A computational analysis of early modern Christian missionary opinions of the Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC).

Stefan Halikowski Smith, K U Leuven (in consultation with Dr. Justyna Robinson & Meredith O'Hara of the Concept Analytics Lab, Sussex University: https://conceptanalytics.org.uk).

The purpose of this contribution is to apply some of the recent techniques of the 'computational turn' in historiography, and more specifically Randomised Lexicographical Collection, Co-Occurrence Analysis and Indexed Prosodic Evaluation, in order to gauge early modern Christian missionary opinions of the Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC). What impressions did Catholic missionaries, the regular clergy (from 'regula' or rule), have of the Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC), an institution at the forefront of early modern merchant capitalism and the greatest multinational employer of its day?[1] A number of missionaries travelled out to the Indies with the VOC and thus had direct experience of the companies, or were sometimes forcibly repatriated by their agency.[2] J-Baptiste Maldonado, S.J. had to be deported after writing provocative pamphlets during a short stay in Batavia describing the VOC as "damnable heretics (…) worse than the gentiles; I would rather spend a year among the heathen than two days amongst people of this nation". He likened them to the *Inimici crucis Christi,* quoted in Paul's 'Letter to the Philippians', 3:18. But others like Guy Tachard S.J. conveyed envy at the disciplined organisation, and respect for the literacy frequently attained by even the humblest of shipmates, efficacy of the company laws, and the fairness governing VOC administration. Other Jesuits like Carlo Scribani were also impressed by Dutch commercial enterprise "to the four corners of the world" (*ad quattuor partes mundi*) as expressed in his *Politico christianus* (Antwerp: Nutius, 1624).

How worthwhile a question is this today? What perspectives does the question offer on the expanding European overseas world and its functioning? It broaches the mental world of organised religion and devotion to open up contemporary panoramas on experimental forms of global capitalism that we know southern European Catholic societies like the Portuguese, Genoese and Tuscans were later keen to replicate.[3] Some scholars have suggested considerable similarities in the way transnational missionary orders like the Jesuits and the North European commercial companies were wired, for both were in essence companies (the Company of Jesus, founded 1540, the United East-India Company, founded 1602). It was the pre-eminent historian of early modern empires in the East, Charles Boxer, who suggested that the Jesuits constituted the world's first multinational corporation.[4] One might thus expect something of a convergence of positions between capitalists and churchmen, a mutual respect perhaps. Alison Forrestal and Seán Alexander Smith, however, think that this comparative allusion has been 'heavily critiqued'[5] – sociologists have contrasted the 'vertical control' of the trading companies with the 'horizontal' demands of the 'inter-organizational

[1] Jan Lucassen, 'A Multinational and its Labor Force. The Dutch EIC 1595-1795', *International Labor and Working-Class History, 66*, no. 2 (2004): 12-39.

[2] more commonly, actually, given its lesser regularisation, and rather *ad hoc* planning of Indies voyages, with the English EIC. 'The Dutch regularly travel on three different occasions each year (namely in April, September and December) to India, but never or very rarely allow somebody to travel on the ships to India except if he is in their service, at least as long as the journey outwards lasts'. Johann Sigmund Wurffbains `Instruktion über verschiedene Reiserouten und -formen nach Ostindien', from Christoph Arnold, *Wahrhaftige Beschreibungen dreyer maechtigen Koenigreiche Japan, Siam und Corea*. Nürnberg, 1672.

[3] Anthony R. Disney, "The First Portuguese India Company, 1628-33", *Economic History Review,* 30; 248, 1977; Giorgio Tosco, 'In Pursuit of the World's Trade. Tuscan and Genoese Attempts to enter Trans-Oceanic Trade in the Seventeenth Century', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, European University Institute, 2020.

[4] Boxer, *Portuguese India in the mid-seventeenth* century (Delhi, 1980), 49-50.

[5] Forrestal & Smith eds., *The Frontiers of Mission. Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism,* Brill: 2016, p. 6

field', patronage, passage and protection between major colonial agencies, for the missionaries.[6] As a *problématique,* however, it continues to draw conferences, such as 'Two Early Modern Global Networks in Asia: The Society of Jesus and the Dutch East India Company' (University of Warsaw, 2–3 December, 2022).[7] Unfortunately, papers there seem to offer how Protestant merchants and Jesuit missionaries viewed Asia, rather than how they viewed each other (paper by Joan Pau Rubiés). Nor do any of the fifteen papers published in *Encounters between Jesuits and Protestants in Asia and the Americas* edited by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (Editor), Robert A. Maryks (Editor), R. Po-chia Hsia (Editor) in 2018 (Brill) address this question, although the point of the volume is to suggest there was much mutual admiration and sympathy to transcend the confessional divide.

Other scholars like Jack McDonald working independently at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies in Leuven have also recently drawn attention to the void in attention to the religious aspects of the Dutch VOC.[8] The problem is not so apparent as to the phenomenology of religion (the activities of the Protestant clergy and lay-readers known as *ziekentrooster)*, but rather as to the theology of religion: what ideas specifically exerted an influence on the Dutch maritime world? The religious history of the Low Countries is itself a roller-coaster ride over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, lying as they did on the fault-line between Catholicism and Protestantism. There was the Anabaptist furor in the 1530s (the emergence ultimately of a Mennonite faction), the rise of Calvinism and the antagonisms between the Arminian and the Gomarist interest groups within it from the beginning of the seventeenth century, or a 'Libertine' and Voetian Counter-Remonstrantism if you follow the personal evolution of Arnoldus Buchelius, with some side-shows like Jansenism.[9] The Synod of Dort 1618-9 made certain stipulations with regard to religion in the colonies: it was decided that non-Christian progeny had to study Protestant catechism to a suitable level, while VOC chaplains were also instructed to learn Malay.[10] Active missionization was, however, not encouraged and would-be missionaries like Leiden university theologian Justius Heurnius, author of *De legatione evangelica ad Indos capessenda admonitio* (1618), 'the first work in the Reformational tradition to provide a detailed missionary theology', were thwarted. He had reminded the States General, the Prince of Orange and the company directors of their obligation to convert the infidels in the territories under their jurisdiction. God had sanctioned the newly-discovered lands opening to the Company not for the purpose of material gain but rather for the conversion of the heathens. Heurnius had emphasised three factors in the success of missionary endeavours: a Christian way of life of the sailors and soldiers in company service, the establishment of proper schools for the indigenous, and the propagation of the Holy Scriptures in the local vernacular languages.[11] In a recent Ph.D. thesis conducted under Alison Games at Georgetown University, Danny Noorlander looks at the *classis,* a body responsible for deciding upon the religious direction of individual colonies

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[6] Howard E. Aldrich and Peter Marsden, 'Environments of Organisations', in *Handbook of Sociology,* ed. Neil Smelser (California: Sage, 1988), 361-92; Amalya Oliver & Mark Elsers, 'Networking Network Studies: An Analysis of Conceptual Configurations in the Study of Inter-Organisational Relationships', *Organization Studies,* 19, 1998, 549-83.

[7] See the review published by Elisa Frei, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu,* vol. XCI, fasc. 182 (2022-2), 873-6.

[8] Jack McDonald, 'The Dutch EIC company: Strict Protestantism and Intolerance', in *Religious Radicalisms. Demarcations and Challenges*, ed. John Temmerman (Brussels: ASP, 2021), pp. 111-128.

[9] Judith Pollmann, *Religious choice in the Dutch Republic: the reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius, 1565-1641,* Manchester University Press, 1999.

[10] Goudriaan, Aza; Lieburg, F. A. van, *Revisiting the Synod of Dort. A Conference Proceedings,* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[11] Summarised in Markus Vink, *Encounters on the opposite Coast The Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai in the Seventeenth Century,* Leiden: Brill, 2015, ch. 1, p. 130. J.R, Callenbach, *Justus Heurnius, eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis des Christendoms in Nederlandsch Oost-Indië,* Nijkerk 1897.

and suitable candidates for the posts of pastor. They operated in close consultation with local consistories, which sent troublesome individuals home, but also reported on home-made problems like VOC apathy.[12]

We need perhaps at this point to interject some basic information regarding the multiple Roman Catholic missionary orders operating in the Orient in different fields and in different capacities over the early modern period. Besides the three principal missionary orders, the Franciscans (O.F.M.), the Dominicans (O.P.) – often involved in procedures of the Holy Inquisition – and the Jesuits (S.J.), the newcomers, an order founded only in 1540, there were the Carmelites, the Theatines, the Capuchins, the Ursulines, the Lazarists, the Barnabites and, somewhat laggard, the Augustinians. These missionaries were literate commentators who left piles of letters, *memoriales, relazioni* today gathering dust in various European archives and libraries: the seminary of St. Thomas Villanova in the Augustijnenklooster in Leuven is one, an enormous building and repository, but a fully underutilised resource by scholars from academia more broadly speaking.[13] What these missionaries had to say was of variable quality and originality, but of undoubtedly broad range: they covered not only matters religious, but, as I have recently investigated, geo-political strategies (Tachard) and successful trading ventures to resuscitate the Venetian Republic (Cima).[14] Otherwise their 'cultura escrita' can be pigeon-holed as spiritual and devotional literature, chronicles, spiritual autobiographies, hagiographies, aphorisms, disquisitions on canon law, *agonías* (guides to dying), catechisms, Church histories, personal diaries, collections of letters, plays (*farsas, autos sacramentales*, mystery plays), imaginative literature, scientific literature.

