

Contents

- 9 Introduction
 - 9 Trading houses as a species
 - 12 Approach
 - 12 Acknowledgements

- 14 CHAPTER I
The unfolding of a commercial world empire, 1550-1650
 - 15 A long dawn
 - 19 The rise of Amsterdam
 - 22 The merchants' business
 - 32 A transfer of power in the Low Countries
 - 35 Halcyon days
 - 39 The world lies open
 - 42 The trading activities of a military-industrial complex
 - 53 Moguls and machinations
 - 62 The character of the entrepot market
 - 68 The merchant as hero

- 72 CHAPTER II
Losing the lead, 1650-1750
 - 73 Running into the sand
 - 75 The foreign trade dilemmas of a small country
 - 81 In search of better margins
 - 83 Commercial organisation and added value
 - 91 New service patterns
 - 97 A new lease of life for the entrepot market
 - 104 The waning of a commercial empire
 - 109 The creeping decline of the trading companies

- 116 CHAPTER III
Through a dark valley, 1750-1850
 - 117 Writings on the wall
 - 119 Kings of commerce
 - 124 From crisis to crisis
 - 127 The end of an era
 - 132 Tacking to avoid enemies and occupying forces
 - 141 A false start
 - 147 Groping for a way out
 - 155 Building a new entrepot market
 - 168 Rulers over a crumbling realm

174 CHAPTER IV

A revolution in industry, traffic, and trade, 1850-1914

- 175 The heyday of liberalism
- 177 The pragmatic liberalism of a free trading country
- 180 Markets in a maelstrom
- 186 The expanding market for industrial products
- 190 Outposts in the unknown
- 194 The traffic revolution and the colonial trade
- 198 The fruits of modern imperialism
- 213 An importer of consumer products in Surabaya

218 CHAPTER V

On the defensive, 1914-1940

- 219 An era of conflict and protectionism
- 220 The First World War
- 227 A crisis of unprecedented depth
- 230 Running a business by remote control, but not blindly
- 235 Doubts about the viability of wholesaling
- 239 Protection through cartels and government intervention
- 245 Manufacturing activities in the Dutch East Indies
- 248 Renewed expansion

252 CHAPTER VI

Trade in Times of War and Decolonisation, 1940-1960

- 253 Trading under enemy occupation
- 258 The situation in the Dutch East Indies
- 261 If the Dutch East Indies are lost...
- 271 Refocusing against the background of growing trade and decolonisation
- 273 To the surrounding Asian areas
- 276 A tropical alternative: Africa
- 281 Testing the Water in South America and in North America
- 282 Taking recourse to the Netherlands
- 285 Striking the balance: winners and losers

290 CHAPTER VII

Trade and industry, an awkward fit, 1960-1983

- 291 Believing in a controllable society
- 295 Migrating to politically stable countries
- 300 The strains between agent and principal
- 303 The lure of industry
- 310 Who takes over whom?
- 314 Industry under pressure
- 316 Disappointing results
- 322 A pervasive slump

326 CHAPTER VIII

Groping for a core business, 1983-2000

- 327 The rehabilitation of free enterprise
- 333 Agencies: wonderful yet vulnerable
- 336 Marketing proprietary brands
- 340 Multi-principal
- 344 Threats from logistical service providers and from the Internet
- 350 International really means European
- 356 Mergers and acquisitions
- 359 Talks between the three big international traders
- 365 Integrating two trading companies

372 CONCLUSION

- 373 The political circumstances
- 376 The links between trade and industry
- 381 Changes in communication
- 385 The trading houses after four centuries

387 List of persons interviewed

389 Notes

407 Literature

419 Index

429 Table of illustrations