been utilized as sources. But the studies based on them have not been primarily art or cultural historical in character. Books such as those by J. De Loos-Haaxman on art, artists, and collections in the Netherlands East Indies have thus until quite recently been the exception, not the rule.

However, since 2000 several major exhibitions have dramatically brought European-Asian cultural encounters into the limelight, drawing attention to the VOC in this context as well. Monographic exhibitions and related publications on several artists who were active in Dutch settlements in Africa and Asia have also appeared. The broader material culture of the world of the VOC, and especially the Cape Colony, has also come into focus. Some historians of Dutch seventeenth-century art and architecture now situate their subjects in relation to the network of trade that was spun by the VOC. Still, the reciprocal effects of Dutch visual and material culture on Asiatic civilizations remain largely unstudied.

This situation provides the backdrop for the present collection of essays, the fruit of much discussion and collaboration. In 2005 a team of scholars was formed to study artistic production and reception in relation to commerce between the Netherlands and the Indian Ocean region. As it developed, the composition of the group changed, and it was recognized that the comparable impact of Asia upon Europe in general and on Dutch art and material culture in particular was much better known than the converse, as several essays within suggest. Hence it was decided to emphasize the question of the possible Dutch (and more broadly Netherlandish) impact on those areas in which the VOC operated from the Cape of Good Hope to the Sea of Japan. The research group coalesced in 2009-2010 at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Wassenaar to study the issues involved.

The essays by this group and its external collaborators represent the results of their
investigations. They consider issues of artistic practice, patronage, market relations, gift exchange, iconography, and visual imagination in the Asian lands and South Africa where the VOC was involved. They point to directions, protagonists, objects, and the media of artistic transfer. They also contribute to the interpretation of cultural exchange, extracting from empirical information a theoretical model.

This introduction briefly outlines the history of the VOC in its social and economic dimensions as a background and starting point for the considerations of cultural history contained in this book. It describes some features of the affect of the Dutch presence in Africa and Asia on the cultural developments this collection discusses. It then considers how to treat the more general interpretation of the visual and material culture (including architecture) that resulted from the complex intercultural interactions that may be related to the activities of the VOC.

A Brief Overview of the VOC

During the first half of the seventeenth century the Dutch supplanted the Portuguese in dominating European trade with the Indies. Dutch trade quickly came to be centered on the VOC, which was formed only six years after the first Dutch fleet (under the command of Cornelis de Houtman) had reached Java in June 1596. The Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, to give its proper name, was united (vereenigd) out of Voorcompagnien (previously formed entrepreneurial companies) from Holland and Zeeland to form a monopoly designed to control the Indies trade.17

The VOC was chartered as a joint-stock company that was awarded semi-sovereign rights by the States General: it was allowed to build forts, recruit soldiers, and sign contracts with foreign rulers. The VOC was divided into six chambers (Amsterdam, Zeeland, Rotterdam, Delft, Hoorn, and Enkhuizen), which each built and equipped ships and auctioned or sold off imported goods orchestrated so to speak by the central executive committee, the Heren XVII (Gentlemen Seventeen), representatives from the six local boards of bewindhebbers, where these directors for life supervised and coordinated the local chambers under their direction.

In Asia the Governor-General and the Councillors of the VOC were in charge of handling local and regional issues. Their chief job was to ensure Dutch access to the spice markets by the use of either diplomatic or military means. Their seat was located in Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia), which became the headquarters of the Dutch Asian trade empire. The choice of this location was determined by its proximity to the chief initial attractions for Dutch commerce. Pepper and rare spices grew in the Indonesian archipelago, notably in the Moluccas, and the VOC needed a center in this spice-growing region to enable it to control the spice trade. This was the task originally assigned to one of the first Governors-General, Jan Pietersz. Coen, who founded the fort of Batavia near the harbor town of Jacatra. This fortification also represents a response to competition from the English, which, however, was not so well funded and did not register such a high volume of trade. Coen’s real aim was to break into the lucrative trade within the Asian regions in which the Portuguese, Spanish, and English were already engaged. This goal was to be achieved by establishing exclusive supply contracts that were supposed to ensure a Dutch monopoly in cloves and nutmeg. On several occasions when partners of the Dutch did not observe what the VOC regarded as the terms of their contract, spice producers were killed or enslaved – as happened for instance on Banda in 1621. The VOC also had clove trees on islands
not occupied by the Dutch destroyed in order to extinguish competition and also to keep prices high on the European market.