Sociologically, what did their presence amount to? The first task would be to calculate exactly how many missionaries were operative at any one time. We know hitherto, from Claudia Collani's work, that the numbers of western missionaries working specifically in the Sinic mission field was as little as 153 in 1701; there were 143 Jesuits working in Japan at the time of the expulsion (1639).[15] There were, however, as many as 30.000 seminarians in Goa, alone, the 'Rome of the Orient'; in 1623-4 the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle suggested that half of the total living in Goa would be sufficient for a city of that size.[16] Scholars like Achilles Meersman O.F.M. have spent their lives documenting their own Franciscan order's presence in different mission-fields of the Orient.[17] European authorities like the Portuguese Crown had encouraged professed clergy 'to go to India', but 'not to return thence'; as a letter to the Viceroy in January 1598 had exclaimed, such a policy was needed as 'those who take the frock there are deficient in such education and qualities as are required for the improvement of society by their example and conversion'.[18] Over the seventeenth century, the idea that there was an

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[12] D. Noorlander, *Serving God, Mammon and the Reformed Church and the Dutch East India Company in the Atlantic World, 1621-1674*, Proquest Dissertations, 2011. Noorlander published his thesis with Cornell University Press in 2019, and won the Hendricks award from the New Netherland Institute.
[13] For a long list of such establishments, see the *Guide Des Sources De L'histoire D'Afrique Du Nord, D'Asie Et D'Océanie Conservées En Belgique.* Bruxelles: UNESCO, 1972.
[14] Halikowski Smith, *Two Missionary Accounts of Southeast Asia in the Late Seventeenth Century: A Translation and Critical Edition of Guy Tachard's* Relation de Voyage Aux Indes *(1690-99) and Nicola Cima's* Relatione Distinta Delli Regni Di Siam, China, Tunchino, E Cocincina *(1697-1706)*, ARC Humanities/Amsterdam University Press, 2019.
[15] From Padre Valentim de Carvalho's report, as cited in Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650,* 321; Collani, *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1 (635-1800), 307-8.
[16] Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies,* vol. 1, 251; *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle il Pellegrino, descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari,* Brighton: G. Gancia, 1843, vol. II, 593.
[17] Meersman, *The Franciscans in the Indonesian Archipelago, 1300*-1775 (Leuven: Nauwelaerts, 1967); 'The Franciscans in Junk-Ceylon, Kedah and Mergui', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 1963 56 (4), 439-62..
[18] *Archivo Português Oriental,* Joaquim H. da Cunha-Rivara ed., New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992, Fasciculo 3, no. 304.

excess of men of the cloth in the Orient in the seventeenth century gained traction, and a meeting was convened in Goa in 1636 of superiors of all religious orders to discuss the appropriate numbers for such communities, and which priests were keen to enter which monastery.[19] Many men of the cloth, it started to be recognised, had been sent out from their Orders back in Europe to get rid of them, idlers and troublemakers, they were considered 'not the most lucid members of their congregation'. They were 'floating' because the infrastructure for them was lacking: not only were the Orders poorly represented in the far-flung corners of the earth, divided up into vast and poorly populated provinces, but there were few religious Residences in which to house them, or supervise their activities.[20] A number of them, like Giambattista Morelli (O.F.M.), developed delusional schemes to, say, drive out demons in Pegu (Burma), or cure the Chinese Emperor of his ailments. Although there were a number of colleges like San Pietro in Montorio in Trastevere or St. Bonaventure and John Capistran in Mexico City founded to train them in, amongst other things, oriental languages, most western missionaries were not proficient, particularly within the ranks of the 'humble orders' (the Jesuits contemptuously referred to them as the 'frailes idiotas'), and had real difficulties relating Christian dogma to the *naturales.*

The way knowledge has been gathered hitherto has aided the production of personal biographies. There are streams of ready necrologies from the early modern period, and modern biographical encyclopedias for the principal orders like that of the Jesuits are readily forthcoming.[21] Streit's 23-volume *Bibliotheca Missionum* produced between 1916–74 is an enormous compendium, in origin bibliographic, but inevitably structured according to individual order, and within that rubric, individuals are recorded alphabetically.[22] Carlos Sommervogel's *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus, eds*. Oscar Schepens & Alphonse Picard (Bruxelles/ Paris: 1890-1932) in eleven volumes is an exhaustive litany of Jesuitica. There are similar, albeit more disorganised, and shorter editions for the other orders.[23]

I was inclined to follow scholars like Catherine Jami in attempting to capitalise on these individual itineraries as a unit of analysis to approximate what she called 'Individual itineraries and the spatial dynamics of knowledge: science, technology and medicine in China, 17th-20th centuries', in a research project (and later, in 2017, book) that ran from Paris, a collaboration of the Collège de France and the Institut des Hautes-Études Chinoises.[24] A micro-analysis by Florence Bretelle-Establet of the careers of individual medical experts, book markets and the dissemination of knowledge in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces in that book amount to a sophisticated study of mobility. But other questions remained. At a conference entitled 'La géopolitique religieuse dans le monde moderne (1500-1800)' and held at the Marine in the Chateau de Vincennes on Friday 13 March, 2015, it became apparent that we needed to discuss the meaning of the names-dropping in the

[19] Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Dúvidas e problemas acerca de algumas teses de história da expansäo,* Lisbon: Edições Gazeta de Filosofia, 1943, 97.
[20] Halikowski Smith, '"Floating" European clergy in Siam during the years immediately prior to the National Revolution of 1688: The letters of Giovan Battista Morelli, O.F.M.', in Stefan Halikowski Smith, ed., *Reinterpreting Indian Ocean worlds: Essays in honour of Kirti N. Chaudhuri* (Cambridge, 2011), 336–76: 371.
[21] O'Neill & Dominguez, *Diccionario histórico* (2001),4 vols.
[22] David Henige,"Bibliotheca Missionum": A Case of Benign Neglect', *History in Africa*, Vol. 5 (1978), pp. 337-344 (8 pages) https://doi.org/10.2307/3171495
[23] See, for example, for the Franciscans Leonhard Lemmens O.F.M., *Geschichte der Franziskanermissionen,* Münster in Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1929; for the Dominicans, see Benno M. Biermann, *Die Anfänge der neueren Dominikaner Mission in China*, Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1927.
[24] Catherine Jami (ed.), *Individual Itineraries and the Spatial Dynamics of Knowledge: Science, Technology and Medicine in China, 17th-20th Centuries* (Paris: 2017) has been reviewed by Anne Gerritsen, see https://journals.openedition.org/artefact/5196.

Society of Jesus. Guy Tachard's *Relation de Voyage aux Indes, 1690-99,* for example, was completely encrusted with the names of colleagues, long descriptions of their peregrinations and co-participation in Tachard's life story. For Tobias Winnerling, this was a deliberate rhetorical, or dramatic strategy aimed at constructing "the kingdom of heaven", a spiritual empire of the Society of Jesus.[25]

For some time, the question had been how to aggregate the knowledge stemming from all these individual itineraries, how to analyse it meaningfully, until I came upon and started to engage with the 'distant reading' revolution from c. 2008. 'Distant reading', which is still not yet a household methodology amongst professional historians, a problem exacerbated by their characteristically conservative outlook on the world, refers to a professional reading method that relies heavily on computer programs but that can analyse thousands of texts simultaneously (and in original ways) and that would otherwise engage many human lifetimes. This strategy, developed by Franco Moretti in his seminal work *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London, New York: Verso 2005) represents an attempt at utilizing big data analytics for the purposes of literary scholarship.[26]

Programmes like DocuScope (200 million words/phrases assigned to 101 linguistic categories) have been developed at the Carnegie Mellon University DocuScope - Department of English - Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences - Carnegie Mellon University (cmu.edu) that are able to create their own recipes for diagnosing genre. As an example, we might ask how Artificial Intelligence can recognise gothic literature? Via tagging, DocuScope would tell you that gothic literature can be shown to contain many events, personal pronouns, and expressions evoking shifts in time. There is an overpreponderant abundance of the past tense in gothic novels. Human beings, however, would tend to operate rather on an emotional register in acknowledging that the Gothic genre tends to go with the human sentiments of fear and sadness. The conclusion here is that computers can detect patterns of linguistic expression at what Dr. Schweighauser calls 'the deepest levels', structures or levels that the human mind does not care to, and simply cannot easily process.

