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Colonial careers : Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens and career-making in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Empire
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Introduction

A disaster of unprecedented scope engulfed the Dutch Republic in the spring and summer of 1672. England declared war in early March, followed by France in early April, and Cologne and Münster in late May. Despite months of sometimes frantic, sometimes lackluster preparations, the disaster spread over the Republic with astonishing rapidity. By June 12, the frontier fortresses on the German Lower Rhine had fallen, while by the end of the month the IJssel Line had collapsed and French troops were rapidly marching west. On July 1, Louis XIV entered Utrecht and celebrated a Catholic mass in the city's cathedral. Although resistance continued in the west and the north, the fall of the remaining four provinces – Zeeland, Friesland, Stad en Lande and, most importantly, Holland – seemed only a matter of time. The story of 1672, the 'year of disasters' (*rampjaar*), which has been extensively studied from a number of vantages, is an important and perhaps the crucial turning point in the history of the early modern Dutch Republic.¹

This 'year of disasters' is a suitable moment to begin my narrative as it was a moment at which the two men whose careers are the focal point of this dissertation moved in tandem. On June 20, Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, the elderly field-marshal who had been governor of Dutch Brazil for the West India Company (WIC) earlier in his career (1636-1644), occupied Muiden Castle just hours before French troops tried to capture it. This act blocked French access to Amsterdam and secured the northern flank of the new front line of the war: the famous 'waterline',² with this action probably preventing the fall of this final defensive line. Nine days earlier, Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens, admiral and commander-in-chief on Ceylon, Malabar and the Coast of Coromandel of the forces of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) west of Malacca, defeated a French fleet in the inner bay of Trincomalee in what was probably the first French defeat of the war.³ Both men were nearing the end of their respective careers, indeed of their lives. Johan Maurits subsequently died in his garden house in Berg und Tal, near Cleves, in 1679 and was buried there in a specially constructed mausoleum before being interred in the family tomb in Siegen Castle. Van Goens died in Amsterdam in 1682, shortly after returning from Asia. Joan Huydecoper, mayor of Amsterdam and director of the VOC, which Van Goens had served all his life, refused to allow him to be buried in Amsterdam and Van Goens was consequently buried in the *Kloosterkerk* in The Hague.

This anecdote about these two men's roles in the 'year of disasters' of 1672 serves to make two points. In the first place, it shows that the Dutch Republic and the colonial empires administered by its chartered companies were closely connected, and that events in one sphere could have significant consequences in another sphere. In the second place, it illustrates that the careers of two very dissimilar men show some remarkable parallels at this specific point in time. At opposite ends of the earth, the two men were both caught up in the war with France and played important roles in their respective areas of command: Van Goens on Ceylon and the

¹ J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (second edition, Clarendon Press: Oxford 1998) 796-806.

² R. Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672* (Groningen 1672) 141.

³ G.J. Ames, 'Colbert's Indian Ocean Strategy of 1664-1674: A Reappraisal', *French Historical Studies* 16:3 (1990) 536-559, 552.

Coromandel Coast of southeastern India, and Johan Maurits in the Dutch army at Muiden and later in Friesland.

This research centers on the careers of these two men: Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679) and Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens (1619-1682). The first served as the governor-general in the WIC's colony in Brazil in 1636-1644, while the second served the VOC virtually his whole life, rising to become governor of Ceylon in the 1660s and 1670s, and ultimately governor-general in Batavia in 1678. Studying, comparing and connecting their careers in the chartered companies will enable me to answer a set of closely related questions on the performance of the companies, on career-making in the early modern Dutch empire, and on that empire more generally. Before concisely formulating the question framing this research, I will introduce the underlying historiography and historical debates.

Historiography and research question

Founded in 1602 and 1621 respectively, the VOC and WIC represented the Dutch Republic outside Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Over time, these chartered companies have been seen in two very different ways and studied from many different perspectives and vantages. In the first place, economic historians have regularly argued that the companies were the immediate predecessors of today's joint-stock companies.⁴ Alternatively, they have been dismissed as crude and inefficient rent-seeking organizations reliant on the application of predatory violence.⁵ In the case of the VOC, its archives have been used to write histories of early modern Asia, given that they represent the single greatest collection of sources on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Asia. The WIC, by contrast, has long been seen as the VOC's less-successful younger brother. As large parts of the WIC's records were destroyed in the nineteenth century, the WIC sources have played a much less important role in the historiography of the early modern Atlantic. The loss of the minutes of the WIC's central management, the *Heren XIX*, is a good example of this absence of documentation. While comparable minutes for the VOC allow for a detailed reconstruction of the decision-making process within this company, the lack of these sources for most years of the WIC means a detailed study of decision-making is not possible in this latter case. Indeed, for some years it is even difficult to find out who the directors were.

Over the years, however, both companies came to rule over large territories and populations of settlers and locals, waged war, signed diplomatic treaties and conducted trades over long distances. To effectively oversee these activities, both companies imposed colonial governments based on hierarchical institutions and offices abroad. Collective decision-making by councils headed by a governor or governor-general was a universal feature of early modern Dutch expansion.⁶ So how did the companies select the officials who would oversee their trades

⁴ For the corporate form, see: A.M. Carlos and S. Nicholas, "Giants of an Earlier Capitalism": The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals', *Business History Review* 62:3 (1988) 398-419, 418-419. See also: N. Steensgaard, 'The Dutch East India Company as an Institutional Innovation', in: M. Aymard (ed.) *Dutch Capitalism and World Capitalism / Capitalisme hollandaise et capitalisme mondial* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New York and Paris 1982) 235-257.

⁵ Den Heijer has criticized the comparison with today's joint-stock companies: H. den Heijer, *De geëtrooideerde compagnie : de VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap* (Kluwer: Amsterdam and Deventer 2005) 211-217. S. Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000-1800* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2011) 404, hinted at the role of violence in the corporate model of the VOC.

⁶ J. Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London 2009) 65.

and rule their colonies on their behalf? This was a sensitive issue: investors in the companies had invested substantial amounts of money (six million guilders in the case of the VOC, and just over seven million in the case of the WIC), and so how could the companies' directors ensure that these funds were properly taken care of by the governors overseas? This problem was compounded by the long distances and slow communications involved, as well as by the substantial plenipotentiary powers that had to be delegated to the overseas administrations if the system was to be made to work. How could the directors ensure that the governors were working for the interests of the company rather than their own private interests? This is a variation on what is known as a *principal-agent* problem; in other words, a problem of trust between two partners in a firm: one – the principal – who invests money, and the other – the agent – who has to manage the firm's assets in a removed location. Studies of this problem and its solutions have sparked a number of debates of importance to this research. I will first address the substantial debate on the issue of *trust* in trade before turning to the debate that has centered specifically on the performance of the chartered trading companies and how they sought to resolve the principal-agent problem.

The ways in which trust was maintained and enforced and the ramifications for the development of medieval and early modern economic institutions have been at the heart of a lively debate among historians. One specific aspect of this debate has focused on the ways in which agency relations could be maintained, with Avner Greif claiming there to be an important distinction between what he termed 'collectivist' and 'individualist' societies. The former, for which he used the example of the Jewish Maghribi traders of North Africa, tended to use only agents from within their own religious group and shared information about any misbehavior by agents among those in the 'in-group'. For them, conflict resolution was thus a matter of reputation and informal settlement of disputes rather than of seeking formal appeals to courts. The medieval merchants of Genoa, by contrast, did not share information with colleagues in Genoa, but instead closely guarded information about agents.⁷ The resulting systems of dispute settlement were markedly different and set the two societies on a different path of institutional development. Greif went so far as to argue that the institutional solutions of the Genoese merchants resembled those of modern-day Western countries, while the Maghribi approach resembled the institutional environment of present-day developing countries.⁸ Greif's analysis was criticized by Jeremy Edwards and Sheilagh Ogilvie, who argued that the 'collectivist' mentality asserted by Greif simply did not exist.⁹ In the same issue of the *Economic History Review*, Greif responded by reasserting his original conclusions and attacking the method and conclusions of Edwards and Ogilvie. The exact arguments of the debate are less relevant here than the simple observation that this issue of trust in long-distance trade and the effects that the structuring of this trust had on institutional formation have sparked fierce debates in the historiography. Contributing to this debate will thus be a key asset of this research.

Genoese merchants were also the focus of Ricardo Court's study of agency relations in a specific firm. Court argued that sixteenth-century Genoese traders did not need to rely on family members scattered around Europe, but were instead able to construct a network of trustworthy

⁷ A. Greif, 'Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies', *Journal of Political Economy*, 102:5 (1994) 912-950.

⁸ This was elaborated in A. Greif, 'The fundamental problem of exchange: A research agenda in Historical Institutional Analysis', *European Review of Economic History* 4 (2000) 251-284, 278.