The VOC soon tried very hard to penetrate the Portuguese system of forts in India, aiming to take over the textile trade on the Coromandel Coast and in Bengal. It also had eyes on the cinnamon market in Ceylon (Sri Lanka); the VOC succeeded in conquering Ceylon between 1640 and 1658. The results are striking: at the beginning of the seventeenth century the VOC exchanged Indian cottons for spices in Southeast Asia, and by the end of the century cotton textiles and silk had even replaced pepper as the main products it shipped to Europe.18

After they failed to penetrate mainland China, the Dutch established a short-lived foothold on the island of Taiwan (Formosa, 1624-1662). The Formosa factory (trading post) at Zeelandia served as an entrepôt for silk, tea, porcelain, and lacquer, along with raw materials and metals. Already during the Taiwan interlude, and more definitely later in the eighteenth century, these items were however also carried by the junk trade directly between the coast of China – ultimately Canton (Guangzhou) – and Batavia.

Trade with Japan proved to be a lucrative business. The Dutch started a small settlement in Hirado. Their factory was soon transferred to the harbor of Nagasaki, where the Portuguese had previously been granted a secure place; in 1639 the Portuguese were expelled from Japan, and the Dutch were forced to move to Deshima. The positive result for the VOC was that the Dutch began to enjoy an exclusive role in the trade between Europe and Japan that lasted until an American fleet under Commodore Perry opened the island nation to foreign trade in 1853.

The VOC imported silk, woolens, and sugar to Japan, while Japan supplied those precious metals (silver, copper, and gold kobangs [gold coins]) the VOC needed for the purchase of goods in India and in the Indonesian archipelago. Every decade 13-15 million guilders worth of silver came from Japan, a figure that may be compared with 3-5 million worth from Persia and 8.4-8.8 million in silver from Spanish America that was imported through the Netherlands.19 A ban placed on silver exports from Japan in 1668 and the consequent decline in VOC trade with Japan thus drastically reduced the supply of bullion which was needed in order to do business elsewhere in Asia. As a result, the VOC had to increase the amount of silver it imported from other sources through Europe. Since trade between many nations in Europe and Asia expanded continually, and European demand for textiles and for new imports – coffee and tea – could only be met in Asia by exchange for silver, more and more of that precious metal was sent to the East.

Details like these can be determined because more is known about Dutch trade in Asia than about that anywhere else in the world, since the VOC kept meticulous records on its purchases and sales. From the many such surviving sources it may be estimated for example that the prices of items sold at commodity auctions in Holland and Zeeland were three times higher than amounts paid for the acquisition of the same things in Asia.20 For example, in the 1660s goods from Asia amounting to a value of 31 million guilders were sent to the Netherlands, where they netted a profit of 92 million guilders. However, in the eighteenth century profits declined, as profit margins were reduced, investment costs became higher, and the VOC – suffering the effects of paying high dividends, which rose to 25 percent – went into debt. This was a sign of the decline of the VOC; it ceased to exist by the end of the century.

But until the end the VOC provided many financial opportunities for its investors. It paid dividends to those private individuals who
bought stock as well as to those entrepreneurs who invested money directly in the individual chambers. From such investments the Amsterdam chamber raised about half of the initial capital of the VOC, 3,679,915 guilders. This gave the Amsterdam chamber the right to 50 percent of all the Company’s investments and profits. Zeeland in comparison had a 25 percent share, while the four smaller Chambers were each responsible for 1/16 of all costs and an equal fraction of the profits, which proportions were kept unchanged during the Company’s existence, even on the occasions that the different chambers did not succeed in gaining the equivalent returns on their investments from the market. Soon after the initial issue of shares, speculation in the stock began: in the course of the century shares in the VOC came to be traded at prices well over their original value.

Both the VOC shareholders who pocketed high dividends from their investments (as well as from potential sale of stock) and the Dutch traders who were more directly involved in re-exporting goods from Asia to the European or American markets thus profited from the trade with Asia. Merchants and other members of the elite class gained enormously; an even broader group of petty merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans, such as ships’ carpenters, made money as well. It is thus no wonder that leading Amsterdam merchants like Gerrit Bicker or Gerrit Reynst were involved in trade with the East (and West) Indies. The East Indies trade made it possible for many of the higher employees of the VOC to climb the social ladder in the Netherlands if they had had a career in Asia and had made a fortune – whether legally or illegally. In general the VOC provided a source of income that enabled its investors to increase their capital, and consequently their social position. Among the signs of success that might express one’s position were the purchase of luxury goods, of works of art, and the acquisition, construction, or decoration of magnificent residences. Many of the objects collected or used as decoration were those that the VOC had imported from Asia, or were European pieces that displayed Asian motifs. In this and other ways the massive importation of goods, especially porcelain, from Asia by the VOC effected numerous transformations in taste and manufacture in the Netherlands, and more broadly in Europe.