DocuScope performs techniques collectively known as NLP or Natural Language Processing, not a necessarily new branch of investigation (Randall Rustin wrote a monograph on the subject in 1973), but one that can now, thanks to technological advances, harness LLMs (Large Language Models). To give an example, Sketchengine's largest English-language corpus enTenTen (2021) has 61,585,997,113 'tokens' or words. One visualization technique, known as T-Sne Embeddings, uses SGNS vectors ("Skip-gram with Negative Sampling") requiring datasets consisting of hundreds of thousands of words. SGNS vectors are one of three methods to construct word embeddings within each time-period: PPMI (= positive PMI), SVD (Singular Value Decomposition), which is a more complex word representation technique that makes the matrix denser (in other words, with fewer columns, hence yielding shorter vectors) and SGNS (i.e. the word2vec algorithm). PMI (Pointwise Mutual Information) measures co-occurrence. PMI maximises when X and Y are perfectly associated, which can be expressed thus: P (x/y) or P (y/x) = 1; word pairings are otherwise allocated by the software a *cosine similarity* rating.

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[25] Winnerling, '"A Kingdom of Heaven. The Spiritual Empire of the Society of Jesus," In: *Itinerario* 40, no. 2 (August 2016): 215– 37.

[26] See the work of Dr. Philipp Schweighauser from the University of Basel, for example; What does distant reading look like?', https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/reading-digital/0/steps/16842; or 'What is distant reading?', https://tales.nmc.unibas.ch/en/literature-in-the-digital-age-11/distant-reading-35/what-is-distant-reading-179.

These are distributional methods representing each word *w* by a vector *w'* that captures information about its co-occurrence, which words associate with it, and then allows for this data to be embedded into multidimensional diagrams as per below. These diagrams, then, are 2D renderings of multidimensional relationships using T-Sne (t-distributed stochastic neighbour embedding), a dimensionality reduction technique that is commonly used to visualize high-dimensional data in a lower-dimensional space.

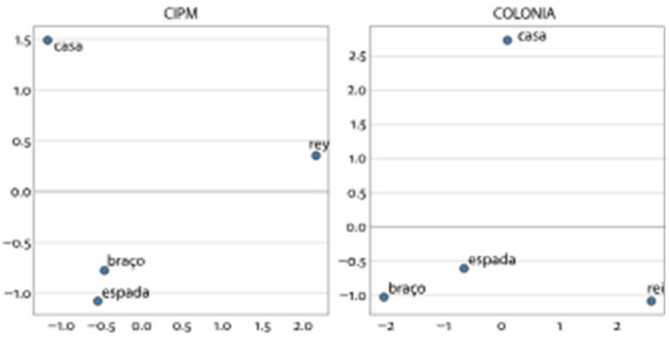


Figure 1. Visualization of sample words in CIPM and COLONIA. Amaral, 'Tracing semantic change in Portuguese' (2023), p. 12.

From the exercise illustrated here, actually the first computational study of semantic change in Portuguese, only conducted in 2022, we can see that the content word sword (*espada*) has a higher co-occurrence with the word *braço* (arm) than it does *casa* (house) or *rei* (king) in the medieval and early modern textual corpora CIPM (Corpus Informatizado do Português Medieval) and COLONIA (containing texts from the 16th-20th centuries), and are thus clustered together in the embedding space.[27] This basically corresponds to human intuitions about the semantic relatedness of these words. Words without clear semantic relations to these words (e.g., *casa* and *rei*) do not cluster. Additionally, the similar distribution of these words across different time periods (the two corpora represent different time periods, medieval and early modern respectively). The embedding indicates that there are no major semantic changes affecting these words.

In a more advanced semantic analysis, we can follow in considerably more detail the evolution of specific English words. These are words chosen to mutate over time, thus it is far more interesting to follow the semantic evolution of the musical term 'rock', than the term as it relates to geological material.

Here, there are no strict axes as we understand them but the vertical space shows time in these diagrams, and then the words are shown according to their proximity to the words in black: grey words close to a black word shows a semantic closeness between the words.[28]

[27] Patrícia Amaral, Zuoyu Tian, Dylan Jarrett and Juan Escalona Torres, 'Tracing semantic change in Portuguese. A distributional approach to adversative connectives', in *Journal of Historical Linguistics*, 13:1 (2023), 1-34.
[28] William L. Hamilton, Jure Leskovec, Dan Jurafsky. 'Diachronic Word Embeddings Reveal Statistical Laws of Semantic Change', at: Diachronic Word Embeddings Reveal Statistical Laws of Semantic Change (aclanthology.org)

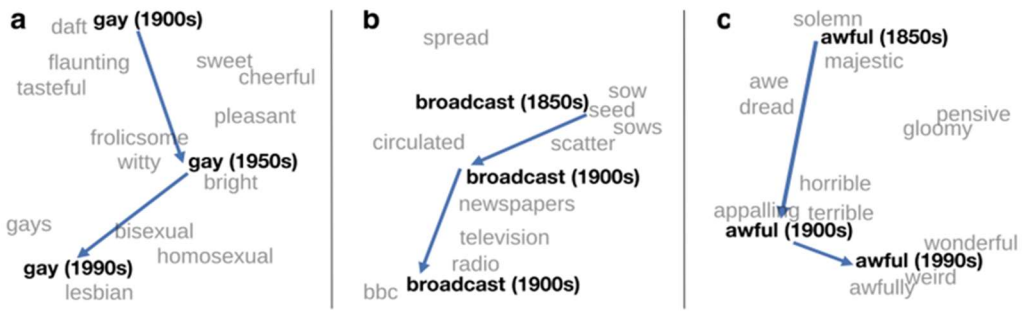
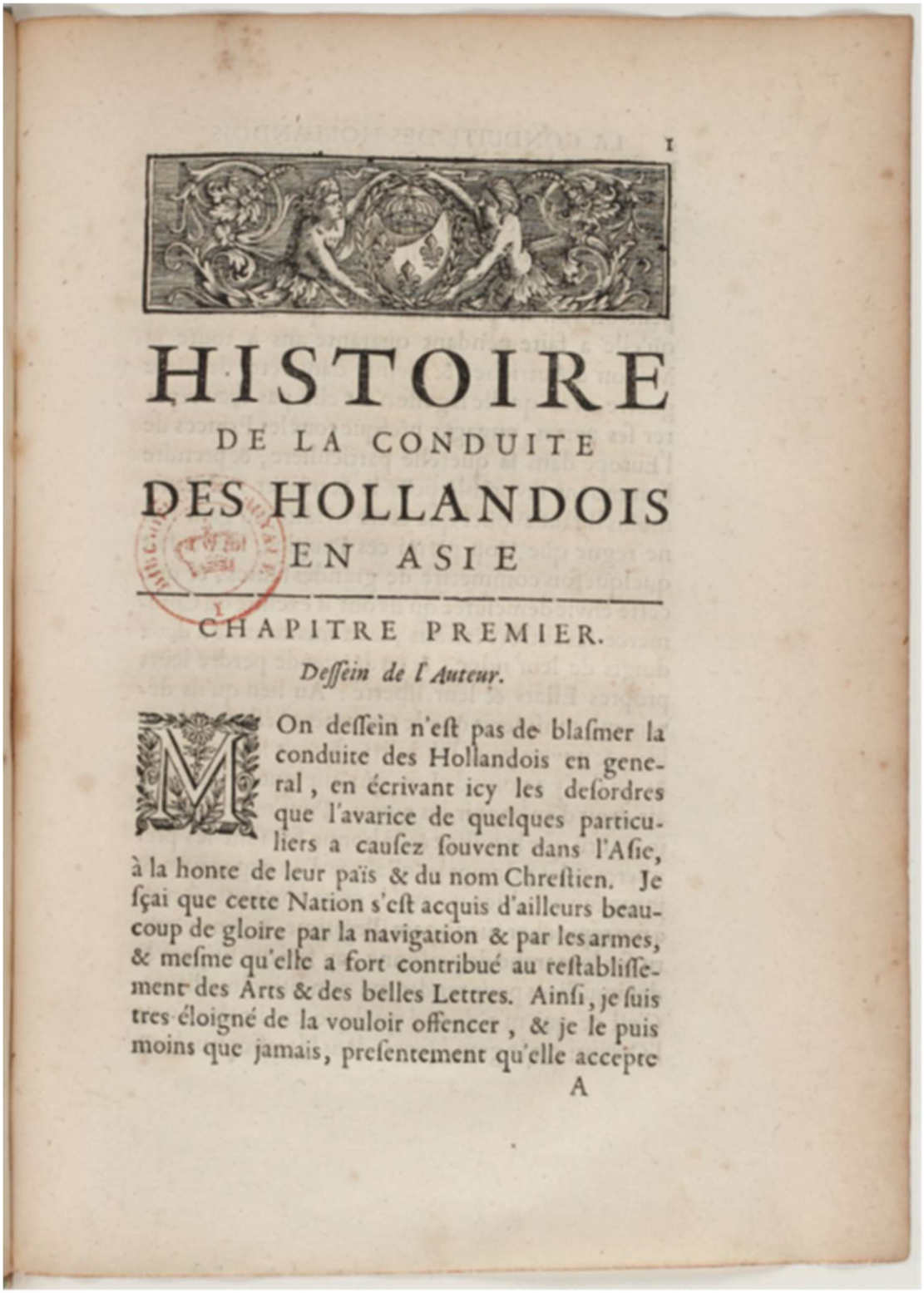