⁹ J. Edwards and S. Ogilvie, 'Contract enforcement, institutions, and social capital: the Maghribi traders reappraised', *Journal of Economic History* 65:2 (2012) 421-444

agents based on reciprocal trading relations and shared property rights.¹⁰ Suze Zijlstra applied this idea to Dutch long-distance trades to Spain and Surinam, using letters that were preserved owing to the vessel's capture by British privateers or warships. She argued that correspondence was the key instrument in building and sustaining trust between otherwise unrelated business partners separated by great distances, rather than a need to rely on familial ties as a means to ensuring adherence to the interests of the firm.¹¹ A focus on the letter-writing of merchants as the key to understanding the construction of networks of trusted agents over long distances is also found in Francesca Trivellato's *The Familiarity of Strangers*. Trivellato argues that references in merchants' letters to friendship and familiarity between individuals who did not in fact share any kinship ties were crucial in constructing long-distance networks of trust. Returning to the Dutch case, Peter Mathias argued that reputation was essential to business success. In contrast to Zijlstra, however, he claimed that family ties were key aspects of this reputation as they constituted signifiers for trust and access to capital, credit and information.¹² For the Dutch Republic, too, therefore, there is also disagreement about the nature of the construction of bonds of trust in long-distance trade. Did trade follow family ties, or could merchants effectively create bonds of trust without reference to existing kinship ties? The agency relations within the chartered companies were, of course, of a rather different order from the outset, given that these were relations between salaried employees and their bosses. So how has the issue of agency relations been dealt with in the historiography of the chartered trading companies?

Rather surprisingly, there is not a great body of historiography focusing squarely on the principal-agent problem as applied to the joint-stock companies of the early modern period. The limited scholarship dealing with this question is concerned mainly with examples drawn from England and its overseas companies. Historians have debated the extent to which early modern trading companies were aware of the problems posed by the principal-agent problem and whether they were able to take measures to remedy these issues. Ann Carlos and Stephen Nicholas argued in 1990 that the English Hudson's Bay Company was aware of the principal-agent problem and that its directors were able to take effective measures to improve the situation¹³ and protect the company's assets. These included, firstly, making prospective governors put up bonds that would be confiscated if they were caught embezzling or smuggling and, secondly, recruiting personnel from specific geographic areas so as to enforce a tight system of social control in the company's settlements. This was coupled with demands for rigorous accounting of expenses and, lastly, by rewarding good conduct and paying good salaries. In this way, according to Carlos and Nicholas, the problem was tamed.¹⁴

The question of the chartered companies' ability to resolve or at least mitigate agency problems is a key part of the debate on the efficiency of the companies as economic institutions. The interpretation of Carlos and Nicholas – that the companies were in fact able to mitigate agency problems and were thus efficient economic institutions – was criticized by Stephen Jones

¹⁰ R. Court, "'Januensis Ergo Mercator': Trust and Enforcement in the Business Correspondence of the Brignole Family", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 35:4 (2004) 987-1003, 1001-1003.

¹¹ S. Zijlstra, 'To Build and Sustain Trust: Long-Distance Correspondence of Dutch Seventeenth-Century Merchants', *Dutch Crossing, Journal of Low Countries Studies* 36:2 (2012) 114-131, 127-128.

¹² Peter Mathias, 'Strategies for Reducing Risk by Entrepreneurs in the Early Modern Period' in: C. Lesger and L. Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times, Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market* (The Hague 1995) 5-24, 6.

¹³ A.M. Carlos and S. Nicholas, 'Agency Problems in Early Chartered Companies: The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company', *The Journal of Economic History* 50:4 (1990) 853-875.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 860-874.

and Simon Ville, who argued that rather than representing efficient solutions to a persistent organizational problem, the chartered companies were rent-seeking monopolists committed to distorting the markets for their own benefit. These authors drew upon the literature to support their case, not only with English examples, but also with some from the Dutch sphere. Citing Holden Furber, they argued that many of the thousands upon thousands of pages of documentation sent back to the Netherlands by the VOC were not read before being filed in the company's archives.¹⁵ Interestingly, this exact same reference was also used more recently by Sheilagh Ogilvie in her criticism of the earlier work of Carlos and Nicholas.¹⁶ She, too, argued against the idea that the companies were efficient or competitive. In both cases, the use of this quote from Holden Furber seems an attempt to compensate for the fact that neither Jones and Ville nor Ogilvie reference any Dutch works and thus did not access the primary sources for themselves.¹⁷ By contrast, those historians who have actually worked with Dutch company sources were impressed by the quality of the companies' processing of information.¹⁸ Santhi Hejeebu, working on contract enforcement in the English East India Company (EIC), also included some references to the VOC, but was hampered in this by the absence of literature specially devoted to this problem for the Dutch case. She argued that although many of the mechanisms that Carlos and Nicholas identified for the Hudson's Bay Company were not applied by the EIC, the company was still able to effectively control the actions (in this case: private trade) of its servants by the option of being able to dismiss them and thus taking away the prospect of profitable private trade. Again, the VOC did not naturally follow this pattern since it was much more restrictive of private trade than the EIC.¹⁹ It is noteworthy, however, that the VOC paid its servants more than the EIC, at least in the case of the lower ranks. Hejeebu mentions that, at the low rank of *assistant*, the VOC paid nearly six times more than the EIC paid the equivalent rank.²⁰ Sadly, the WIC does not merit any reference in this literature.

But the chartered companies were more than just large merchant firms: Philip Stern provocatively argued that the seventeenth-century EIC should be seen primarily as a state in Asia, a 'company-state'.²¹ Although this is partially derived from a specific English legal setting of corporations, the term seems eminently applicable to the VOC, while its applicability to the WIC is also a question of great interest. As company-states, the companies – and their governors – were confronted with much more than just business decisions. They also had to navigate issues such as the '*nature of obligations of subjects and rulers, good governance, political economy, jurisdiction, authority, and sovereignty*'.²² As such, the role of colonial governors was more complex than that of agents for firms involved in long-distance trade, and their performance could be evaluated and criticized on very different parameters. This is a new trend in the historiography, and its application can substantially change our perceptions of the way in which the companies operated.

¹⁵ S.R.H. Jones and S.P. Ville, 'Efficient Transactors or Rent-Seeking Monopolists? The Rationale for Early Chartered Trading Companies', *The Journal of Economic History* 56:4 (1996) 898-915, 906.

¹⁶ S. Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000-1800* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2011) 357.

¹⁷ The original is given in H. Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient* (1976) 191.

¹⁸ C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (Hutchinson and Co.: London 1965) 46-47.

¹⁹ S. Hejeebu, 'Contract Enforcement in the English East India Company', *The Journal of Economic History* 65:2 (2005) 496-523, 517-518.

²⁰ Ibidem, 502, footnote 26.

²¹ P. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York 2011), especially 3-18.

²² Ibidem, 14.

There is a long tradition in the historiography of the companies that has focused on their shipping operations, especially those of the VOC.²³ The output of studies of the Dutch chartered companies is sufficient to fill an entire library. Yet even in a field of research as well covered as that of these companies, there are new questions to be explored, as well as new ideas to be tested. In reviewing the books published to mark the 400th anniversary of the founding of the VOC in 2002, Femme Gaastra observed that it was to be expected that, in future, the company itself would play more of a second fiddle in the historiography, with the Asian context in which the company operated becoming more prominent.²⁴ This observation was repeated by Victor Enthoven two years later.²⁵ Indeed, in the past decade and a half, the use of VOC records to write Asian history has flourished.²⁶ Nevertheless, the company has not retreated to the background as much as Gaastra and Enthoven expected. This is partly because of the continuation of some research trends that Gaastra already noted in 2005, and partly the result of the appearance of completely new fields of interest that have thrown up new questions and challenges. Gerrit Knaap, whose recent inaugural lecture is at the forefront of one of these new approaches, convincingly argued that the VOC in Asia derived most of its products not from trade, but from taxation of subjugated populations. We should thus see the company in Asia not primarily as a merchant firm, but rather as a colonial government, much in line with Stern's work.²⁷

The study of the WIC, too, has seen important changes over the last decade, as the idea of Atlantic history caught on in Dutch academia. Interestingly, until very recently the way for scholars to argue for an important role for the early modern Dutch Republic in the Atlantic world was to ignore the WIC, with scholarship tending to focus on the 'middleman' role of islands such as Curacao and St. Eustatius in the eighteenth century, and on the myriad connections of a colony such as Surinam to the wider Atlantic world, rather than on the imperial adventure that was Brazil.²⁸ Ironically, then, Dutch Atlantic history has tried to eliminate the role of this company as far as possible. Additionally, the preference for the eighteenth century was justified in *Dutch Atlantic Connections* by arguing with regard to the history of the period prior to 1680 that '*this story is well-known, often repeated, and the answers to the questions are clear.*'²⁹ But regardless of the many questions remaining to be answered for the role of the Dutch Republic in the eighteenth century, the seventeenth century is not as well-defined and hashed out as the authors argue. In contrast to the post-1680 period, the WIC must be central to any attempt to write a Dutch Atlantic history for this earlier period as it represented a well-defined attempt at the creation of an Atlantic empire that was devised in the company boardrooms, and also overseen and directed from there.

