

Journal, Memorials and Letters of Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge: Security, Diplomacy and Commerce in 17th-century Southeast Asia. Edited by Peter Borschberg. Singapore: NUS Press, 2015. Pp. xxxix, 658. \$64.00, cloth; \$42.00, paper.
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The pre-industrial period is of great importance to those many economic historians who, in recent years, contributed to the debates about globalization and the Great Divergence. Historical prices and wages have figured prominently in these studies as the data sources allow researchers to measure living standards and levels of market integration. It is no surprise that the archive of the largest European trading company, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), is, therefore, an important source of data. These quantitative studies, however, often take the Company's trading empire, centralized around Batavia (present-day Jakarta), for granted. In doing so, we tend to lose sight of the fact that establishing this empire cost both considerable time and money, and its centralized structure was by no means given at the outset. Peter Borschberg remedies these gaps in the literature by making available in English, for the first time, primary sources written by or relating to Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge (c. 1570–1632).

Matelieff commanded a fleet of 1,440 men and 11 vessels that cost an estimated 2.1 million guilders (or around 3.3 million daily wages of unskilled building laborers). He operated precisely during the Company's formative period, and his fleet (1605–1608) was only the second one that the VOC sent to Asia after its foundation in 1602. At this time the VOC still had to wrest the Asian trade from the hands of the Portuguese, whom they planned to fight also because of Portugal's union with the Crown of Spain (with whom the Dutch were already at war). Matelieff thus found himself in constant tension between commerce and warfare, and he provided significant long-term contributions to both. He proposed to invest in the commercial as well as in the military infrastructure, to corner the market in some (e.g., nutmeg, mace, and cloves) but not in other (e.g., pepper) products, to establish a fixed rendezvous in Asia, and to appoint a governor-general to direct the Company in Asia. The latter two proposals would fundamentally change the VOC's organizational structure in Asia, which until then relied on the various fleet commanders who happened to be in Asia at the time. Long-term strategies were consequently hard to pursue.

Borschberg most notably publishes an English translation of the *Historische Verhael* (Historical Narrative), a crewmember's report of Matelieff's journey published in Dutch in 1645. A Dutch source publication was recently edited by historian Leo Akveld (*Machtsstrijd om Malakka: De reis van VOC-admiraal Cornelis Cornelisz. Matelief naar Oost-Azië, 1605–1608*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2013. Pp. 397) and Borschberg now makes the source available in English. The *Historische Verhael* is accompanied by a range of additional sources, including letters and memorials written by Matelieff himself. All these sources are conveniently provided with a glossary (pp. 457–525), a list of geographic terms (pp. 526–85), and an index (pp. 610–58). While helpful for consulting the book, this does raise the question of why the source publication was not accompanied, or even replaced, by an online version.

The Introduction (pp. 1–138) is elaborate and provides a historiographical overview, the historical context, Matelieff's biography, a synopsis of his Asian journey, and an outline of the included source texts. Those not familiar with Dutch (economic) history will find the historical context section (pp. 6–44) useful, but others may choose to browse

further. The synopsis of Matelieff's Asian journey (pp. 53–104) then reads quite like a rather classic political or military history—an account consisting of great generals and their important battles—rather than an analysis from an economic history or political economy point of view. The particular nature of Borschberg's sources is the apparent cause for this, but while he contextualizes some things, ordinary people and trade remain a little too much in the background. It remains unclear also whether Matelieff was a visionary or whether other fleet commanders would have obtained similar insights concerning the VOC's trade and organization in Asia. Of course, Borschberg should not be judged on these issues too much. He did not write Matelieff's biography nor did he attempt to provide a final account of the VOC's formative period. He edited valuable sources and made these available in English to scholars and students interested in Europe's early trade with Asia. Since few sources on the Company's history are available in English at all, this is a laudable effort, and many will likely benefit from it.

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MEXICO

Mexico's Uneven Development: The Geographical and Historical Context of Inequality.

By Oscar J. Martinez. New York: Routledge, 2016. Pp. 326. \$44.95, paper; \$16.00, hardcover; \$31.47, eBook.

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The border between the United States and Mexico has long captivated economists and historians. There are few other non-militarized borders where a rich country meets a poor one. The difference is so stark that James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu chose the divided border city of Nogales as the place to start their investigation of “Why Nations Fail.”

It should therefore come as no surprise that a great many economists, political scientists, and historians have dedicated a good part of their careers to understanding why Mexico is so much poorer than its northern neighbor. There is general agreement that the root causes of Mexico's relative poverty lie in its institutions—the rules that govern economic and political life. There is less agreement over *why* exactly Mexico developed the institutions that it did. The Spanish heritage? Its resource endowment? Path dependency from other some original sin? Any explanation must not only account for why Mexico is poorer than the United States; it must also explain why Mexico is richer than most of the planet as well as the large income difference within the country.

There is certainly space for a book synthesizing what we know about Mexico's economic development. *Mexico's Uneven Development*, by Oscar Martinez, sadly is not that book. Martinez begins with a provocative thesis: Mexico's institutions are epiphenomena; its divergence from the United States is a product of Mexico's geography. This would be a reasonable thesis around which to write a book about Mexico. The problem, however, rises early in the first chapter where the author muddles his arguments