Figure 2. Two-dimensional visualization of semantic change in English using SGNS vectors. For example, the word gay shifted from meaning 'cheerful' or 'frolicsome' to referring to homosexuality. From William L. Hamilton, Jure Leskovec, Dan Jurafsky. 'Diachronic Word Embeddings Reveal Statistical Laws of Semantic Change', in *Proceedings of the 54th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics* (Berlin, Germany, August 7-12, 2016), p. 1490.

The problem with our data-set is that it was simply too small to deploy machine-led analysis like that performed by *Sketchengine*. I nonetheless experimented on orbital co-occurrence visualizations with

a sample text, the



1

HISTOIRE

DE LA CONDUITE

DES HOLLANDOIS

EN ASIE

CHAPITRE PREMIER.

Deſſein de l'Auteur.

MOn deſſein n'eſt pas de blaſmer la conduite des Hollandois en general, en écrivant icy les deſordres que l'avarice de quelques particuliers a cauſez ſouvent dans l'Aſie, à la honte de leur païs & du nom Chreſtien. Je ſçai que cette Nation s'eſt acquis d'ailleurs beaucoup de gloire par la navigation & par les armes, & meſme qu'elle a fort contribué au reſtabliſſement des Arts & des belles Lettres. Ainſi, je ſuis tres-éloigné de la vouloir offencer, & je le puis moins que jamais, preſentement qu'elle accepte

A

Figure 3. Title-page of J-B. Tavernier, *Histoire de la Conduite des Hollandois en Asie,* Paris: 1679, 181 pages long (43.846 words).

Histoire de la Conduite des Hollandois en Asie, and authored by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-89), published in Paris in 1679 as part of a wider collection of reflections, the *Recüeil de plusieurs*

relations et traitez singuliers et curieux . De J. B. Tavernier, chevalier, baron d'Aubonne. Qui n'ont point esté mis dans ses six premiers voyages. Divisé en cinq paties : I. Une relation du Japon, & de la cause de la persecution des chrestiens dans ses isles : avec la carte du païs. II. Relation de ce qui s'est passé dans la negociation des deputez qui ont esté en Perse & aux Indes, tant de la part du Roy, que de la Compagnie françoise, pour l'establissement du commerce. III. Observations sur le commerce des Indes orientales, & sur les fraudes qui peuvent s'y commettre. IV. Relation nouvelle & singuliere du royaume de Tunquin : avec plusieurs figures & la carte du païs. V. Histoire de la conduite des Hollandois en Asie.[29] Tavernier, of course, was not a man-of-the-cloth but a Protestant merchant, although his text remains a lynchpin in closely-observed and sustained criticism of the VOC.[30]

The task was not without its detractions. For the sake of fairness, the text really needs to be studied in league with its official refutation on the part of Henrick van Quellenburgh's apologetic *Vinidiciae Batavicae* (Amsterdam: Jan Bouman, 1684). There was, however, insufficient time at hand to follow that through.

[29] There is a digital copy available via the Bibliothèque de France: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k10400008.image

[30] Stephane Yerasimos, 'L'aventure au temps de Louis XIV: Jean-Baptiste Tavernier', *L'Histoire,* no. 37, Sept. 1981; George Rothrock, 'Jean-Baptiste Tavernier: Merchant Extraordinary', *History Today,* Volume 17 Issue 11 November 1967; Charles Boxer, 'J.B. Tavernier, controversial Huguenot Traveller and Trader, 1605-89', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, vol. 24, issue 3 (1985): 202-9.

HENRICK van QUELLENBURGHS

VINDICIÆ BATAVICÆ

Ofte

REFUTATIE

Van het Tractaet van J. B. Tavernier, Chevalier, Baron d'Aubonne &c.

In de welcke niet alleen de valsheydt van veele lasteren ende leugenen, den Staet, de Ed. Hoogh Achtb. Compagnie ende de natie aengevreven, werdt aengewesen, maer oock light gegeven in veele saecken in d'Asiatische Gewesten voorgevallen, welcke kennisse geven aen die geene die haer vermaeck ende nut soecken te trecken uyt het lesen der Indische Voyagien.

t'AMSTERDAM,
By JAN BOUMAN, Boeckverkooper, in de Kalverstraet, over de Kapel, 1684.

Figure 4. Henrick van Quellenburgh's apologetic *Vinidiciae Batavicae* (Amsterdam: Jan Bouman, 1684), frontispiece.

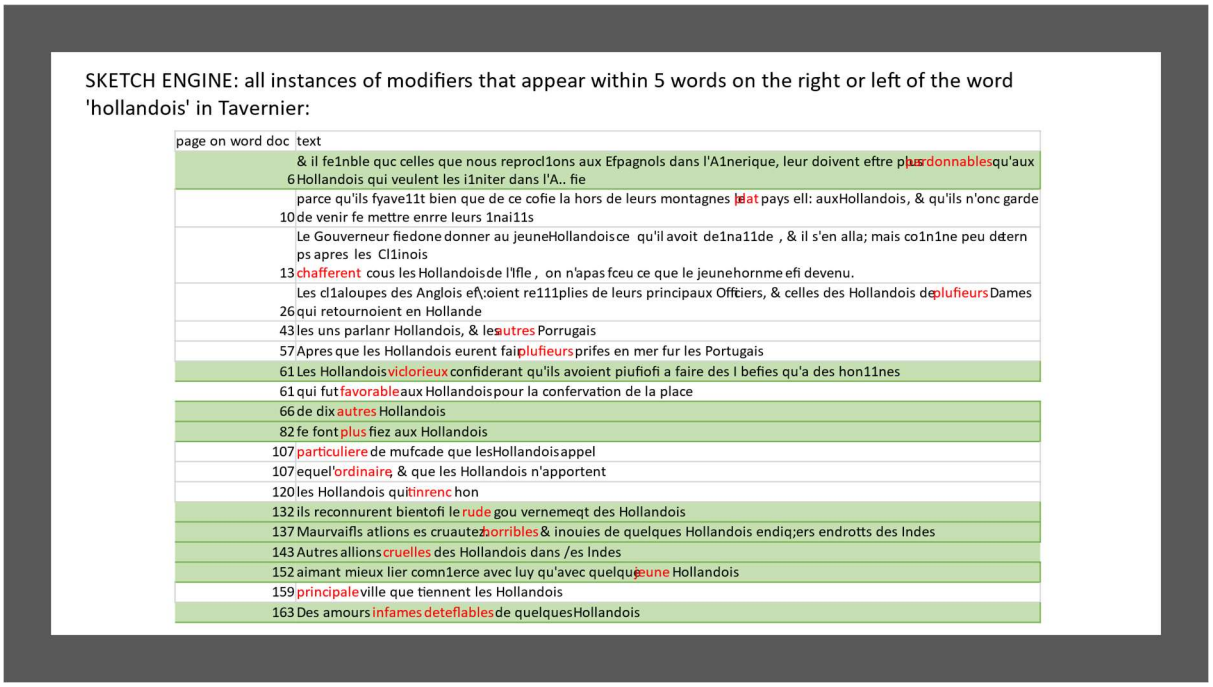
The exercise, which has been flaunted by some enthusiastic scholars as key to establishing an entire 'topography of discourse' (Justyna Robinson) for a given time-period[31], was not enormously successful in our case in that the terms returned did not attach directly to negative or positive prosodies of the Dutch: of the twenty nearest co-occurrences, the nouns 'esclaves', 'malade', 'anglois' suggest that the VOC was caught in deep rivalry with its contemporary joint-stock chartered trading company, the English East India Company (founded in 1600, actually two years earlier than the Dutch). The returns suggest there were many ill or seasick Dutchmen that the company needed to be concerned with, and finally, that the trade they promoted had a lot to do with the slave trade.[32] The text had to be cleaned in order to grapple with the seventeenth-century orthography,