²³ For example: J.R. Bruijn and F.S. Gaastra, *Dutch-Asiatic shipping in the 17th and 18th centuries* (3 volumes, Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague 1979-1987).

²⁴ F. Gaastra, 'De neerslag van een jubileumjaar: VOC 2002', *BMGN* 120:4 (2005) 546-561, 559.

²⁵ V. Enthoven, 'H. den Heijer, De geotrooieerde compagnie. De VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap' (book review), *BMGN* 122:2 (2007) 275-278, 278.

²⁶ Largely as a result of the ENCOMPASS and TANAP projects at Leiden University. Both projects resulted in many publications using VOC sources as the basis for writing Asian history.

²⁷ G. Knaap, *De 'core Business' van de VOC: Markt, macht en mentaliteit vanuit overzees perspectief* (inaugural lecture, Utrecht 2014).

²⁸ For an excellent recent work on the colony of Surinam and focusing on its place in an Atlantic network, see: K. Fatah-Black, *White lies and black markets: evading metropolitan authority in colonial Suriname, 1650-1800* (Brill: Leiden and Boston 2015).

²⁹ G. Oostindie and J.V. Roitman, 'Introduction'. in: G. Oostindie and J.V. Roitman (eds.), *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Brill: Leiden and Boston 2014) 1-24, 3.

Three recent publications have taken up this challenge and returned to the supposedly well-researched seventeenth century with new questions and new perspectives. In *The Dutch Moment*, Wim Klooster reviews the entire period until the late 1670s and argues that this period represented the Dutch bid for empire in the Atlantic. Brazil was central to this experiment and is thus accorded its due weight.³⁰ What is more, Klooster brings back the warfare and violence that were the cornerstones of this bid for empire and presents the ‘Dutch’ in the Atlantic in a different light: not as middlemen and brokers, but as soldiers, conquerors and iconoclasts. This bid for empire failed, according to Klooster, because of the WIC’s lack of care for the soldiers who were supposed to conquer and protect its colonies.³¹ Michiel van Groesen takes a different tack in his recent *Amsterdam’s Atlantic*. Although he, too, focuses on the attempt to conquer Brazil, he concentrates on the print culture and the flow of news across the Atlantic, much as in his earlier work.³² Through the spread of news maps, pamphlets and publications such as celebratory songs, Van Groesen reconstructs the flow and uses of news from the Atlantic. He convincingly argues that the print culture in Amsterdam had an important impact on the changing perceptions of the colony in Brazil, and these changing perceptions fatally undermined support for the WIC’s attempt at empire.³³ Susanah Shaw Romney, in her slightly older (2014) *New Netherland Connections*, takes a different perspective again. She argues that the empire was constructed as much bottom-up as much as it was top-down and studies the roles of intimate networks in the creation of transatlantic ties in the seventeenth century, focusing primarily on the link between Amsterdam and New Amsterdam.³⁴ Empire, she argues, was constructed not only in the boardrooms of the companies, but also by ordinary people. In their activities, whether by helping equip men for sea or providing credit to sailors, women in Amsterdam, for example, enabled the large numbers of men required for company service to ship out.³⁵

Despite these new studies, there remain substantial lacunae in the historiography available to researchers of the first WIC and especially its colonies in the South Atlantic. There is but one monograph of the WIC’s tenure in Angola, written in the 1940s but only published in 2000.³⁶ The substantial Portuguese-language historiography on Dutch Brazil written by Brazilian scholars is available to Dutch researchers in translation only in a few cases.³⁷ Even classic studies such as Evaldo Cabral de Mello’s *Olinda restaurada : guerra e açúcar no nordeste, 1630-1654*, or for the purposes of this study even more pertinent *Nassau: Governador do Brasil holandês* remain untranslated or even available in the Netherlands in Portuguese.³⁸ More recent work, such as

³⁰ W. Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cornell University Press and Leiden University Press: Ithaca and Leiden 2016).

³¹ Ibidem, 262.

³² M. van Groesen, ‘A Week to Remember: Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August – 2 September 1624’, *Quaerendo* 40 (2010) 26-49.

³³ M. van Groesen, *Amsterdam’s Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia 2016) 188-198.

³⁴ S. Shaw Romney, *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth-Century America* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill 2014).

³⁵ Ibidem; chapter one deal with the role of women in outfitting sailors, 26-65.

³⁶ K. Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika 1600-1650 : Angola, Kongo en São Tomé* (Walburg Pers: Zutphen 2000).

³⁷ J. A. Gonsalves de Mello, *Nederlanders in Brazilië (1624-1654) : de invloed van de Hollandse bezetting op het leven en de cultuur in Noord-Brazilië* (Walburg Pers: Zutphen 2001) and E. Cabral de Mello, *De Braziliaanse affaire : Portugal, de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden en Noord-Oost Brazilië, 1641-1669* (Walburg Pers, Zutphen 2001).

³⁸ E. Cabral de Mello, *Olinda Restaurada: Guerra e Açúcar no Nordeste, 1630-1654* (Sao Paulo University press: Sao Paulo 1975) would be a good candidate for translation, given the lack of good work on the war in Brazil in Dutch. E.

Bruno Miranda's *Gente de Guerra* has not been translated either. Accessing much of the Brazilian historiography is thus an issue.

Strikingly, the studies of East and West in the Dutch case have largely been conducted separately. There are very few studies on comparisons or connections between activities in Asia and the Americas. Charles Boxer's classic, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, remains one of the very few works to compare the worlds of the companies on a thematic level.³⁹ The more recent *Rijk aan de rand van de wereld*, by Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, also deals with both East and West, but still retains the geographic division within the structure of the book.⁴⁰ There is thus a case to be made for a study dealing with similar questions in the two spheres, with the aim of improving our understanding of the evolution of empire in the different geographic zones and the connections between these zones.

The brief overview presented here of trends in the historiography, of the debates on trust and agency, and of the role of the companies leads naturally to the question that will guide my research: how could individuals attain high office in the service of the chartered companies and, once in office, how could they maintain these positions? This question contains elements of all the points discussed above. Appointing colonial governors created a principal-agent relationship between directors and governor, which was of course a matter of trust. In office, governors in the chartered companies' service were expected to manage trade, but also to wage war, to engage in diplomacy, to speak justice and to rule over colonial populations. Governors, thus, were responsible for the process that created the company-state in practice, overseen at a distance by the directors in the Netherlands. In selecting the two cases at the heart of this research, I will connect and compare these processes in the VOC and the WIC, thus enabling me to argue, in the conclusion to this work, that despite organizational similarities in the Netherlands, the companies worked remarkably differently overseas.

Having introduced the historiographical background giving rise to the research question, I will now detail the theoretical inputs to be used to answer the question at hand. Since this question focuses on the issues of career-making and appointments, the theoretical framework will be built around ideas on the formation of networks in the early modern era, specifically those that have been devised to analyze the formation of networks in the Dutch Republic.

Family and friends, politics, patrimonialism and patronage

The chartered trading companies were extremely important to the cities in which they were located, both in an economic as well as a social sense. Economically, the companies were not just significant because of their direct activities, but also because their demand for ships, equipment and crews created many related economic opportunities. Socially, a directorship on a board of one of the companies became one of the signifiers of social attainment and of inclusion in the regent elite. Given the companies' importance for the urban politics of the Dutch Republic, my theoretical framework will draw heavily on insights derived from studies of politics and state-formation in the Dutch Republic itself. In so doing I will try to balance a view of the institutional world, and the confines it placed on the agents who operated within it, against the ability of

Cabral de Mello, *Nassau Governador do Brasil holandês* (Companhia das Letras: Sao Paulo 2006) is unavailable even in de Royal Library in The Hague.

³⁹ C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (reprint, Hutchinson: London 1977).

