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Brabantia Ducatus: Geschiedenis en Cartobibliografie van het hertogdom Brabant tot 1795. Mario Dorigo and Mathieu Franssen.

Explokart Studies on the History of Cartography 18. Leiden: Brill, 2018. 712 pp. \$198.

Brabantia Ducatus is an impressive book, both in its physical appearance and its content. Counting more than seven hundred pages and weighing in at nine pounds, this description of all known early modern maps of the Duchy of Brabant is not easy to transport but will be as useful as a reference work as it will be impressive as a coffee table book. It is the eighteenth installment of the Studies on the History of Cartography series, begun in 2000 by Explokart. Explokart stands for “Exploration and accessibility of Dutch cartographic documents, 16th–20th century” and is dedicated to making inventories, descriptions, and facsimiles of Dutch wall maps, topographical maps, sea charts, hydrographical maps, and globes.

One of the interesting aspects of the Explokart project is that it groups both professional and amateur historians of cartography. This approach allows for the kind of long-haul bibliographic projects of which *Brabantia Ducatus* is an excellent example. In the current academic climate, projects that take a decade to complete are considered professional suicide, and on top of that, bibliographical publications are no longer considered real scientific work. In the case of *Brabantia Ducatus*, both authors are map collectors and amateur researchers, who have been preparing this study for almost two decades under the auspices of professors Günter Schilder and Peter van der Krogt.

The strength of this work therefore lies in the first place in the detailed analysis of the individual maps and the accompanying chapters on cartography. The actual cartobibliography makes up the bulk of the work (more than five hundred pages). The used methodology for the description is summarized on one page (171) and in line with the other volumes in the series. The maps are organized chronologically and described meticulously. The bibliography is lavishly illustrated, often including an image of the different states of each map.

The cartobibliography is preceded by four chapters. Here the work occasionally could have benefited from more rigorous editing and conceptualizing. It lacks a general introduction, leaving the reader somewhat puzzled about what to expect. Chapter 1 is an unnecessarily lengthy overview of the history of the Duchy of Brabant. It is derived from a single publication: the collective compilation of essays *Geschiedenis van Brabant: van het hertogdom tot heden* (2004). An original twist here is the insertion of maps to illustrate the history. Vermeer’s *The Art of Painting* (identified somewhat surprisingly by the authors as *Het Schilderij* or *The Painting*) has a wall map of the Seventeen Provinces in the background that shows a crack exactly between the Southern and the Northern Netherlands. The crack is often interpreted as a comment on the separation between the Catholic South and the Protestant North. Occasionally, the chapters look hastily put

together: the tables look messy compared to the lavish illustrations, and some captions seem to have disappeared (e.g., illustrations 15a and 15b).

Chapter 2 is completely on point, with an overview of the most important maps of Brabant starting with the modest manuscript map drawn up by English proctor William de Spyny at the University of Paris in 1357. The authors also point out that the most famous family of cartographers, the Blaeus, surprisingly were not cartographic innovators in the case of Brabant, contrary to the Visscher and Hondius families, who updated roads, waterways, dikes, and city plans. Every change in every state of the maps is documented here, allowing Doringo and Franssen to conclude that the Visscher family and the Frenchman Alexis-Hubert Jaillot were the most interested in the ongoing perfection of their products.

Chapter 3 explores how changes in the landscape are visible on maps. It discusses the difficulties mapmakers had with the flow of the river Scheldt, how inundations appeared and disappeared during the Eighty Years' War, and how creation of polders led to the appearance of new villages. A last and technical chapter discusses the precision of maps, using MapAnalist software. The analysis shows that the accuracy of maps barely improved between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. In summary, *Brabantia Ducatus* is an extremely useful reference work that will serve historians of cartography and of the Low Countries alike.