[31] Digital Heritage Seminar 2023: Concept-led Approach to Semantic Change (youtube.com)

[32] So, for example, 'D'ailleurs les Hollandois en Asie font voir qu'ils n'ont gueres de religion , lorsqu'ils font travailler les Dimanches les soldats, les matelots, & les esclaves de l'un & de l'autre sexe'

particularly the long fluted ‘s’ that looks like an ‘f’. The -ais ending to ‘Hollandais’ had not yet transpired; the ‘ois’ (**wє**) ending (originally a learned dipthong) was reduced to ‘ais’ (**є**) only with the 1835 Sixth Edition of the Académie Française dictionary.[33] Note: ‘Hollandois’ appears 166 times in the corpus, and ‘hollandoi*’ appears 184 times, that's a relative frequency of about 0.03%.

Figure 5. All instances of modifiers appearing within five words left or write of the term ‘hollandois’ in Tavernier. Source: Sketchengine: https://www.sketchengine.eu/ .

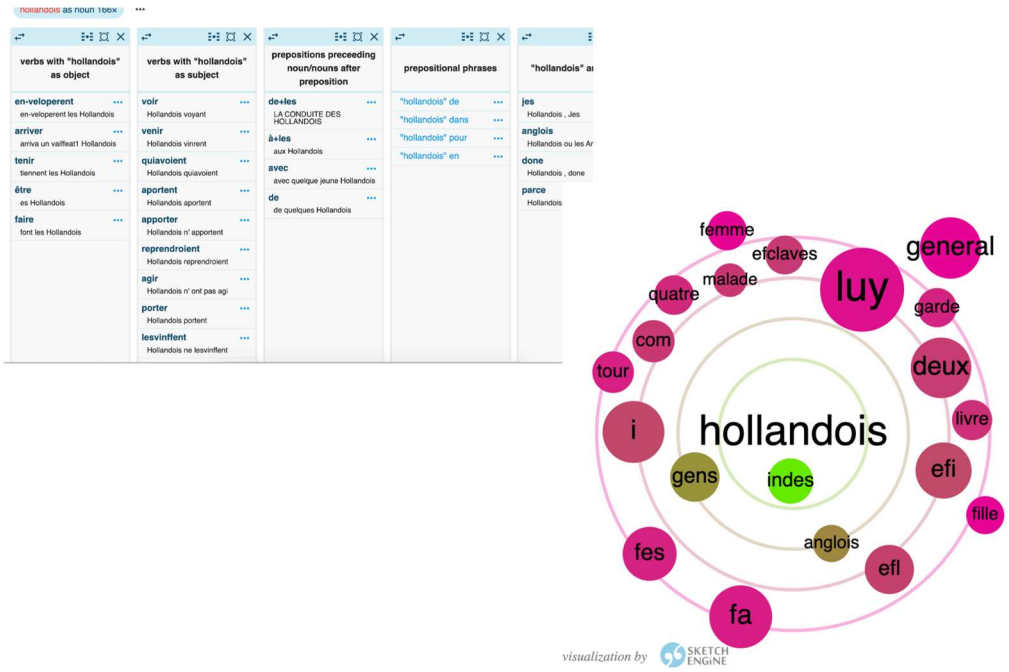


SKETCH ENGINE: all instances of modifiers that appear within 5 words on the right or left of the word 'hollandois' in Tavernier:

page on word doc	text
6	& il fe1nble quc celles que nous reprocl1ons aux Efpagnols dans l'A1nerique, leur doivent eftre plus ordonnables qu'aux Hollandois qui veulent les i1niter dans l'A.. fie
10	parce qu'ils fyave11t bien que de ce cofie la hors de leurs montagnes leur pays ell: aux Hollandois, & qu'ils n'onc garde de venir fe mettre enrre leurs 1nai11s
13	Le Gouverneur fiedone donner au jeune Hollandois ce qu'il avoit de1na11de , & il s'en alla; mais co1n1ne peu de temps apres les Cl1inois chafferent cous les Hollandois de l'Ifle , on n'apas fceu ce que le jeune hornme efi devenu.
26	Les cl1aloupes des Anglois ef\:oient re111plies de leurs principaux Officiers, & celles des Hollandois de plufieurs Dames qui retournoient en Hollande
43	les uns parlanr Hollandois, & les autres Porrugais
57	Apres que les Hollandois eurent fait plufieurs prifes en mer fur les Portugais
61	Les Hollandois victorieux confiderant qu'ils avoient piufiofi a faire des I befies qu'a des hon11nes
61	qui fut favorable aux Hollandois pour la confervation de la place
66	de dix autres Hollandois
82	fe font plus fiez aux Hollandois
107	particuliere de mufcade que les Hollandois appel
107	equel'ordinaire, & que les Hollandois n'apportent
120	les Hollandois quitinrenc hon
132	ils reconnurent bientofi le rude gou vernemeqt des Hollandois
137	Maurvaifls atlions es cruautez horribles & inouies de quelques Hollandois endiq;ers endrotts des Indes
143	Autres allions cruelles des Hollandois dans /es Indes
152	aimant mieux lier comn1erce avec luy qu'avec quelque jeune Hollandois
159	principale ville que tiennent les Hollandois
163	Des amours infames deteflables de quelques Hollandois

***Figure 6. The Sketchengine orbital visual co-occurrence analysis of Tavernier’s text* La conduite des Hollandois.**

[33] Rickard, *A history of the French language*, 1989.



The dataset I had collected involved interrogating the Internet Archive (archive.org) using selected search terms, and then honing in on extracts within relevant texts that could answer the question: 'What did early modern missionaries make of the VOC'? Given the limit time available, I was able to amass eighty different 'tokens', or written positions on this problematic, in an MS-Excel database.