⁴⁰ P. Emmer and J. Gommans, *Rijk aan de rand van de wereld: De Geschiedenis van Nederland overzee, 1600-1800* (Bert Bakker: Amsterdam 2012).

individuals to challenge, reinforce or undermine the institutional arrangements in place. Like the individuals studied by David Hancock in his work on the trade in Madeira wine, the governors and directors of the Dutch chartered companies ‘did not live in an atomized, anomic world.’⁴¹ And like Hancock, in his description of producers, traders and consumers of Madeira wine, I will focus on the linkages between individuals and the networks that these linkages created. But I will be hesitant to argue that these networks constituted a ‘self-organized world’.⁴² Instead I will argue that the interpersonal networks were so integrated within the company structures that the latter could not have worked without them. Conversely, the personal networks often relied on the company’s structure and organization for their very existence, while the acceptance of new members into a network was often prompted by a change in position within the company hierarchy. In other words, the institutional and personal worlds connected and reinforced each other. As this makes drawing a strict distinction between institutions and agency pointless, I aim instead to argue that, in the case of the career-making of Dutch colonial governors, neither could do without the other. For my theoretical framework, I will draw heavily on a number of scholars whose works, I argue, complement each other. These are Daniel Roorda for his view on factionalism, Julia Adams for her concept of the Dutch Republic as a ‘familial state’, Luuc Kooijmans for his work on friendship, and Jan Glete for his ideas on interest aggregation in the Dutch Republic. Together, the views of these scholars allow for a nuanced theoretical framework encompassing both the creation of interpersonal bonds and the creation of networks, as well as the performance of the companies as institutions.

Institutions and interest aggregation

The early modern Dutch Republic puzzled contemporary observers and indeed continues to puzzle historians and historical sociologists to this day. Contemporaries and historians alike have generally been quite dismissive of the effectiveness of the governmental structures and organization of government in the Republic. The conflicted nature of sovereignty in the Republic, its multiple and sometimes conflicting layers of governance, and the lack of a centralized ‘head’ all made the Republic stand out from the monarchies of Europe. This view persisted in the historiography until the early 1980s, with historians stressing the inefficiency of the system and the lack of a national framework.⁴³ This was especially apparent in, for example, naval history, where the ills of the system of multiple admiralties were stressed and formed part of nineteenth- and twentieth-century naval officers’ arguments for a unitary *rijksmarine* and against a separate colonial navy.⁴⁴ Past scholarship on the Dutch Republic thus presents us with a view for the period in which it was written. Since the early 1980s, however, this negative view of the Republic has been modified in response to the convergence of a number of separate trends in the historiography. These will be discussed here as they are still instrumental for our present views on the Republic.

⁴¹ D. Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2009) xx.

⁴² Ibidem, xxiii-xxv.

⁴³ The 1980s as a pivot in the historiography is made by G. de Bruin, ‘Het politieke bestel van de Republiek: een anomalie in het vroegmodern Europa?’, *BMGN, Low Countries Historical Review* 114:1 (1999) 16-38, 16.

⁴⁴ Older generations of naval historians were especially critical of the system of multiple admiralties of the Republic. However, also a more recent historian such as J.R. Bruijn has criticized the divided naval organization, while also mentioning that the federal nature of the Dutch state would have made a central organization difficult to achieve. See: J.R. Bruijn, *The Dutch Navy of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia 1990) 29-39, 99-110, 213-219.

Renewed attention for the military side of the Dutch Revolt and the later wars fought by the Dutch Republic dates back to the 1950s. Within the theory of the 'military revolution', crucial importance was attributed to the military reforms of Maurits and Willem Lodewijk and the spread of innovative fortification designs in the early Dutch Republic.⁴⁵ Working on the original thesis by Roberts, Geoffrey Parker also explored the spread of the military revolution beyond Europe, again stressing the role of the Republic.⁴⁶ This renewed attention for the Republic's military apparatus also spilled over into the field of politics, statecraft and governance. The perceived success and dynamism of the Republic in military affairs were not compatible with a perception of the Republic as a weak and internally divided entity. Thus, new concepts such as that of the 'fiscal-military' state were developed and applied to the Republic.⁴⁷ These went further than a merely institutional or formal political history and looked at how policy was made and paid for in practice. The Swedish historian Jan Glete argued that the success of the Republic as a naval and military power should be seen as a *result* of its institutional framework, rather than *despite* it. In describing the process of policy-making, Glete used the term 'interest aggregation' to denote the process by which local politics' influence on central policies (mostly war and peace) and the taxation required to pay for these policies meant that tax discipline in the Republic was high and policies were easily implemented. The scholarship stressing the military strength of the Republic and, by consequence, the strength of the Republic as a state contrasts sharply with those scholars who have stressed the disadvantages of the Dutch system. These include Charles Tilly, who argued that the Republic did not implement permanent state structures for waging war.⁴⁸ Glete was able to argue convincingly against this view, pointing out that the Republic was able, in the seventeenth century, to raise larger armies per capita than any of its rivals, and that the fleet of the Republic was often seen as an example to be emulated by other powers.

Glete's ideas on interest aggregation, which he applied primarily to the admiralty boards, can easily be transposed to the India companies. These companies were composed of various chambers representing a range of different regional interests, and the success or failure of the companies was dictated by their ability to aggregate these diverse interests behind common goals. This also meant that regional interests could play a relatively large role in appointments and dismissals of individual governors. The institutional view of Glete can be nicely complemented by the ideas of Roorda, Adams and Kooijmans, who focused on the way that ties between members of the Dutch elite were created and reinforced.

Factions, families and friendship

The directors occupying the most important seats in the chartered companies were to a very large degree the same individuals who also held seats in the municipal councils where the company chambers were located.⁴⁹ Directorships in the companies were a fully integrated part of the local market for prestigious and profitable government jobs. As a result, the same dynamics that

⁴⁵ M. Roberts, *The military revolution, 1560-1660* (Belfast 1956).

⁴⁶ See: G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* (second revised edition, London, New York and Melbourne 1972), and the first chapter in: G. Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800* (eleventh edition, Cambridge 2007) 6-44.

⁴⁷ The idea of the fiscal-military state has been worked on by many scholars. For a good application of the concept to the Dutch Republic, see: J. Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500-1660* (London 2002) 140-173.

⁴⁸ C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (revised edition, Cambridge and Oxford 1992) 62.

⁴⁹ See chapter one.

impacted on the composition of the urban councils also had an effect on directorships and, therefore, on the election or deselection of colonial governors. The work of Daniel Roorda is unavoidable in any study of the politics of the cities of the Dutch Republic. In his 1968 dissertation he argued that the conflicts between different parts of the urban councils in Holland in 1672 were due not to party-political differences, but instead to factional infighting. By this Roorda meant that though opposing parties used the labels of Orangist or States parties, their differences were not primarily inspired by genuinely held ideas on the proper conduct of politics and the nature of sovereignty in the Dutch Republic. Rather, he argued, the opposing parts of the urban councils were factions who fought over control of the urban council because such control would mean that profitable and prestigious jobs would flow to them and their families, rather than to their rivals.⁵⁰ Only in abnormal situations of crisis did party politics play a real role.⁵¹ This was the first of a series of articles and books in which Roorda studied the composition of the Republic's elites, their change over time, and newcomers' ability to access the regent elite.⁵² Roorda's ideas on the factional nature of Dutch urban politics are of great importance with regard to the companies. In Holland, the fact that burgomasters appointed the company directors meant that changes in the composition of the urban council and the burgomasters ultimately percolated through to the companies and could then impact on the careers of the high colonial governors overseas who had been appointed by the former directors.

The American historical sociologist Julia Adams has devised a model of state-formation that brings together the ideas of Glete and Roorda within a single mold. She argued that the fighting factions in fact represented a system of patriarchy: rule by (male) heads of family. The term 'patrimonialism' derives from Max Weber, who used it to denote the projection of patriarchal systems onto a broader set of social relationships.⁵³ Patriarchy denotes the domination of the extended household by the male head of the family. The return of patriarchy and the deterioration of the socio-economic position of Dutch women after mid-sixteenth century has been an object of debate.⁵⁴ But this debate is less relevant when we look at the elite families of nobles and high regents where patriarchal familial ties were indeed still important and where extended family ties were crucial. To understand patriarchy in this political context, we need to think of families not as merely the supposedly modern 'nuclear family'.⁵⁵ As will become apparent, elites in the Republic conceived of their families as larger extended groups and had an acute understanding of the family's history, stretching back centuries in some cases. This conception of family, including its past and its connections and rivalries with other families, allowed for a quite different conception of the role of the self within this larger structure. Acquiring wealth, status and high positions certainly mattered, but of crucial importance was the

⁵⁰ D.J. Roorda, *Partij en Factie: De oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (unaltered reprint, Wolters-Noordhoff: Groningen 1979) 3-6.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 7.

⁵² H. van Dijk and D.J. Roorda, 'Sociale mobiliteit onder regenten van de Republiek', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 84:2 (1971) 306-328.

⁵³ For Max Weber on patrimonialism as an 'ideal type' or analytical tool, see, for example, M.M. Charrad and J. Adams, 'Introduction: Patrimonialism, Past and Present', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 636, *Patrimonial Power in the Modern World* (July 2011) 6-15, 7-8.

⁵⁴ See: c On page 28, the authors lay out the argument put forward by Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden that conditions did indeed worsen.