The Dutch Impact in Asia

These are relatively well-known phenomena, but what can be said about reciprocal impact of the Dutch abroad? The same basic pattern seen in Europe in which cultural historical developments are related to economic and social factors also seems to pertain to Asia. The production and reception of Dutch art in the Indian Ocean and East Asian regions were functions of intensified market relations in which the Dutch East India Company played a major role. Yet numerous local agents within and outside the European trading companies also had a part in these developments. Art objects were not just commodities on an international market, but also figured significantly on local markets. Furthermore, when people moved to Batavia or to the Cape from Europe, America, or Asia, they usually brought with them only a small number of art objects to serve for decorative or commemorative purposes. If more art, or objects, were desired for interior decoration of houses or for a conspicuous display of wealth, they had to be commissioned or purchased. Estate auctions where second-hand goods might be obtained or sold could thus provide an important market instrument. However, since local sources of production were often limited in Dutch outposts, sources were necessarily
sought abroad. Hence arose one cause for the trade in luxuries, in works of art, within the network established by the VOC.

The VOC was in effect not only involved in carrying bullion and distributing objects throughout the eastern hemisphere, including, of interest to this project, the importation of works of art and other luxury items to Europe. Conversely, it often served not just as a purveyor of bullion and occasionally of European goods to Asia, but also as a mediator for the transport of goods between parts of Asia – or in the case of ivory – from one place to another within the broader region extending from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan. In this way the VOC may also be said to have mediated objects and contacts, hence forms of culture.

Various features of mediation, represented by many different sorts of mediators and media, may be discerned in the interchanges affected by the VOC. While the VOC and its personnel were no doubt major players in this process, other forces were also at work. As discussed in Marten Jan Bok’s essay, one continuing source for art in Asia and Africa was the actual presence in the Indies (and the Cape) of Dutch artists, and of Netherlandish works of art exported abroad. Dutch art and artists could thus provide a direct stimulus for local artists and artisans, which, as suggested for example in Gary Schwartz’s and Amy Landau’s essays, might receive a positive response from Asian recipients. In addition to this conduit several other channels existed for the mediation of artistic objects and ideas that were not under VOC control. For instance, indigenous agents might pass objects and ideas on, or else adapt them to new environments.

The mediation of Netherlandish art in colonial societies proceeded simultaneously via two processes that varied according to the social groups involved. This is demonstrated by the spread of forms of decoration. In the first place, decorative patterns from the Netherlands trickled down and were disseminated via the upper social strata of the Company to the middle classes and to various indigenous groups. Eventually these patterns might be appropriated by local producers of art and craft objects. A second process is independent of the first but nonetheless connected with it: members of some local ethnic groups had their own styles of furnishing and adorning their homes that in the course of time absorbed Western or specifically Dutch models.

Modes of mediation, so to speak, thus differed according to the local situations with which the VOC had to deal or which it could eventually create, control, or influence. The summary description of the previous paragraph may apply more broadly, but it best fits the colonial societies that were emerging in Batavia and Cape Town. However, Batavia and Cape Town differed from each other, and, more important, the sorts of goods sought in these places, and the conditions that existed for their exchange, were different from those found in many other sites where the Dutch were involved. Dealings in the colonial societies of Batavia and Cape Town differed from transactions with the great courts of Persia or India, or with those in Japan, where the Dutch were isolated on Deshima, and obligated to send a delegation annually to pay homage and grant tribute to the Shogun in Edo. Forms or modes of mediation, as represented or conducted through different channels of communication and design, also had an impact that varied according to whether they were affecting architecture, sculpture, painting, prints, or other sorts of objects of material culture.

The existence of a wide variety of patterns of interchange and reception of culture is therefore evident in the vastly different areas where the VOC was active. In Batavia European practices and procedures were altered to meet local circumstances. Many different
cultures met at this VOC headquarters city, even though it may also be considered to have been the most important Dutch colonial city in the eastern hemisphere, and may furthermore be regarded as a Dutch foundation. Although (as they later did in Formosa, Galle, or Cape Town) the Dutch applied the same principles of urban design and construction to Batavia that they had employed in the Netherlands itself for laying out fortifications, canals, drawbridges, and they furthermore imported engineers, masons, and even building materials (bricks), in Batavia the appearance of constructions differed significantly from that of their Dutch models. The outside surfaces of bricks in buildings in Batavia were plastered over to provide protection from heat; ridges of roofs were placed parallel, not perpendicular to the street, probably for a similar reason; and broad overhangs were set at the front and the back of houses to protect the entrances against tropical rains. The creators of this Indisch architectural design were also representatives of a new sort of domestic culture: the Dutch houseowners and their indigenous concubines (nyai), helped by their Chinese overseers (mandor), and Chinese and Javanese workers. The latter moreover applied Chinese techniques to constructions (Nas).24