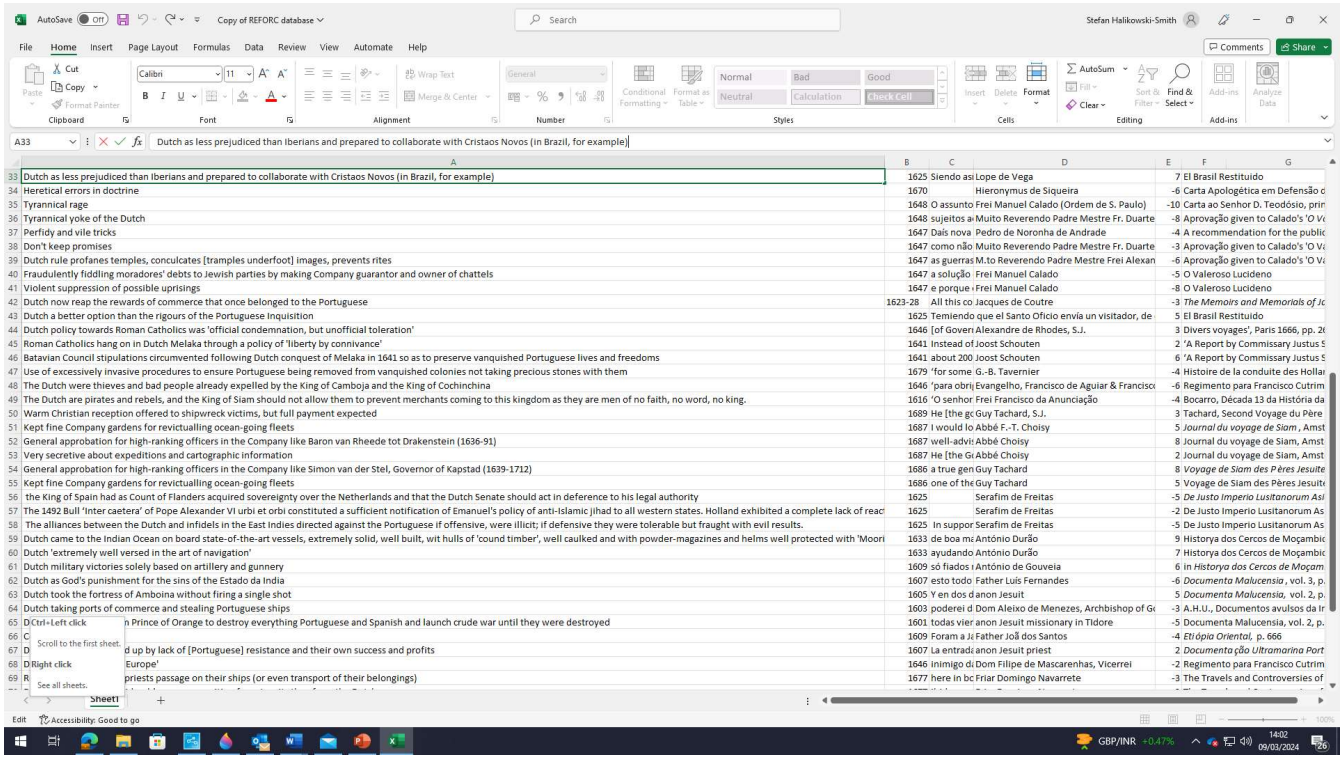


Figure 7. MS Excel database of missionary statements with regard to the VOC in personal storage: 'What did early modern missionaries make of the VOC' (seven columns)?

As can be perceived from the screenshot the database consisted of seven columns.

1 – the first column contains a translated summary of the evaluation of the Vereinigde Ost-Indische Compagnie, be it positive or negative.

2 – the date this judgement was formulated;

3 - the precise quotation from the text relating to a missionary judgement of the VOC;

4- the author of the evaluation;

5- the valency, evaluated according to positive and negative intensity, with median zero value for neutral expressions.

6- the precise source (reference).

7- the topic area of the evaluation. These areas were developed manually according to the thrust of the utterance in question, and consisted of six negative topic areas and five positive ones. Here is the rubric developed:

Figure 8. Groupings for index evaluations of prosody.

Grouped the accusations into 5-6 general categories for each polarity. Below you will find a key to this ascription: 1-6 are negative, 7-11 are positive.

1. Concupiscence, love of money, greed
2. Fraudulent, full of lies, perfidy
3. Religious heretics, and political rebels
4. Intolerant, slanderous, selfish, alcoholics
5. Violent and repulsive, predatory
6. Incompetent
7. Generous: providing enhanced services, and improved material state of things
8. Disciplined and providing good government (emphasis on management tenor); powerful through righteousness.
9. Literate, observant of spiritual needs, religious
10. Progressive: the introduction of a specifically capitalist sensibility, from the gain of which investment made in the colonies
11. Provision of protection: good at self-defence, a worthy underdog

The topic areas helped to distribute the prosodic commentaries into meaningful categories, from which two doughnuts were developed: a doughnut of positive prosody, and one of negative prosody.

Figure 9. Negative attributes of the Dutch companies according to RC missionaries (from 44 negative returns)

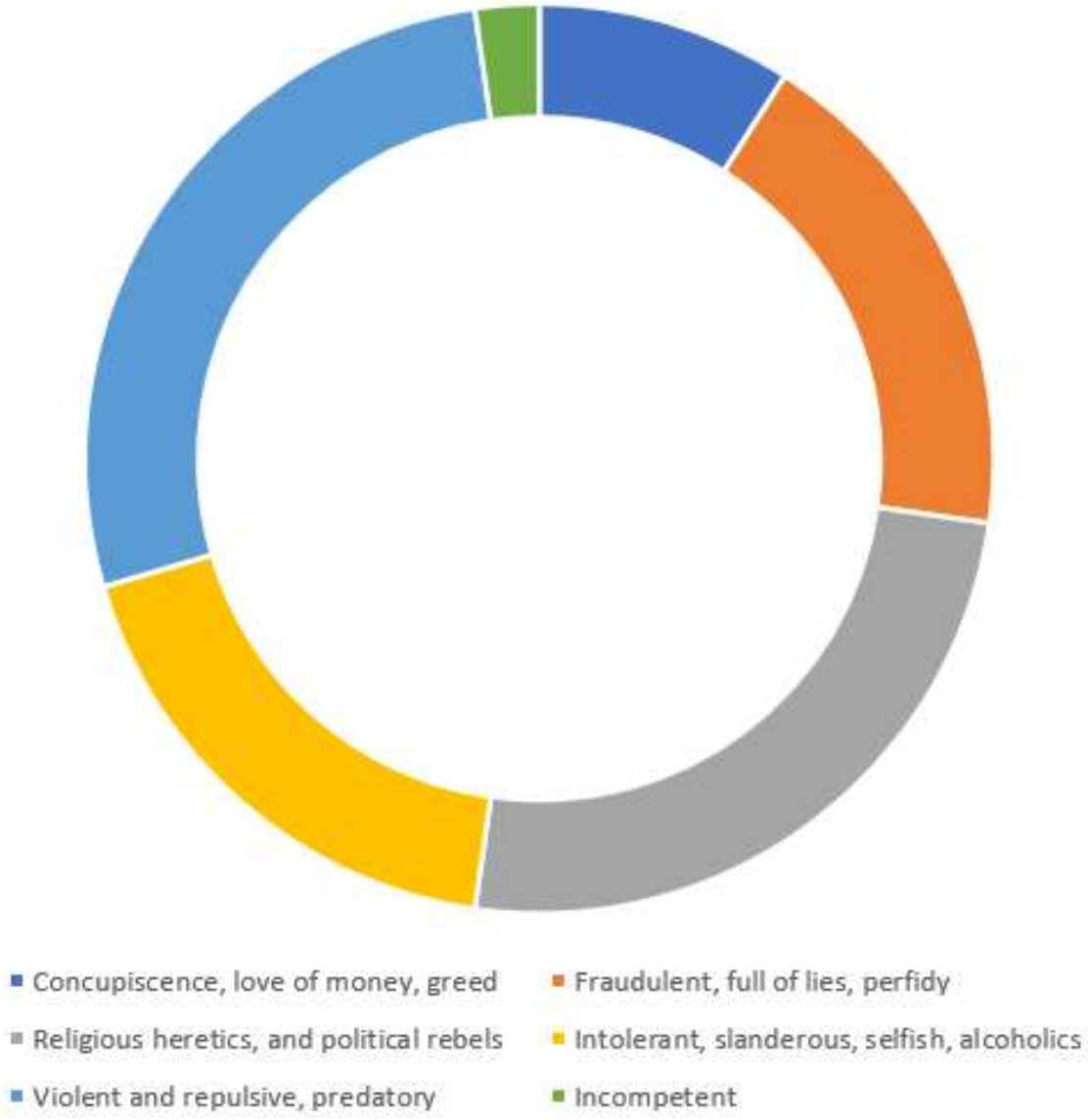
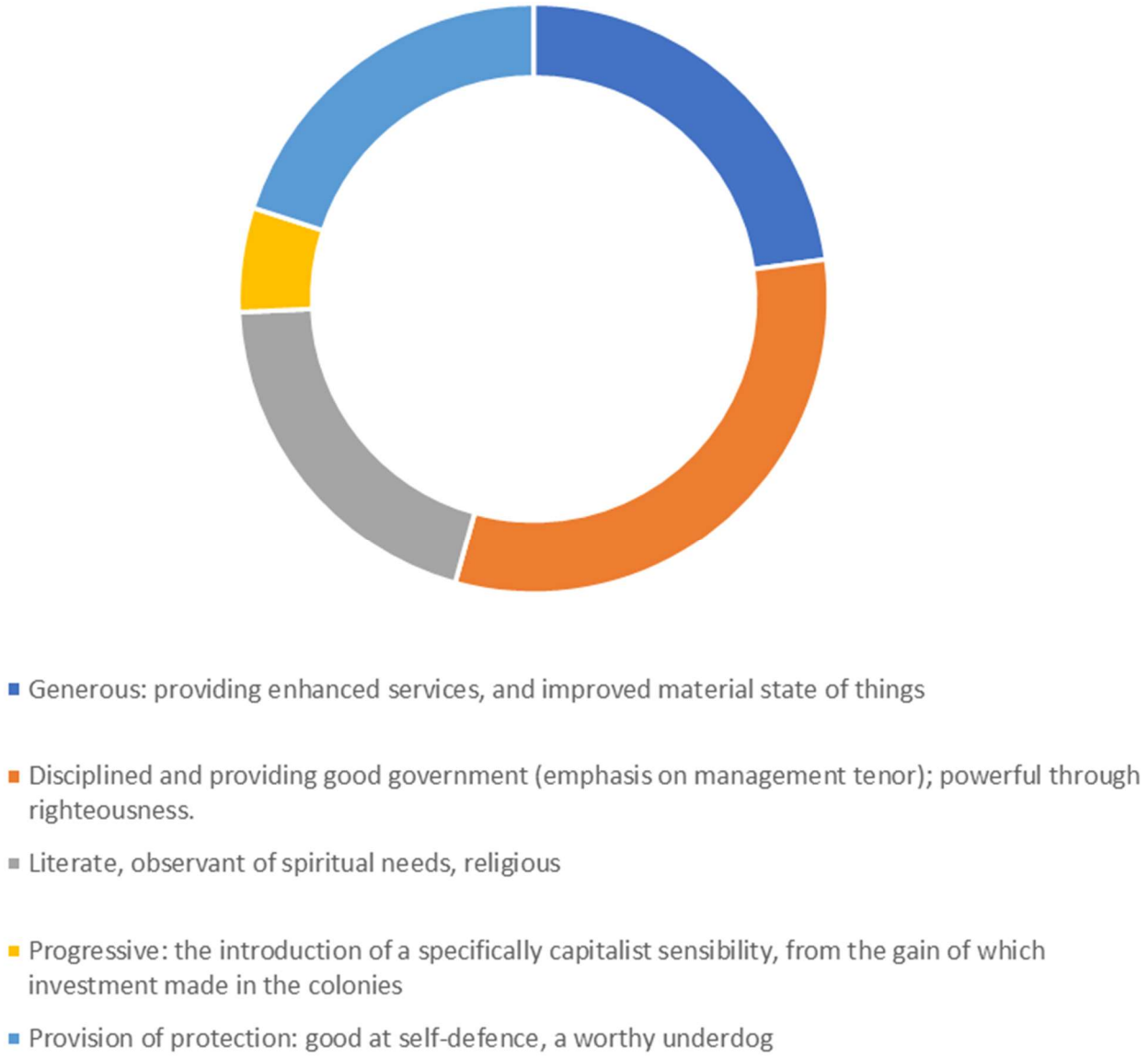