⁵⁵ The role of the nuclear family in Western European and the free choice of partners has been an object of study. Van der Heijden, Nederveen Meerkerk and Schmidt, 'Terugkeer van het patriarchaat?' 30-34 argue that women were relatively free to choose their partner in Early Modern Holland. Crucially, however, arranged marriages still were important amongst the nobility and the elite regent families.

ability to pass on these privileges to subsequent generations so that they, too, could profit from the actions of individuals living in the present. As such, patriarchy requires thinking in terms of extended family groups, with marriage being conceived of as an instrument for making important connections and job-seeking as a way of extending the reputation and income of the family group. According to Adams, elite male heads of households in the Republic came to dominate the institutions of the state. This meant they then had two – sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping – goals: to secure the state that afforded them rewarding and honorable employment at all levels of the state, and to maintain and extend the income, wealth and dignity of their families.⁵⁶ The operation of the institutions of the state – and, in Adams' view, the companies were a part of this – is thus to a significant extent a result of the patrimonial strategies deployed by elite heads of households. This was, of course, particularly the case as far as the personnel policy was concerned. Adams also distinguishes between state patrimonialism and patronage systems based on the structure of positions within the system.⁵⁷ The willingness of local regents and merchants to pay the taxes that underpinned the Dutch navy and army, as signaled by Glete, was thus underpinned by their wish to secure their own positions in that state. The factional infighting that Roorda signaled within the urban councils was a result of the wish of patrimonial heads of families to secure honorable positions for themselves and their offspring, with the companies being an integral part of this world.

Finally, Adams's work on patrimonialism is complemented nicely by the work of Luuc Kooijmans.⁵⁸ In focusing on the concept of friendship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Kooijmans argues that this was used quite differently than at present. Friendship was a transactional, reciprocal relationship, whereby both parties (the friends) expected to profit from the ties that bound them. To survive and thrive, individuals needed a network of friends to help them. These friends, unsurprisingly, were often family members, and friendship within these kinship networks helped younger members of the group to gain experience and starting capital.⁵⁹ The process at work behind the friendship studied by Kooijmans is patronage. The importance of the language of friendship in building and reinforcing ties, as studied by Kooijmans, will recur in the discussion of my methodology, given the importance of the message carried by the word 'friendship' (*vriendschap*) in letter-writing.

Patronage and clientage

Related to the issues of patrimonialism and friendship is that of patronage. Patrimonialism and patronage are two different systems for maintaining unequal but reciprocal social relationships.⁶⁰ In its simplest terms, patronage or clientage in the context of the Dutch Republic entailed the relationship between a higher-placed individual (the patron), and a lower-placed individual (the client). The relationship between patron and client was one of reciprocity, with the patron offering, for example, goods, job opportunities or possibilities for advancement to the client who

⁵⁶ Adams, 'The Familial State: Elite family practices and state-making in the early modern Netherlands', *Theory and Society* 23 (1994) 505-539, 505-506.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 514.

⁵⁸ L. Kooijmans, *Vriendschap en de kunst van het overleven in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (2nd edition, Prometheus: Amsterdam 2016).

⁵⁹ Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 14-19, 59-60.

⁶⁰ For an explanation of the difference between the two, see: J. Adams, 'The Familial State', 513-514.

would reciprocate by offering his support and loyalty to the patron.⁶¹ Until recently there were only a few scattered works on the mechanisms of patronage in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. The work by Geert Janssen on the clientage network of Willem Frederik (1613-1664), stadholder of Friesland, is the most important recent work on patronage in the Netherlands. Although the patronage relations at the court of Willem Frederik were, of course, in a different setting from that of either of the companies, there are a number of important lessons to be drawn from Janssen's work. In the first place, he has shown that clientage in the Republic was split into two distinct spheres: a public or stately sphere versus a private or domestic sphere, with distinct mores of acceptable conduct governing clientage in each sphere.⁶² This was the case, for example, in the criteria for religious affiliation. While Willem Frederik maintained a strict line in favoring only Dutch reformed church clients in his role as stadholder, this religious rule was not maintained in his private function as a count.⁶³ Besides this specificity of the patron-client relationship based on the role assumed by the patron (or client), another important point to be taken from Janssen's work is that patrons could also be clients in a different setting. Willem Frederik, for instance, was a patron when in Friesland, but at the court in The Hague he was a client of 'the boss' (*de Baes*).⁶⁴ Instead of studying single patron-client relations, we should therefore be mindful of a possible cascade of such relations, with each relationship stacked on top of another. Another recent study on patronage in the Dutch Republic, by Coen Wilders on the network of stadholder William III (1650-1702), argues that the reciprocal nature of patronage was stronger than an earlier generation of scholars had allowed for. Important clients of the stadholder in Utrecht acted as brokers, passing on requests from their friends and family in the province.⁶⁵ Wilders thus speaks of a system of brokerage, which in fact resembled that of the surrounding monarchies. The position of brokers is another example of the importance of choosing the right patron: brokers in the Republic depended on access to their patron for maintaining their own position as patrons to their respective circle of friends and family – or clients.

Although the details of the patronage relations at the courts of the stadholders will have differed from those operating within the companies, there are nevertheless a number of lessons to be drawn from them. A study of the mechanisms and social importance of the patron-client relationship in a large organization comparable to that of the companies is provided by Nicholas Rodger in his classic study of the British navy in the Georgian era.⁶⁶ A number of interesting points can be taken from Rodger's analysis of patronage within that navy. In the first place, he argues that patronage was a method of selecting talent, albeit using methods that would currently be frowned upon. This has presented historians with a paradox, which certainly also applies to the careers of the servants of the companies: *'The paradox is clear: how could good men have been selected by a system which, according to the usual modern approach, seems bound to have shown deplorable results?'*⁶⁷ Rodger argues that this paradox is based on the false assumption that application of personal

⁶¹ For this definition of patronage, see: G.H. Janssen, *Creaturen van de Macht: Patronage bij Willem Frederik van Nassau (1613-1664)* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2005) 12-13.

⁶² Ibidem, 212-215, 221.

⁶³ Ibidem, 221-222.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 223.

⁶⁵ C. Wilders, *Patronage in de Provincie: Het Utrechtse netwerk van stadhouder Willem III* (Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam 2015) 177-178.

⁶⁶ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (Collins: London 1986) 273-302.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 274.

interest in public service was necessarily wrong and would, in consequence, lead to failure. This was not at all the reality of the eighteenth-century world that he studied. Applying personal interests to the selection of potential officers was a perfectly accepted part of naval service and seems (for Britain at least) to have produced rather excellent officers. For officers, Rodger argues, developing a following of loyal junior officers and skilled lower ratings was an elementary precondition for success: skilled officers were scarce, and waiting for the individuals that the Admiralty and Navy Board would throw their way would not have resulted in the best crews. A good crew was obviously important, given that the best way to gain advancement quickly was success in battle.⁶⁸ A somewhat similar point can be made for the companies. Governors tried to develop a loyal following of lower company servants, such as commanders, merchants (*opperkoopmannen*) and bookkeepers, but also captains (*schippers*) and military officers, because skilled subaltern officers who worked together in a harmonious team offered the best chances for governors to succeed in their entrusted command, regardless of whether this involved profitable trade or conquering Portuguese strongholds. Teamwork, as Rodger noted, was of the essence.⁶⁹

However, to attract skilled followers and keep them in his entourage, a captain (or, in our case, a governor) also had to prove that he was able to advance them and help them progress upwards in their own careers. Reciprocity was thus essential: if loyal clients were not rewarded with honorable and profitable assignments of their own – and the chance to develop their own following – they would look for a patron who could secure these advantages. Patron-client relations supposed a strong tie between the prospective patron and his superiors – the Admiralty or, in our case, the company directors – so that clients, too, had a good chance of advancement. Reversely, it was of the essence that patrons only recommended clients for advancement who were actually fitted for the task at hand. If incompetent clients were advanced and duly failed at their new assignments, the patron would lose the trust of his superiors and thus lose the ability to further the careers of his other clients, who would then seek other patrons.

The important flow of information that kept clients aware of the position of their patrons and enabled patrons to justify their selection of men for promotion largely ran in parallel with the official correspondence, Rodger notes.⁷⁰ This, too, applies at least in the case of the VOC, where we can see how Van Goens' private correspondence with the company directors ran parallel to the company letters in which the affairs of his clients were discussed. The above leads on naturally to a closer examination of the methods used to select my source material, together with a brief discussion of these sources themselves.