Chinese styles of decoration, by way of contrast, penetrated the European strata in Batavia from an early date, as Europeans bought and displayed Chinese cultural goods of many kinds. These included not only paintings, but also porcelain, lanterns, and so forth. A sizeable market for Chinese art objects came into being in Batavia as early as the 1620s; significantly this is a taste that did not manifest itself in the Netherlands until about 1700, when Chinese paintings show up in some of the richer collections.25 In Batavia these objects were probably acquired directly from the Chinese and indirectly at auctions of Chinese estates. Only later were Chinese products traded by the VOC at the Cape and Holland. At the high point of this development in VOC commerce, inhabitants of colonial cities could choose from a wide range of art objects that had been produced in China, Japan, Batavia, India, at the Cape, in Holland and in the rest of Europe (North).26

Other, often similar forces of mediation are discernible in smaller places such as Galle on Ceylon. According to estate auctions of the second half of the eighteenth century Sinhalese and Muslims, among them interpreters for the Company, Moslem chiefs and Moslem traders acquired tea and related accessories (Japanese tea kettles), playing cards, and prints. They thus seem to have wished to emulate a Dutch colonial lifestyle (Wagenaar).27 A similar trend is also visible in the settlements of other European trading companies in South Asia, where company translators amassed enormous quantities of cultural goods.28 This situation may be compared with the way in which the functional elites “worked” in Europe as tastemakers for cultural consumption.29

Furthermore, objects sold at estate auctions in Ceylon inspired indigenous craftsmanship, especially visible in furniture. While a few Dutch-led workshops specialized in the production of French rococo style chairs and Chinese chest-making in Japara (north Java), Sinhalese and Tamil furniture makers in Ceylon were also creative and productive. Their invention of the so-called burgomaster chair also came to be circulated and imitated within the territory encompassed by the VOC trading network.30

The existence of this network may also explain how individual decorative motifs may have circulated, for example the floral decorative motifs that were applied in different media over vast expanses of space. Here again the VOC seems to have acted as a mediating factor. In this case it helped to spread motifs used on tombstones, cabinets, chintz, and silverware.
throughout the region. Dutch tombstones that were shipped from Sadraspatnam on the Coromandel Coast to Batavia and other places in Southeast Asia bear the same floral borders as does furniture from late-seventeenth-century Batavia (Krieger); similar borders were also used in Indian chintz fabrics on the Coromandel Coast. These designs were all probably ultimately inspired by Dutch prints, like those found in the floral illustrations of “De blomhof” engraved by Crispijn van de Passe.

In the VOC’s dealings with courts, exchanges occurred differently. The VOC presented paintings to rulers, and it sent painters as well. For example, the Mogul Sultans of Surat repeatedly made requests to the VOC factory there for landscape and genre paintings as well as for capable painters. In 1657 the local VOC director made mention of two competent painters who were present in his factory. In the 1620s and 1630s the painter Hendrick Arentsz. Vapoor had indeed already been active in Surat and at Agra, where he helped the Dutch to establish diplomatic and commercial contacts. Another cosmopolitan Dutch painter, Jan Luccasz. van Hasselt, who was active in Persia at the court of Shah ‘Abbas I in Isfahan, opened the Persian hinterland for VOC trading in 1622 after the Portuguese had been driven out of Hormuz. His activities are recorded in a letter of 1624 from the Amsterdam VOC bewindhebbers to the VOC resident in Isfahan. In this letter the export to Surat of paintings, especially portraits and those with genre subjects is also discussed, because of the animosity that was anticipated against the representation of human beings in images.

In the 1640s the VOC continued its artistic diplomacy in Persia. At the request of the Shah it dispatched the merchant Hendrick Boudewijn van Lockhorst as painter to the Persian court, where he was to receive the enormous salary of 4,000 guilders. Philips Angel, who is perhaps the best-known Dutch artist active in Persia, succeeded him there; Angel eventually became court painter to Shah ‘Abbas II, with the same salary van Lockhorst had received. Angel is renowned for having painted (no longer surviving) Persian still lifes.