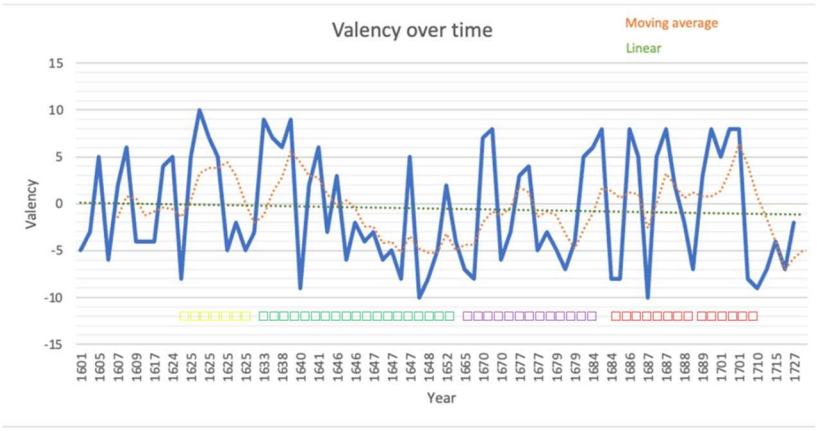
Figure 10. Positive attributes of the Dutch companies according to RC missionaries (from 35 positive returns).



From this exercise we can see what the specific attributes of the VOC that were singled out for attention were. Amongst the positive attributes we can single out discipline, good government and righteousness; amongst the negatives were highlighted their violence, repulsiveness and religious heresy. In conclusion we decided that Roman Catholic missionaries operating in the wider world were violent and rebellious heretics, but not at all incompetent!

The final exercise conducted was designed to see if there were fluctuations in the dating of the positive prosody and the negative prosody relating to the VOC amongst missionary opinions? To begin, each evaluation was ascribed a positive and a negative valency from -10 (the blackest form of hate) to +10 (the strongest adulation and approbation). The zero benchmark was used as a qualifier to indicate 'indifference'.

Figure 11. Valency chart of RC impressions of VOC attributes over time (1601-1727).



Legend:

□□□ = **'Merchant-Warrior ethos'** (Winius), Dutch gain reputation of being 'the most cruel nation of the whole world'. Governeur-Generaal of Netherlands Indies Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1619-23, 1627-9).

□□□ = ascendancy of Rijcklof van Goes (Sr. & Jr), 1660-80. Hostilities against Makassar, policy of **pre-emptive strikes** against enemies; counterweight was 'legalistic' governorship of Joan Maetsuycker (-1678).

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ = *Nederlands-Brazilië*, or **Dutch occupation of (northeast) Brazil**, 1630-54; **blockades of Goa** 1635-43.

□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ 1700-1713 = '**consolidation of Dutch supremacy** in the East' (Furber)

Wars of the Carnatic (1740-8, 1749-54, 1757-63) when religious divisions were exacerbated.

Period of 'torpidity' (1759-63) as described by Rommelse 2020.

After the evaluative ascriptions, the trendline was plotted automatically by the software, which also provided a 'moving trendline' in orange dots. A moving average trendline depicts the average evaluation over a specified number of periods, shown as a single line overlaid onto a standard representational chart. Moving averages smooth out the period-to-period fluctuations, helping to highlight the overall trend direction. Would the data confirm pre-held opinion? Were opinions more strongly negative at the outset of the VOC's presence in the East, or not? Was the eighteenth century truly an 'age of reason' so that religious vituperations died by the wayside? The moving average trendline helped elucidate a generalised trendline, but one which does not yield its secrets willingly. All we can assert is that the VOC did not start out its history with an *a priori* negative evaluation by Roman Catholic missionary commentators, whilst the period 1646 until 1684 turned out to be a long stretch of negative prosody.

The job to tally these findings with an external reality is a complicated one. Using archival evidence concerning the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), Ernst Van Veen sketched the initial years

of the Dutch enterprise, asserting that its original goals did not include the destruction of the Estado da Índia.[34] This goal, he contends, only gradually became the Dutch ambition as the company's profit margins fell in the once-lucrative trade in luxury goods between Asia and Europe. Rather than ceding its commercial supremacy immediately to the Dutch at the beginning of the Philippine period as earlier scholars have claimed, the Portuguese state maintained its trading power in Asia until the VOC was forced to adopt more violent means to eliminate competition in the 1630s. This really does not concur with *a priori* expectations, nor it has to be said *prima facie*, circumstantial evidence. The first half of the seventeenth century was already marred by very considerable antagonisms between Dutch and Portuguese, often through their clients (Patani, for example, as a client of the Dutch since a factory had been established there in 1602). There was the seizure of the *Santa Catarina* carrack off the coast of Singapore on 25 February 1603, the *Santo António* in 1605, and then Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge's attacks on Malacca in 1606.[35] The VOC attacked Macao in 1601, 1603, 1607 and 1622.[36] The Flemish Coutre brothers were expelled as 'heretics' from Portuguese territories in 1623; the Portuguese (and their Spanish allies) sought wherever possible to seize Dutch shipping as the *Cleen Zeelandt* incident of 1624 reveals[37], or the *De Walvisch* incident off the Bar of Siam in 1658 demonstrates[38], and the Dutch reciprocated as we appreciate from the seizure of *Nossa Senhora da Quietação* in 1641 by a squadron blockading Goa.[39] There were very public assassinations: of the *casado* António de Saldanha, who was murdered in Patani in 1602; of Pieter van Regesmortes and his retinue in Cambodia in 1643; the murder of Isaac Moerdijck, *opperhoof'd* of the Dutch factory at Ayutthaya, 1646. The relationship gradually shifted over the course of the second half of the seventeenth century to a less antagonistic one, both because of the more 'sympathetic' leadership of governor Maetsuyker (1653-78) or Johannes Camphuys (1684-91), but also as it became more obvious that there was a third rising power, the English, which by the end of the century was threatening to eclipse both the Dutch and the Portuguese.[40]

In the Figure below (entitled 'Valency over time') we have sub-plotted four factually based phases of the VOC. The first (in yellow boxes), which we have called 'the Merchant Warrior ethos' registers – contrary to expectations, surprisingly positive prosody from Roman Catholic missionaries. The next (green boxes), a long phase from 1633 to 1665 was marked by the Dutch occupation of northeastern Brazil, and blockades of Goa. Prosody is marked by a long and steady decline to an index of around -5. In the third phase (marked with purple boxes), representing the ascendancy of Rijcklof van Goes Senior and Junior, but also the 'legalistic' governorship of Maetsuycker in the East, you have a muddled picture of both positive rise and collapse again in prosodic value. Finally, the period of the wars in the Carnatic (red boxes), the so-called 'consolidation of Dutch supremacy' saw a steady rise from 1684 until around 1701, followed by a long, steady decline into the eighteenth-century.