Method and hypothesis

A study of the careers of two colonial governors will, of course, hew close to the life stories of the two men, but without seeking to write a double biography. This section will briefly discuss some methodological issues, focusing on the differences between biographical and prosopographical approaches, and the approach taken in this book. Although I will obviously draw heavily on both approaches, I hope to explain here how my approach to the topic at hand differs. The genre of biography is still very much alive when it comes to the characters of Dutch colonial governors. Besides the biographies of Johan Maurits mentioned below, recent years have seen new works on Peter Stuyvesant and Iman Wilhelm Falck, as well as the excellent biography

⁶⁸ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 275-276.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, 283.

of Jan Pieterszoon Coen.⁷¹ The best of these are able to explain much of the history of the companies through the choice of the actor at the heart of the book, and I will draw heavily on Van Goor's biography of Coen in particular. There are a number of reasons, however, why a biographical approach did not lend itself for the present book.

As mentioned before, biographies have previously been written of both men at the heart of this study. Of the two, Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen has received by far more attention. This started as early as 1647, when Caspar Barlaeus published his *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, heralding the achievements of Johan Maurits in Brazil.⁷² Since the nineteenth century, biographies have appeared in Dutch and German with some regularity.⁷³ Though Johan Maurits spent only eight years of his life in Brazil, his Brazilian period regularly garners much attention in these works, and indeed is often part of the title, such as in P.J. Bouman's 1947 classic *Johan Maurits, de Braziliaan*.⁷⁴ More recently, H.S. van der Straaten and K. Witteveen-Van Lennep have both also written biographies of the former governor of Dutch Brazil.⁷⁵ Besides these full-on biographies, there is a slew of works focusing on parts of Johan Maurits' life, or edited volumes of loose contributions centered on the person of Johan Maurits. Particularly interesting in this regard is the volume published by the society supporting the *Mauritshuis*, the museum now established in Johan Maurits' former house in The Hague. The contributions in this volume focus particularly on his role as a patron of the arts, on his buildings, on his early youth and on how the 'man from Brazil' is perceived.⁷⁶ The editors of the volume admittedly addressed some of the lacunae in their foreword, noting that it was particularly disappointing that no-one had been found who could write about Johan Maurits' performance as a military commander.⁷⁷ To this, it could be added that it was unfortunate that no-one, not only in that collection of essays but also in the biographies, has written in more depth on the relationship between the governor-general of Dutch Brazil and the directors of the WIC. A persistent problem with many of the biographical accounts of Johan Maurits' life is that they rely heavily on the text of the first work, *Rerum per octennium*. Barlaeus' account of Johan Maurits' tenure in office in Brazil, however, was not a seventeenth-century work of an independent-minded historian. Rather, Barlaeus had been commissioned by Johan Maurits to write a classic epic on his Brazilian period. Johan Maurits was thus fully aware of the contents of the book and also able to influence its contents.⁷⁸ This points

⁷¹ J. Jacobs, *Petrus Stuyvesant: Een levensschets* (Bakker: Amsterdam 2009); F. van Dulm, 'Zonder eigen gewinne en glorie'. Mr. Iman Wilhelm Falck (1736-1785), *gouverneur en directeur van Ceylon en onderborigheden* (Verloren: Hilversum 2012); J. van Goor, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 1587-1629: Koopman-koning in Azië* (Boom: Amsterdam 2015).

⁷² C. Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia et alibi gestarum, sub praefectura ill. Comitis I. Mauriti Nassaviae &c Comitis, Historia* (Johannes Blaeu: Amsterdam 1647), published in a Dutch translation as: S.P. Honoré Naber and Caspar Barlaeus, *Nederlandsch Brazilïë onder het bewind van Johan Maurits, Grave van Nassau 1637-1644* (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague 1923).

⁷³ See footnote 43 for a recent German-language edition.

⁷⁴ P.J. Bouman, *Johan Maurits van Nassau, de Braziliaan* (Utrecht 1947).

⁷⁵ H.S. van der Straaten, *Maurits de Braziliaan; het levensverhaal van Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, stichter van het Mauritshuis, gouverneur-generaal van Nederlands-Brazilïë, stadhouder van Kleef, 1604-1679*. K. Witteveen-Van Lennep, *Leven als een vorst in de Gouden Eeuw: Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, 1604-1679*.

⁷⁶ E. van den Boogaart, H.R. Hoetink and P.J.P. Whitehead (eds), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, 1604-1679: A humanist prince in Europe and Brazil* (The Hague 1979). This work includes two chapters on the buildings commissioned by Johan Maurits, as well as chapters on his gardens, zoology in Dutch Brazil, science and exoticism, the Dutch vision of Brazil through art, and a Latin epic poem written in his honor, to name just the most eye-catching examples.

⁷⁷ H.R. Hoetink and E. van den Boogaart, 'Foreword', in: Ibidem, 5.

⁷⁸ J. van der Veldt, 'An Autograph Letter of John Maurice of Nassau, Governor of the Dutch Colony in Brazil (1636-1644)', *The Americas* 3:3 (1947) 311-318, 311.

to a potential pitfall, especially with older biographies: they can all too easily turn into works of hero-worship owing to the preferences of the person writing them. A good example in the case of Johan Maurits is his involvement in the Dutch transatlantic slave trade. By ordering the conquest of Elmina in 1638 and of Angola in 1642, Johan Maurits stood at the very beginning of the WIC's trade in enslaved Africans. But this rarely gets a mention in the older biographies as it was not considered an issue at the time they were written. This heavy focus on the arts and Johan Maurits' courtly life is also replicated in more recent historiography, while his performance as a military commander and a governor has so far been afforded much less attention.⁷⁹

Rijckloff van Goens has been at the center of fewer dedicated biographies, and none of these spans his entire life. The oldest of these biographies is J. Aalbers' *Rijckloff van Goens: Commissaris en veldoverste der Oost-Indische Compagnie, en zijn arbeidsveld 1653/54 en 1657/58*.⁸⁰ As the title suggests, this work covers only part of Van Goens' long career within the VOC, and focuses on a limited number of aspects. Later, W.M. Ottow wrote two works on Van Goens: the first, *Rijckloff van Goens: De carrière van een diplomaat, 1619-1655*, focused on the early years and his diplomatic missions to the Court of Mataram, while the second covered the period 1657-1662.⁸¹ The weakness of this latter work especially is that it hews too closely to the sources, some of which Van Goens wrote autobiographically, and the figure of Van Goens himself to provide a good perspective on the context in which he operated. In addition, Van Goens features in a larger number of works focusing on the collective of high VOC personnel in Asia, while also featuring as the rival of Adriaan van Reede in the brief biography in J. Heniger's work on Van Reede and the Hortus Malabaricus.⁸² Here, too, the proper context needed to understand the enmity between the two men is lacking. Instead, Van Goens is cast as the villain, with the book taking his rival, Adriaan van Reede, as its focus for the botanical work. This points to a trap in biographical accounts, which was explored by Jill Lepore in her essay *Historians Who Love Too Much*.⁸³

Lepore's essay argues for a distinction between biography on the one hand and microhistory on the other. At the time, microhistory was not a category that was widely applied in American historical writing. Through four propositions, Lepore argued that there were four important differences between the two approaches and that, as a consequence of these differences, microhistorians were less likely to become too attached to (or too repulsed by) their subjects. Though my research is not cast as either a microhistory or a work of biography, the first of the distinctions made by Lepore is relevant as it highlights some of the choices underlying this work. Her first proposition argued that 'If biography is largely founded on a belief in the singularity and significance of an individual's contribution to history, microhistory is founded

⁷⁹ A recent edited volume is: G. Brunn and C. Neutsch (eds.) *Sein Feld war die Welt, Johan Moritz von Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679): Von Siegen über die Niederlande und Brasilien nach Brandenburg* (Waxmann: Münster, New York, Munich and Berlin 2008). This edited volume contains two chapters that focus on the transatlantic slave trade, a novelty, as well as a comparison of Johan Maurits and Jan Pieterszoon Coen, but otherwise replicates older works by focusing – for the Brazilian period – on the court, art and urban planning.

⁸⁰ J. Aalbers, *Rijckloff van Goens: Commissaris en veldoverste der Oost-Indische Compagnie, en zijn arbeidsveld 1653/54 en 1657/58* (Groningen 1916).

⁸¹ W.M. Ottow, *Rijckloff Volckerts van Goens: krijgsman, commissaris en regent in dienst van de VOC: archiefstudie over het Europese verlof (1655-1657) en de eerste grote Ceylon-periode (1657-1662): omslagjaren voor de man die van jongs af aan in VOC-verband prachtig carrière maakte, maar die het later bitter moeilijk kreeg* (self-published 1996).

⁸² J. Heniger, *Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein (1636-1691) and Hortus Malabaricus: A Contribution to the History of Dutch Colonial Botany* (Balkema: Rotterdam 1986).