Between 1656 he painted five portraits and a large genre scene (a “Merry Company”) on the wall of the palace, as later travelers record. Despite apparent religious prohibitions, the visual representation of human beings was evidently demanded from Dutch painters in Persia, and it became popular in Persian painting of the Safavid dynasty as well. Persian artists copied Dutch and Flemish models, but mixed these with examples that indicate copying or appropriation of models from Italy (Schwartz).

Imperial painters in Isfahan in particular integrated European iconography into compositions that follow pictorial conventions that are associated with Persian painting. Armenian merchant networks, which partially overlap with those established by agents of the VOC agents, also mediated the accessibility of northern European print culture, first to Christian communities, and then to the Muslim population. Through this means the court painter Muhammad Zaman came to produce several paintings that are based on northern European prints with Biblical subjects, where principles of aerial perspective are also introduced, but in which a more local, Persian, aesthetics of color is also evinced. The Dutch role as mediators was further complemented by the Armenian merchant communities in Persia, who, built churches and commissioned their decoration with Europeanized murals, notably at New Julffa. In a way they thereby played a role similar to that of the Jesuits at the Mogul courts in India (Landau). The Mogul Empire in fact received western European artistic input through several different channels. Jesuit missionaries confronted the Mogul court with European religious art;
engravings and printed books with frontispieces and illustrations were important forms of transmission, and they were often made or commissioned by Netherlandish print-makers or publishers. They could be easily assimilated into a local context, such as that provided by royal Mogul albums, because they were understood to share qualities similar to those possessed by the paintings and calligraphy made by Persian or Indian artists that constituted the bulk of the imperial collections.

The VOC also presented European prints to Indian princes. The Dutch circulated images at several indigenous Indian courts, such as those of the Rajput rulers. In Rajastan European imagery inspired local artistic production, a topic that deserves further examination. A double-sided painting from the beginning of the eighteenth century from Udaipur provides a good example of this process. It shows on one side Maharana Sangram Singh II, and on the other a European (a Dutchman); it is composed by mixing together a French fashion print and an image of a VOC employee of the type seen in India. It is further possible that Dutch forms inspired the transformation of certain genres of Indian art (Chakravarti).

In giving gifts and selling objects the Dutch responded to the customs and practices they found around them when they were establishing trading factories in Asia. This included the practice of gift-giving itself as an aid to commerce; it was important to discover what kind of commodities were in demand and what types of gifts might please the rulers or other officials from whom the VOC sought trade privileges. Lists of a variety of goods specified according the demands of the different Asian settlements (Viallé) are thus recorded as presents. These include for example pictures with scenes of Dutch victories over the Spaniards and the English, as gifts for the Shogun from the Dutch factory at Deshima. Although such paintings might be considered sites of memory (lieux de mémoire) in relation to the Dutch Republic, the local governor interdicted their presentation. On the other hand in the eighteenth century the governor of Nagasaki requested twenty-five European paintings with specified dimensions that depicted flowers, birds, and landscapes (Kobayashi-Sato) – strikingly more traditional Japanese subjects, although ones to be made, to be sure, in a different stylistic vocabulary.

After the lifting of the seventeenth-century ban on the importation of Christian books to Japan by Shogun Yoshimune, who was also a patron of Dutch paintings that he ordered through the VOC, a wave of interest in Dutch culture hit Japan. Imitation of Dutch things became even a sort of Hollandomania. One major sign is the production of ranga, paintings in Western manner, especially by the Akira school. Artists patronized by the daimyo (lord) Shozan also painted landscapes that evince the application of Western techniques. Together with Odano Naotake Shozan also wrote treatises on Western-style painting. These books are only a few of the manifestations that may be regarded as exemplifying what are called in Japanese “Dutch Studies” (rangaku).

Such studies were aided by the fact that Dutch residents of the VOC factory on Deshima increasingly made the Japanese presents of Dutch books. From one such book containing a partial translation of Egbert Buys’s Nieuw en volkomen woordenboek van konsten en wezenschappen the Japanese artist Shiba Kōkan discovered methods for making copperplate engravings and etchings. Kōkan also employed other Western pictorial devices that a few years later Aōdō Denzen would perfect in his work. Perspective prints depicting street views and the interiors of Kabuki theaters (ukiie) emerged in Edo in the 1760s, perhaps also as another result of the reception of Dutch prints, in this case of theaters and church interiors.
media (books and prints) thus proved important both for the establishment of the Japanese artistic tradition of *ranga* and for the subject matter of *ukie* (Forrer).