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[34] Van Veen, *Decay or Defeat? An Inquiry into the Portuguese Decline in Asia, 1580*-1645 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, Center for Non-Western Studies, 2000)

[35] Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits. Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th century,* (NUS: Singapore, 2010).

[36] C.R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East*, ch. 5.

[37] George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*, pp. 18-19.

[38] Gijsbert Heeck, *Derde Voijage can Gisbert Heecq Naer Oost Indijen* (1655), trans. and ed. by Barend Jan Terwiel, *A Traveller in Siam in the Year 1655. Extracts from the Journal of Gisbert Heeck,* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2008.

[39] See C.R. Boxer, *From Lisbon to Goa*, p. 84.

[40] 'Unquiet Religious Backdrop to European East Indies Trade', chap. 12 in *The Indian Ocean in the Making of Early Modern India,* Delhi: Manohar, 2016), 409-412

From the aforementioned, it is clear that we cannot deduce a working hypothesis: that, for example, periods of tightening Dutch company discipline resulted necessarily in outpourings of Roman Catholic hatred, or, on the other side of the spectrum, compliance from Roman Catholic missionaries working alongside them. The parameters of the work plan would seem to be too wide and, as we know from History, and as iterated by Charles Boxer, what constituted at once a Dutch political loss for their landholding in Brazil in 1654, went hand in hand with a simultaneous 'draw' in Angola, and success in the Indian Ocean.[41] The Dutch company, in other words, could be successful in one place whilst unsuccessful elsewhere, which makes generalising, or characterising Dutch company behaviour at a particular moment, difficult. We would therefore recommend more localised studies of correlations. But we can reiterate the project's findings: that is, that the VOC did not start out its history with an *a priori* negative evaluation by Roman Catholic missionary commentators, whilst broadly speaking the positive periods in Dutch company history in the East correlated with positive Roman Catholic impressions, while the first two decades of the eighteenth century witnessed a steady decline in approval.

Sources used for this exercise: Luzeiro Evangelico; Arch. Prop. Fid. Sc. Ind. Or., vol. 3, pp. 350-2; Tachard, 'A travel account to the Indies (1690-99)' in Halikowski Smith, *Two Missionary Accounts*, pp. 96; Lettera 277, ASF; Tavernier, 'Histoire de la conduite des Hollandais en Asie' in Receuil de plusieurs relations et traites singuliers et curieux de J.B. Tavernier, pp 261-2; Nicholas Gervaise, Histoire politique et naturelle du royaume de Siam; Adam Contzen S.J., Ten Books on Politics; 'Four unpublished letters from Desfarges, Beauchamp and Vollant. Survivors of the Siege of Bangkok in 1688', trans. Michael Smithies, JSS v 92, p. 65-; Monita ad Missionarios trad. Albert Geluy, Paris: MÉP, 2000 (Maurits Sabbe Library); Archief classis Amsterdam (279), 4 312 [SAA]; António Cardim, S.J. *Relação* (apud H. Fitzler, O Cerco de Columbo, Coimbra: 1928); Giovan-Battista Morelli, Luzeiro Evangelico (see ejph article, p. 72); Monsignor Cerri, An Account of the State of the Roman-Catholick Religion; Carlo Scribani, *Societate Iesu Politico Christianus recens in Galliis in lucem emissus;* Godfried Udemans, Spiritual Rudder of the Merchant Ship, or T'Geestelyck Roer van't Coopmansschip; Carlo Scribani, Societate Iesu Politico Christianus recens in Galliis in lucem emissus; 'João Ferreira d'Almeida', in Bruijn, Caspar Van Troostenburg de (1893). Biographisch Woordeboek van Oost-Indische predikanten. P. J. Milborn; G-B. Morelli, Lettera 276, filza 1606, ASF; G-B. Morelli, Letter 277, Archivio di Stato di Firenze; António Vieira, 'Exhortación por el buen suceso de las Armas de Portugal contre las de Holanda', sermón dicho en la Bahia en 1640. In Sermoes, t. 1, São Paulo: Ed. Hedra, 2000, p. 449; Juan António Correa, 'La pérdida y restauración de la Bahía de Todos los Santos', prob. Prof. José Carlos Lisboa, 1961, 'Uma Peça Desconhecida sobre os holandeses na Bahia', p. 253; Lope de Vega, 'El Brasil Restituido'; Hieronymus de Siqueira, Carta Apologética em Defensão da Religião Católica Romana contra João Ferreira de Almeida; Frei Manuel Calado (Ordem de S. Paulo), Carta ao Senhor D. Teodósio, principe do reino e monarquia de Portugal; Muito Reverendo Padre Mestre Fr. Duarte da Conceição, Ministro Provincial da Terceira Ordem di Seráfico Patriarca São Francisco e Revedor do Sto. Oficio, Aprovação given to Calado's 'O Valeroso Lucideno' (in Calado, 1987); Pedro de Noronha de Andrade, A recommendation for the publication of Calado's text; Calado, O Valeroso Lucideno; The Memoirs and Memorials of Jacques de Coutre, ed. Peter Borschberg, p. 189; Alexandre de Rhodes, S.J., 'Divers voyages', Paris

[41] Charles Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825,* Alfred Knopf Publ: 1969, 110.

1666, pp. 268-70; ‘A Report by Commissary Justus Schouten of his visit to Malacca, including an account of the past and present of that city, together with some suggestions as to its future welfare and how its trade could be utilized for the General East India Company’; ‘Regimento para Francisco Cutrim de Magalhães que vai enviado ao Rei de Sião', Goa, August 3 1646, A.H.E.I., Livros dos Segredos, no. 1, fl. 83-84. See Conceição Flores in Teodoro do Matos & Roberto Carneiro, O Século Cristão do Japão; Bocarro, Década 13 da História da India, 1876 ed., pp. 522-523. [archive.org]; Tachard, Second Voyage du Père Tachard et des Jésuites envoyés par le Roy au Royaume de Siam, etc., 1689, pp. 309-75; Abbé F.-T. de Choisy, Journal du voyage de Siam, Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1687; Guy Tachard, S.J., Voyage de Siam des Pères Jesuites [p. 83 in Smithies extract 'A Siamese Embassy' 1999]; Serafim de Freitas, De Justo Imperio Lusitanorum Asiatico, ch. VIII; António Durão, Historya dos Cercos de Moçambique, defendidos por D. Estevão de Ataíde, p. 522; António de Gouveia, in Historya dos Cercos de Moçambique, defendidos por D. Estevão de Ataíde, p. 477; Father Luís Fernandes, Documenta Malucensia, vol. 3, p. 69; anon. Jesuit, Documenta Malucensia, vol. 2, p. 679 (cf. Documentação Ultramarina, vol. 1, p. 145); Dom Aleixa de Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, A.H.U., Documentos avulsos da India, cx. 1, doc. 1, fls. 14v-15; anon. Jesuit missionary in Tidore, Documenta Malucensia, vol. 2, p. 521; Father João dos Santos, Etiópia Oriental, p. 666; anon. Jesuit priest, Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa, vol. 2, p. 45; Friar Domingo Navarrete, The Travels and Controversies of F.D.N., xxiv, 256; Martino Martini S.J., reported in Franco Demarchi ed., Martino Martini. A Humanist and Scientist in Seventeenth Century China, Trento 1996; Luís Coelho Barbuda, Empresas militares de Lusitanos. Lisboa: Paulo Crasbeeck; Richard Cocks, Diary; Jeremy Blackman, in William Foster, The English Factories in India 1651-4, Oxford: 1915, p.251; Alexander Hamilton, A New Account of the East Indies, 1727 (2v); Caspar Barlaeus, Rerum per octennium in Brasilia.