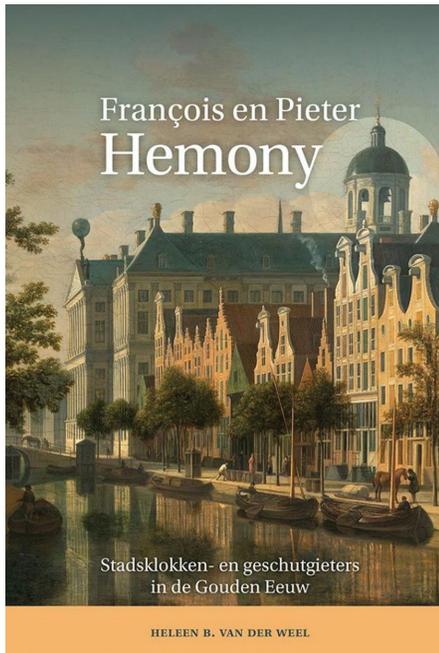


Note

Heleen B. van der Weel. *François en Pieter Hemony: Stadsklokken- en Geschutgieters in de Gouden Eeuw*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2018, 416 pp. ISBN 9789087046804.



Heleen van der Weel's book is dedicated to the lives of the two brothers François and Pieter Hemony, renowned bell-makers. They were born in the Southern Netherlands and moved to the Dutch Republic in the early 1640s. For the next several decades they established a virtual monopoly on the casting of bells in the Dutch Republic (despite selling many of their bells beyond the Dutch borders). They were also skilled canon-makers, made small industrial items, such as pestles and mortars, and poured several statues for the Amsterdam city hall. Their lives are a fascinating reflection of the tumultuous seventeenth century, as they were instrumental in the re-building of the country after the Eighty Years' War and the production of ammunition during the Anglo-Dutch Wars.

Beyond the merit of a detailed study of individual lives this period, perhaps the particular value of this publication lies in

the substantial new material that the author has unearthed. As well as building on work in Andre Lehr's long-standing *De Klokkengieters François en Pieter Hemony* (1959), she went back to the archives, within the Netherlands and abroad, and has included additional correspondence by the two brothers, city maps showing where different foundries were located, paintings of close acquaintances, and diagrams, making the story of these two brothers come alive. The wealth of sources provided remains well curated from its possible extent, however, with further material indicated in the appendices. The case-study on the bells of Hulst also provides a rich description of the cooperation between the magistrates of Hulst and François. The devoted research into the lives and art of these two men (and their offspring) is admirable, and the author's love for the subject really shines through.

From the outset it is clear that this study is far more than a dry catalogue of the different bells and related objects that François en Pieter made, and their current location. Such studies do exist and have definite value, though often at the expense of readability. I am, however, left wanting a little after reading this study, a result of the choice to maintain a relatively narrow focus. We are shown some tantalizing connections, such as with Christiaan Huygens who was interested in the relationship between music and the physics of sound, but this is not further explored (p. 93). Some words are dedicated to the brothers' Catholicism (see Chapter 25: De Hemony's en de Kerk, pp. 327-333), but given the tensions of the time, their treatment by the Amsterdam city council or the Zutphen city council compared to other craftsmen of the period, ought to be the subject of discussion. Before we can comment on the uniqueness of these two men, there would have been value in establishing the status quo, its exceptions and limitations, forming the backdrop to their achievements and decisions.

This is a beautiful edition, with extensive illustrations, contemporary paintings, and photos of models. Given the attention paid to visual content, the price is also very reasonable. If the reader hankers after a broad and rigorous study into the Hemony brothers, their oeuvre, and especially how this sits within the context of the Dutch Republic and how it rewarded merchants and craftsmen, this might not be the book to which to turn. It may, however, whet the appetite, as it offers a detailed and engaging account of the lives of two hard-working and highly skilled individuals who played an important role in the cultural and architectural development of the Netherlands.

Esther van Raamsdonk, University of Exeter