The singular case of China and Taiwan is revealing, although the Dutch were largely unsuccessful in their endeavors in this region, and their impact was comparatively insignificant in contrast with the response to Chinese influence in Europe. The Dutch had a limited effect on Taiwan, where only some of the objects that they themselves had used in their settlements, such as pipes and ceramics, and more interestingly the staffs they supplied as signs of office, percolated down, as it were, into lasting items of indigenous material culture. In China very little in terms of European cultural goods, as distinct from objects purveyed from other Asian cultures, or animals, seems to have had an impact, or even to have made an impression. Exceptions may include painted enamels, and definitely a distinctive sort of complicated turned ivory object, whose original source seem to be Nuremberg.

This may in part have occurred because in contrast with their practices in some other Asian lands the Dutch were often mistaken about what they came to present as gifts, especially in regard to products of European material culture. They seem not to have treated the Chinese as a distinct, highly civilized people, since they gave members of the highly sophisticated court in Beijing bibelots similar to those they would have presented to indigenous people on Taiwan. On one important occasion when they did carry to China highly crafted objects, clocks, these were presented in insufficient number and in bad condition; in any case clocks were already superfluous, because the Chinese already possessed them in abundance. Other objects such as furniture with inlaid stone mosaics which the VOC had offered on an earlier occasion would have been much better received as gifts in India, where they were much more appropriate to the taste of the Moguls (and the Rajastani rulers) than they were to the emperor of China, where marble furniture was not yet in fashion. Unlike their Jesuit antagonists, who sought out and adapted themselves to the interests and customs of their hosts, the VOC thus does not seem to have approached the Chinese in a way that adequately responded to them as a separate, distinctive, and highly cultivated people (Kaufmann).

**Problems of Interpretation**

The variation in interactions involving the VOC, as well as their relative success or failure, present problems for the construction of a simple, uniform theory of cultural interchange. It is clearly most often not the case that a one-way process was involved, in which a finished cultural product was handed over from one culture to another and remained more or less unchanged. Asian recipients of goods did not treat them passively, but took them up and adapted them to their new cultural environment. As Peter Burke has put it, ideas, artifacts, and practices are in general first decontextualized and then recontextualized or “localized”; they are “translated.”

Many of the terms and theories often still utilized for discussions of global flows are therefore not adequate to present questions. Older notions such as expansion, mission, influence, and diffusion do not fit the case of the VOC, because they imply an unequal relationship, suggesting the superiority of one culture over another. In many cases, the use of these sorts of interpretive terms moreover implies European domination or hegemony. But before the nineteenth century most situations involving European cultural exchanges with Asia do not support the construction of
models based on interpretative hypotheses of this nature, because the evidence does not seem to validate them. In only a few instances involving the Dutch, as in the Spice Islands of Indonesia and in parts of Sri Lanka, did the VOC actually exercise a truly dominant position in relation to its surroundings, and even in these cases the question remains if its cultural impact was commensurate with its political and economic authority or even social prestige.

In general the familiar model of center and periphery prevalent in world system analyses also does not appear to apply to the interpretation of the Dutch in the East. According to the original conceptualization of this model, raw materials from the periphery go to the center in exchange for finished goods. As it has been applied to cultural history, cultural flows would thus work similarly. But as the major examples of Japan, China, and India suggest, the flow of bullion went to Asia, whence luxury items were derived and returned to Europe. In most cases the export of European objects to Asia by the VOC hardly equals the import of Asian works to Europe. And a reversal of the picture of relationships also does not fit, either. Within the Asian context VOC relations speak better for the existence of several centers, not just one, hence for polycentrality.

Another term previously used to describe intercultural relations, namely cultural exchange, may also now also be called into question. While the choice of the notion of cultural exchange might seem to be an appropriate match for the character of the VOC as the first joint-stock company, the economic model implied by the concept of exchange is not fully adequate. Cultural goods are not always objects that are immediately exchanged. Art objects may change their functions and meanings while passing through different zones of value. They may change from being a commissioned gift to a commodity, a memorial, or another sort of symbolic representation.44

Other terms including accommodation, assimilation, acculturation, hybridization or better, transculturation that have been applied to other cross-cultural relations might appear to be useful in the case of the VOC. Again, however most of these terms do not necessarily seem broadly applicable: for example acculturation again implies inequality, and accommodation also seems similar in its weighting. Few instances exist involving the VOC in which either cultural hybridity, transculturation, or cultural accommodation may be found. In general the more neutral notion of cultural transfer thus seems preferable.