⁸³ J. Lepore, 'Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography', *The Journal of American History* 88:1 (2001) 129-144.

upon the almost opposite assumption: however singular a person's life may be, the value of examining it lies in how it serves as an allegory for the culture as a whole.⁸⁴ This sentence nicely summarizes some of the rationale behind the choices made in this research and helps explain why it is not purely biographical. I have chosen Johan Maurits and Rijckloff van Goens not because they themselves are highly important characters – though one could argue that they were – but because studying their careers will help me better analyze the process of career-making within the Dutch chartered companies. Given other parameters for this research, I could have made other choices, for example Peter Stuyvesant for the WIC, and Johannes Speelman for the VOC. My goal, however, is to understand the internal organization and operations of the India companies, not to understand the lives of the two governors themselves in every way. This is not to say that this work will not contain any biographical characteristics; it will, but it will perhaps be more akin to prosopography, or group biography. This is because understanding the trajectory of a career requires not only an understanding of the life and actions of the governors themselves, but also of the composition and networks within the colonial councils in which they operated and the composition of the boards of directors of the companies which they served. Especially this last point will be elaborated upon as it will show more clearly than anything else the limitations placed on the agency of even very powerful colonial governors by factional strife and boardroom politics over which they had no influence. I will thus combine elements of the biographical, prosopographical and microhistorical in an account of the careers of two seventeenth-century Dutch colonial governors that seeks to highlight the ways in which the companies actually operated and that hopes to surprise the reader by showing the alliances of interests that could influence or even dictate policy behind the scenes. This work thus follows Lawrence Goldman's exhortation to historians and biographers alike to '*encourage further attempts at the integration of structural and personal approaches, though always with care, with an eye to the sources, and with an awareness of the limitations of both these ways of writing about the past when taken on their own.*'⁸⁵

In reading the sources, I have paid special attention to those phrases and words used to signify a special kind of relationship. Following Kooijmans, the use of the word *friendship* (*riendschap*) had important connotations of real or claimed familiarity and connection. Whether *friends* were family members, unrelated patrons or indeed clients, the use of the word shows that the person in question was at least trying to establish a connection.⁸⁶ This use of language was studied in another context by Francesca Trivellato in *The Familiarity of Strangers*, which studies cross-cultural trade among Sephardi Jews. She argued that the word *friend* was indeed used between trading partners who not only did not share familial ties, but who also had different faiths, lived on different continents and most likely had never even met. Using the language of friendship, the merchants she studied were able to correspond with Hindu merchants in Goa, as well as with their most trusted agents.⁸⁷ I will argue that this same language of friendship and reciprocity was used by the servants of the Dutch chartered trading companies in their correspondence with directors and colleagues. A key difference, however, was that, in this setting, the corresponding parties often were connected by kinship or patronage. In these cases, the language of friendship confirmed and strengthened these ties, or at least that was the object of

⁸⁴ Lepore, 'Reflections', 141.

⁸⁵ L. Goldman, 'History and biography', *Historical Research* 89:245 (2016) 399-411, 411.

⁸⁶ For use of the word '*vriend*', see L. Kooijmans, *Vriendschap*, 18.

⁸⁷ F. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2009) 178-184.

the person using them. This makes it ideal for a close reading of the sources as the terms of friendship, reciprocity and kinship are signals of real ties or attempts to construct them.

Based on the above considerations, I can construct a brief hypothesis of the career-making in the early modern Dutch chartered trading companies that underlies my methodological choices. Careers in the companies were unlike 'regular' long-distance relations because they were much more politicized. This meant that the mechanisms by which trust was built and enforced were quite different from the ways described above. Besides trade and commerce, colonial governors were responsible for governance, sometimes over quite large populations, as well as for warfare and diplomacy. The very size of the companies made their fates highly politically important for the elites within the Dutch Republic. As a result, the familial networks in the Dutch Republics played an important role in the appointments of colonial governors. However, political pressures on these appointments did not mean that they were simply a question of nepotism. Those in a position to promote individuals still had every incentive to choose capable individuals over incompetent ones. This had everything to do with the reciprocal nature of the client-patron relationship: elevation of an incompetent client to high office would reflect badly on the patron if the client failed at his important task. To gain advancement, therefore, one needed a dose of skill or merit, besides good connections giving access to a set of patrimonial or overseas patronage relations that would open the way to further advancement. Early in a career, developing a patron-client relation with powerful superiors was of the essence for individuals starting low in the hierarchy. As a career continued, relationships with the directors became ever more important as the latter reserved the right to appoint candidates to the highest positions. Developing personal connections with the directors in some way or another became ever more important if a person wanted to avoid encountering a 'glass ceiling'. Familial connections could thus prove to be of the essence. Finally, once in a position of considerable power, a successful governor needed to develop patronage relations with his underlings so that he could be assured of backing from loyal subordinates. In addition, it was crucial to control the flow of information to the directors who held the power of dismissal. To this end it was also important to develop good relations with local states and sovereigns or local colonial society as an ill-timed conflict or complaints from colonists could seriously hamper the development and sustainment of a career.

There were thus four sets of relations that were important, depending on the stages of a career: relations with the directors, relations with colonial colleagues, relations with local society and, lastly, relations with other states, companies or sovereigns. These four sets of relations are the factors I will use to analyze the development of the networks that were so crucial for career-making. To analyze these factors I have divided the careers of the two men in question into three parts: career beginning, middle and end. This division is not arbitrary: I argue that not all of these four networks were relevant at the same time in a career, and that different connections were crucial at different moments in a career. To study these networks, a close reading of the sources is essential. I will therefore focus on letters to and from these governors, both of an official and a personal nature. In analyzing these networks, I have used the GEPHI software for visualization. Social network analysis is a key component of this research, but its application has limits. The graphs of the networks I construct are governed by my selection of sources and therefore by my choice of main characters. Therefore, application of such calculations such as node centrality and level of connectedness was less useful for this research. The graphs of the networks should be seen as a way of illustrating the networks studied and in some cases they show the links between important individuals.

Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen and Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens: two seventeenth-century governors

Ultimately, this research will focus on the careers and networks of two Dutch colonial governors. Before continuing with a description and analysis of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study, I will briefly sketch the lives of the two men and then turn to the important question of why they were chosen for the study at hand. The two governors chosen represent both the Eastern and the Western halves of what this study will argue was the Dutch empire in the seventeenth century. A wish to draw both parts into one study and examine whether the processes of influence differed between the two companies was my reason for choosing a case from each hemisphere. With this in mind, the choice for Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen was quickly made as he is well-researched, with plenty of secondary works and biographies available. As the purpose of this study is most emphatically not to write a new biography, the existence of biographies of the selected cases was an important consideration as these will help in the archival research and to reconstruct the networks of support both men enjoyed.⁸⁸ Interestingly, the earlier biographies of Johan Maurits are all quite positive, thus reinforcing the perception of his tenure as the ‘good period’ of Dutch Brazil. By contrast, Klooster and Van Groesen in their respective recent works are much more critical, thus signaling a shift in the perception of Johan Maurits and to which this research will add.⁸⁹ Johan Maurits is also a most interesting case, exceptional in a way, because of being both the only governor-general of Dutch Brazil ever appointed and the only Nassau to venture overseas. High nobility rarely ventured overseas in the Dutch empire, although lower nobility occasionally did so, as this study will point out.⁹⁰ This will allow me to compare with the other case chosen for study and to examine whether and, if so, how a noble background made a difference in the way in which the influence of politics intervened in career-making. The fact that Johan Maurits was ultimately dismissed from his position as governor-general⁹¹ is a most important point as the process by which he moved from appointment to dismissal, and the changing opinions of the directors on his suitability for the position, will provide the best insight into the actual processes within the boards of directors and the interests involved. For comparative purposes, therefore, a candidate from the VOC had to be found who was also dismissed, preferably as acrimoniously as possible, given that it is in the chaos of dismissal that the underlying structures will become most clearly visible. The choice was actually quite easy: Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens fitted the bill like no other candidate and provided an interesting contrast with the nobleman Johan Maurits on many levels: Van Goens was the son of a common soldier, born in a Dutch-held fortress on the German Lower Rhine and orphaned at the age of ten, and worked his way through the ranks of the VOC hierarchy in the East to become governor-general in 1678. His tenure in Batavia and, before that, as governor of Ceylon were a crucial period for the VOC as it was then that important questions were being raised about management, private trade, colonization, expansion,

⁸⁸ For biographies of Johan Maurits, see: P.J. Bouman, *Johan Maurits van Nassau, de Braziliaan* (Utrecht 1947) and A.N.J. Fabius, *Johan Maurits, de Braziliaan* (Utrecht 1914). There are many more biographical studies that focus on specific parts of Johan Maurits’ life; these will be examined in chapters 4, 6 and 8.

⁸⁹ W. Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 65-66. M. van Groesen, *Amsterdam’s Atlantic*, 157-167.

⁹⁰ An example of lower nobility serving the companies included Van Reede in the VOC. This puts the Dutch empire in a very different social position from that of the other European empires of the period, all of which had strong participation by nobles.