But even this last term describes a general process, not the particular role of the Dutch, of the VOC, that was involved in it. The case studies presented in this book took place in what has been described as a network, but the use of the term network also does not indicate specifically what was carried on within it, or how. Another notion has thus emerged as a useful common denominator for the transfer of cultural goods from Europe to Asia, and vice versa, as well as even more tellingly for the Dutch role in transferring goods from one part of the Indian Ocean and East Asian region to another. This is cultural mediation. Several studies in this volume (Kaufmann) have already evoked this term, and this introduction has also employed it in a number of places. Cultural mediation has thus also received a theoretical elaboration in one contribution to this book that differentiates the mediation process into production, transmission, reception, transcultural remediation, and afterlife (Erll).45 It is furthermore noteworthy that scholars of other comparable phenomena involving relations between Europe and other parts of the world during the early modern era that used to be described as European expansion
Conclusion

Some works by the Amsterdam artist Willem Schellinks (1627-1678) discussed by Gary Schwartz in his essay below help lead to a conclusion. Paintings by Schellinks incorporate themes from Mogul painting: they thus exemplify the fruitful interaction of Dutch and Asian art in the seventeenth century. Schellinks's attitude is also expressed in a poem he wrote praising the “painting of the Benjans”, a common term for Indians. Schwartz quotes an excerpt from this poem, which was published in the 1657 in the collection *Klioos Kraam* (The Muse of History Gives Birth). Schellinks’s “On the Painting of the Benjans” offers a remarkable capsule history of painting, as Schwartz also notes. Its conclusion aduces some themes that approximate even more closely some themes of the present book, and thus may be quoted here:

> The Mogul boasts of his discovery, despite Peru, which caused Gualpa’s mouth to spew up silver, to its good fortune and Spain, for which it serves as a crutch were the West Indies to offer the Benjan for their art all the silver that Potosí still has in store, he would say, “I’ll not trade art for treasure.” that teaches us all in Europe this lesson art cannot be bought for any amount of money.

These words resonate with several themes. In the ultimate lines Schellinks deploys a poetic topos (commonplace) that stems from some dicta of the Roman Stoic Seneca. An artist strives for several aims, fame, love of art, and gain, but of these love of art is superior to gold. This idea is also expressed in a motto also familiar in seventeenth-century Dutch art where, encapsulated in the Latin motto *Ars auro prior*, it is found in works by Goltzius and Hoogstraten, among others.

Schellinks also establishes a global context for considerations of Dutch relations with Asian cultures. Silver from the Americas, especially from Potosí in Upper Peru, now Bolivia, over which the Spanish had wrenched control from the Inca Atahualpa, was in fact what was most often employed to purchase goods in the eastern hemisphere, including luxury items such as art, as discussed above. The VOC was thus enmeshed in commercial ventures that ultimately encompassed the globe. Its activities were inextricably connected with those of the West India Company (WIC), and this connection is also manifest in the realms of material and visual culture.

Most dramatically, silver from the Spanish fleet seized by Piet Hein for the WIC in 1628 would have ultimately been used to buy things in Asia. Ivory acquired by the WIC in Africa was carried by VOC ships to India, China, Japan, and elsewhere, where it was utilized by local masters. Conversely, textiles bought by the VOC in India were used to purchase and to clothe some of the slaves from West Africa who were sent to the Americas. Objects from both hemispheres were collected by the Dutch in Nieuw Amsterdam, as is demonstrated by Margarieta van Varick, who had lived in Malacca before she came to Manhattan. On the other hand, Thomas de Wit came from New York to Cape Town, where he decorated his house with both European objects and Chinese paintings (North). The Dresden-born painter-functionary Zacharias Wagenaer was employed by both the VOC and the WIC: Wagenaer worked in Brazil, Indonesia, and Japan, and was the second head of the Cape Colony; as an artist, he depicted animals, human beings, and events in both hemispheres.
The cultural flows which the VOC helped set in motion were thus global in character. Because these cross-currents originated with contacts Europeans had initiated c. 1500, it seems legitimate to trace the first globalization back to this time. A century later the Dutch had followed the Spanish and the Portuguese, and they were joined by the French, English, Danes, and Swedish, among other Westerners. The period with which this book is concerned ends approximately c. 1800, when both the VOC and the WIC ceased to exist, and East-West relations were transformed into conditions more characteristic of the imperial relationships that pertained for the next century and a half. Like the Dutch presence itself, this book therefore gestures in a direction similar to that followed by some recent endeavors that have traced how the Portuguese (and Spanish) “encompassed the globe,” and as is now being suggested, how they acted as cultural mediators thereon.