⁹¹ Though some dispute this point, pointing out that the initial request to leave came from Johan Maurits himself. This point will be addressed in chapter six, which will demonstrate that Johan Maurits did not, in fact, wish to leave Brazil and that his dismissal was most prejudicial to his interests.

and the hierarchy between the Asian colonies. The Van Goens years were transformative for the VOC and will thus show the various interests and networks at play most clearly. The selection means that this is a diachronic study of quite different characters. I posit that this is not a problem as it is the mechanisms behind the appointment of governors that are of interest, rather than the biographies of the men themselves. In their diversity, they will best allow me to analyze the mechanisms of career-making in the seventeenth-century Dutch overseas empire. The two cases are furthermore interesting as both men faced similar problems during their tenures in Brazil and on Ceylon respectively. This – the problem of territorial control and rule by the chartered companies – is an aspect that has so far been neglected because of the focus on commercial and maritime activities. Studying their policies will allow me to make the case that, in contrast to what has sometimes been suggested, the Dutch empire of the seventeenth century was not so different from other European empires. Finally, the careers of the two men reveal more than their individual particularities. Indeed, the mechanisms at work in the career-making process reveal how the early modern Dutch empire worked in practice.

Sources and selection

The richness of the VOC's records held in The Hague is well-known to historians of early modern Asia. Less well-known, and less well-preserved, are the records of the WIC, also held in The Hague. The documents from these two inventories are at the heart of the chapters to follow. But these are not used in isolation. Besides these official, institutionally created, organized and preserved documents, I have sought recourse, wherever possible, to the richness of the personal archives that complement these institutional pieces, and which are also held in The Hague. Often these collections were formed by directors of the VOC or WIC who kept correspondence or copies of official documents in their private family archives. Collections such as those of the Sweers, Radermacher and Hudde families complement the official documents very well. These collections contain personal letters and papers sent in parallel to the official company correspondence. In some cases, these letters contain sensitive information on interpersonal ties between company servants and directors. The use of these more personal documents allowed me to understand an event or a decision both from the official documents held in the company's archives, as well as from the personal correspondence in which decisions were mentioned, criticized, explained and toned down. This was especially important in the case of Van Goens, where the use of the private correspondence allowed not only a fuller understanding of the networks supporting Van Goens, but also of the person of Van Goens himself. One will search in vain in the VOC's official correspondence for personal touches such as the following extract from a letter sent by Van Goens to his stepdaughter Catherina van Adrichem in December 1670: *'Your sweet sister Esther Ceylonia is also well and happy, and excels above all other children in many talents. She can already speak Dutch well and some Portuguese.'*⁹² Both men also left personal archives. In the case of Van Goens these are held in the National Archives in The Hague, while those of Johan Maurits are held in the Royal House Archives in the same city.

Over the course of their careers both men produced copious amounts of paper. In selecting the material for this study I focused in the first place on the moments of tension within the networks that surrounded them. These moments could be identified from a reading of the

⁹² NL-HaNA, Sweers, 1.10.78, inv. no. 2. *'zoo mede u Zoete Suster Esther Ceylonia, die vrolijk is, en boven andre kinderen (Godloff) in veel gaven nijtmunt, kan al goet Hollants en quatt Portugees spreken.'*

secondary literature. At these crucial junctures, a close reading of the sources helped identify these networks by focusing on key phrases and words such as *vriend* (friend) and *patroon* (patron). Additionally, not merely the contents of the texts themselves, but also the layout of the texts were taken into account, with the best example being the notes made by Van Goens in the margins of a letter sent by governor of Ceylon, Van der Meijden, in the early 1660s. These marginal notes, separately dated and signed by Van Goens, showed that the governor could not communicate with the Netherlands without his letters being read and commented upon by his rival, Van Goens.

Connecting careers, constructing empire

This study will do more, however, than just give an account of two separate careers in the seventeenth-century Dutch empire. It will argue, firstly, that such an empire did in fact exist and deserves to be studied by that name. Anthony Pagden famously argued that the Dutch Republic did not consider itself an empire and that the Netherlands only became an empire in the nineteenth century.⁹³ But when studying the linked histories of the WIC in Brazil and the VOC in Ceylon, both part of a larger struggle against Spain and Portugal, or (after 1640) only Portugal, it is difficult to ignore the trope of empire. The WIC's war in Brazil was the largest interimperial conflict in the Atlantic in the seventeenth century and was fought out over a quarter of a century, while the VOC succeeded in conquering some of the oldest Portuguese possessions in Asia and displacing the *Estado* as the premier European power in the area. What is more, the personal lives of the men and women who lived through these struggles were closely connected. An excellent example of this is provided by a letter from Salomon Sweers, councilor in the High Government of the Indies and patron of Rijckloff van Goens, in a letter to his brother in 1641. In this letter the first news mentioned was that Sweers had received news from Brazil: the VOC vessel *Lillo* had stopped over in Brazil on the way to Asia and had picked up letters there. These included:

[A] letter from 8 November passed by brother Isack and another of the fourth of the same month by Cousin Coddén from Mauricia from which I have gathered with regret and much sadness that brother Abraham deceased - promoted to captain by Cousin Coddén's benevolent affection – was killed treacherously on August 4, 1641 (God forbid) in the vicinity of St. Paulo Luando on the ship *Enchuijsen* by an Italian traitor with four [balls of] lead in his chest and murdered.⁹⁴

Commerce and conquest in America and Asia were managed by different institutions. To the people, however, who lived in these worlds, they were very much connected. On another level, the companies and their activities were closely intertwined in the Republic itself, where directors of the companies were also mayors of important cities and delegates to the States-General. This overlapping of positions allowed for decision-making and weighing of interests on a global level. The question of empire is referred to throughout the text and will be returned to in more length in the conclusion.

⁹³ A. Pagden, *Lords of All The World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c.1500-c.1800* (New Haven and London 1995) 4.

⁹⁴ NL-HaNA, Sweers, 1.10.78, inv. no. 2 fol. 29. '...een brief vanden 8 november passado door frere Isack ende een ander vanden 4 derselver pr Cousijn Coddén nijt Maurica geschreven waer nijt met leetvesen en onder aller groote droefnis verstaen hebben, hoe dat frere Abraham sal.r door Cousijn Coddens goedertierne genegentheijt tot Cap.n gevordert, den 4 Augustus 1641 (Godt betert) ontrent St. Paulo d'Louando op't schip *Enchuijsen* door een Italiaens verrader seer deerlijck met vier loodedn te gelijc in sijn borst getroffen om bals gebracht ende vermoort is.

The remainder of *Colonial Careers* is divided into seven chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one provides a baseline into the Dutch background: the organization of Dutch politics and the companies in the Netherlands. This chapter draws special attention to the practices of governance and politics, showing that while the different bodies of state and the companies were in theory quite separated, in practice they overlapped because many of the same individuals had a seat in each of them. If we are to look for an early modern Dutch empire, we will find it not in an official body of state, but rather in the combined interests of the individuals who governed both the Dutch state and the companies and who frequently also had substantial interests in the European trades. The remaining six chapters are divided equally between the two cases: three chapters for Van Goens and three for Johan Maurits. Chapter two details Johan Maurits' appointment to Brazil in 1636, pointing out the pervasive influence of domestic politics on this appointment. Chapter three deals with the rise through the ranks of Rijckloff van Goens in the period 1629-1655. It introduces the idea of there being something like a *cursus honorum* in the VOC and launches the concept of 'career-path dependency'. Chapters four and five repeat this pattern, with chapter four focusing on Johan Maurits' tenure in Brazil in 1636-1640, and chapter five on Rijckloff van Goens' tenure on Ceylon in the later 1650s to the late 1660s. A common thread running through these two chapters is trade versus territory. These chapters link up with some of the issues debated in chapter two and, together, reflect that there was at least a school of thought within Dutch overseas governance that was far more concerned with controlling territory rather than trade. Chapters six and seven deal with the two men's dismissal from office by trying to reconstruct the changes in the composition of the company directors between the moment the governors were appointed and the moment they were dismissed. In addition, these two chapters both examine changes in the areas ruled by the companies. Did other company officials turn against the governors and did these officials' critical reports play a role in the governors' dismissals? Could local society influence the decision-making on tenure? Chapter six asks these questions for Johan Maurits, while chapter seven asks them for Rijckloff van Goens. Finally, the conclusion will connect the two stories by comparing the thematic and conceptual issues underlying the three specific stages in these men's careers. From the careers of the two chosen cases I will distill a number of mechanisms that seem to have played an important role in creating and sustaining their careers. This is also the moment at which to reflect further on the divergent fates of the companies that the two men served. To what extent did different methods of selecting talent for the companies' service lead to the different fates of the companies themselves? Finally, the conclusion will present a number of hypotheses that can be used as tests in future research.