However, as the allusions of Schellinks’s poem suggest, the expected directions of cultural flows from West to East are not so clear; they may be seen to be reversed, to work in counter currents. In particular an old idea that a translation of the arts paralleled the translation of empires from East to West – from Mesopotamia and Persia to Greece to Rome to the western European nations – is returned by Schellinks’s poem eastwards. Schellinks traces a route that begins similarly to that of the translation of empires, but ends by pointing to the superiority of India. We have followed him in reversing traditional emphases on Europe to investigate what the Asian response to or reception of the European may have been. Arguments that cultural production and consumption culminated in Europe are belied by the realities of the cultural interactions that actually took place between Europe and Asia, not to mention the structures of their commercial relations. The best way of describing the role of the VOC, of the Dutch, seems to be as mediating cultures.

Notes

1. It is not the purpose of this introduction to provide a complete survey of the literature. For an overview see F. S. Gaastra, The Dutch East India Company (Zutphen 2003), 179-188.
5. F. S. Gaastra, Bewind en beleid bij de VOC. De financiële en commerciële politiek van de be windhebbers, 1672-1702 (Zutphen 1989).
6. See for example J. G. Taylor, The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia (Madison 1983); R. Raben, Batavia and


8. At the NIAS conference some interlocutors even doubted that the project introduced there was appropriate for scholarship on the VOC, because they claimed that the Dutch East India Company was primarily an economic enterprise, accounts of which would by necessity have to be economic history.


12. Johannes Rach, 1720-1783: Artist in Indonesia and Asia, exhib. cat. (Jakarta 2001); M. de Bruijn and R. Raben, eds., The World of Jan Brandes, 1743-1808: Drawings of a Dutch Traveller in Batavia, Ceylon and Southern Africa (Zwolle 2004). Rach had however also been treated in an earlier study by J. de Loos Haaxman, Johannes Rach en zijn werk (Batavia 1928). Other figures who were VOC employees and yet were artists such as Zacharias Wagenaer have also been studied: see S. Pfaff, Zacharias Wagener (Hassfurt 2001; Ph.D. diss., Bamberg, 1997).


15. Exceptions to this tendency, including the important Oxford dissertation by Amy Landaau, are referred to in the notes to the various essays within.
16. A first result was a volume on broader aspects on cultural and artistic exchanges: M. North, ed., _Artistic and Cultural Exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400-1900: Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections_ (Farnham and Surrey 2010).

17. Gaastra, _The Dutch East India Company_, 17-23.

18. Glamann, _Dutch-Asiatic Trade_, 12-21, esp. 14 (Table 2).


23. See G. Schwartz, ‘Terms of Reception: Europeans and Persians and Each Other’s Art’ and A. S. Landau, ‘Reconfiguring the Northern European Print to Depict Sacred History at the Persian Court’ in this volume.


25. For example the 1706 inventory of William Henry, Count of Nassau, and his wife, the Countess of Rochford, contained “20 Chineze schilderijen,” “8 Chineze schilderijtjes,” “11 Chineze stucken,” and 7 Chineze stuckjes.” Het Utrechts Archief: Archief Taets van Amerongen van Naterwisch, nr. 45. According to the Getty Provenance Index Database there are only two earlier mentions of Chinese _schilderijtjes_ (not _schilderijen_!): 2 _schilderijtjes_ in the inventory of Christina Heere (1682) and 20 _schilderijtjes_ in the inventory of Cornelis van Herff (1690).

26. See M. North, ‘Art and Material Culture in the Cape Colony and Batavia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’ in this volume.


31. See M. Krieger, ‘Dutch Cemeteries in South India’ in this volume.

32. Veenendaal, ‘Furniture in Batavia,’ 30-34.

33. Schwartz, ‘Terms of Reception’ in this volume.

34. Landau, ‘Reconfiguring the Northern European Print’ in this volume.


37. A. Topsfield, _Paintings from Rajasthan in the National Gallery of Victoria: A Collection Acquired through the Felton Bequest’s Committee_ (Melbourne 1980), Plate 70, 68f.


39. See C. Viallé, “‘To Capture Their Favor”: On Gift-Giving by the VOC’ in this volume.
40. See Y. Kobayashi-Sato, 'Japan’s Encounters with the West through the VOC: Western Paintings and Their Appropriation in Japan' in this volume.

41. See M. Forrer, 'From Optical Prints to Ukiyoe: The Adoption and Adaptation of Western Linear Perspective in Japan' in this volume.

42. See Th. DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Scratching the Surface: The Impact of the Dutch on Artistic and Material Culture in Taiwan and China' in this volume.


46. This is the conception of a research project being organized by the University of Coimbra on the Portuguese as cultural mediators in the world.
