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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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2. Appointing a stadholder for Brazil

Governing Dutch Brazil, September 1634 – September 1636

This chapter explores the appointment of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen to the position of governor-general of Brazil. Although the person of Maurits is one of the most studied aspects of Dutch Brazil, this particular episode has received only scant attention in the literature. His appointment raises an interesting and important question: why did the WIC appoint to its most valuable colony, and its main hope for commercial success, a man who not only had never been overseas before, but who also had no experience in managerial or government positions and who was so inexperienced in commerce and finances that he had nearly bankrupted himself in building a new stately house in the center of The Hague? This is the question that needs to be answered adequately before we can understand the appointment of Johan Maurits to the governor-generalship of Brazil. In answering this question, this chapter also explores the various ideas on how to organize colonial government that were prevalent in the WIC in the mid-1630s. Additionally, it briefly addresses the comparison with the office of the governor-general in the VOC's Asian domain, and argues that this was in fact a very different position from that held by Johan Maurits. Finally, the chapter will answer the question of which example, if any, the WIC modeled its Brazilian administration on in the summer of 1636.

This chapter thus devotes attention to the specific meetings of WIC directors and main shareholders (*hoofdparticipanten*) in the two-year period from summer 1634 until the appointment of Johan Maurits in August 1636. I will draw mostly from the secret minutes of the meetings of the XIX in summer 1636, when it was decided that Maurits should be asked to take on the role.¹⁹⁴ Although these minutes provide valuable insight into the way in which the XIX decided to opt for Maurits, they are unfortunately written in a very concise form. This means that the exact reasons for choosing Maurits have not been recorded, although the minutes *do* record that an argument for this choice was made in this meeting. The reconstruction of Maurits' appointment is thus a process of analysis, interpretation and argumentation, rather than the result of finding a previously unknown source stating such reasons.

This chapter argues that we should look at the appointment procedure from two sides: supply and demand. The latter side of this equation concerns what the WIC required of a governor-general. These requirements, I argue, were twofold. On the one hand, the Brazilian realities of the WIC demanded a man who could act as a neutral intermediary between the army commanders and the political councils. The Dutch political realities, on the other hand, demanded a man whose appointment could be interpreted as representing WIC support for the pro-war party surrounding the court of the stadholder. The position of the WIC in the political landscape changed in the mid-1630s, with profound effects for both company and governor.

The supply side is the person of Maurits and his qualities and shortcomings. Unfortunately we do not know whether the XIX considered other men for the job. However, since no others are mentioned by name, even in the secret minutes, this seems unlikely. I will argue that Johan Maurits filled both the Brazilian and the Dutch requirements very well, despite the seeming disadvantages of having no experience overseas or in commerce. The qualities Johan Maurits had to offer were thus at the intersection of the demands of the different branches of the

¹⁹⁴ To be found in NL-HaNA 1.05.01.01, OWIC, inv. no. 2.

WIC. As a result, he was appointed. Interpreting Johan Maurits' appointment as the result of two different sets of demands will also help us to understand why, and the way in which, he was called home in 1642.

This chapter first explores the various ways in which the WIC tried to establish a government for its Brazilian colony in the period 1630-1636. It then turns to the Dutch Republic to analyze the Dutch requirements, the person of Johan Maurits and the procedure that was followed in summer 1636, and which resulted in Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen being appointed to the position of governor-, admiral- and captain-general of the 'Brazilian Coasts'.

Company government in Brazil, 1630-1636

The original charter of the WIC had envisioned the institution of a governor-general responsible for all the WIC's colonies (then yet to be acquired) in the Atlantic Basin, along the lines of the office just established by the VOC in Asia. By the time the WIC took Bahia in 1624, however, a less centralized model had been implemented. This perhaps reflected a realization on the part of the company directors that the newly acquired colonies, ranging from New Netherland in the north to Brazil in the south, could not be well administered by a central government in the Americas. The new arrangement envisioned a nine-member council, with a rotating presidency mirrored on the XIX themselves. This already shows that the WIC moved away from the VOC model of colonial administration quite quickly. Rather than implementing a powerful central colonial administration that could potentially serve as a counterweight to the influence of the directors back home, the WIC opted for a council whose members were directly appointed by the chambers, rather than by the XIX. This is an early indication that the WIC struggled to entrust its servants in the colonies with power and indeed found it difficult to act as a single entity, as the influence of the individual chambers suggests. The quick loss of the colony precluded implementation of this system.¹⁹⁵

When the WIC's forces took Olinda and Recife in 1630, the task of creating a system of governance for the new colony was one of the first to be undertaken, based on the 1624 model for Bahia. Throughout the next six years, the company struggled to find an acceptable and workable formula in Brazil to effectively pursue the war against the Portuguese, as well as profitably manage the sugar-producing lands. Initially the XIX had decided that management of the colony would be left in the hands of a 'political council' of nine members, who would take decisions on a majority basis. These nine seats would be divided among the chambers in the Republic, based on the same rules governing voting powers in the XIX (the *negensteutel*).¹⁹⁶ This, in turn, was based on the *ordre van Regieringe* of 1629. This latter document would affect *all* WIC colonies in the Atlantic by placing the civilian administration of the colonies in the hands of civilian councils appointed by the XIX and pledging allegiance to the States-General.¹⁹⁷ This already illustrates that, in the case of the WIC, governance of the colonies was much more closely intertwined with the corporate governance of the WIC *in* the Republic. This was in marked contrast to the VOC, as we shall see. The shorter distances and the opportunities to receive information from the Atlantic in a continual stream, rather than only at certain periods of the year, perhaps serve as an explanation for this difference. This kind of direct involvement of the

¹⁹⁵ A. Bick, *Governing the Free Sea: The Dutch West India Company and Commercial Politics, 1618-1645* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton 2012) 142.

¹⁹⁶ Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 43.

¹⁹⁷ Den Heijer, 'Bewindhebbers, gouverneurs en raden van bestuur', 32.

company directors was feasible in the Atlantic, but impossible in Asia. As a result, the WIC looked more to the Republic than to its Asian sister for inspiration on how to govern its colonies. In addition, the council was, in practice, never fully manned and never had more than five civilian members.¹⁹⁸

For nine months, from January 1633 until September 1633, the governance of the colony was entrusted to two delegated directors, Matthias van Ceulen (Amsterdam chamber) and Johan Gijsselingh (Zeeland chamber).¹⁹⁹ They were appointed because of the difficulties experienced by the company in Brazil and the perceived need for more empowered government. The tenure of Gijsselingh and Van Ceulen coincided with a change in the fortunes of the WIC in Brazil. With the help of former Portuguese slaves who had run away from the Portuguese forces surrounding Recife, the WIC army was able to end the Portuguese stranglehold and 'break out'. In late 1633, the company's forces took the important fort at the mouth of the Rio Grande do Norte. This fort was renamed Fort Ceulen in honor of the director. Army affairs were then increasingly left to the gifted duo of Sigismund von Schoppe and Christoffel Arciszewski. The territory under the company's control gradually expanded throughout 1633 and 1634, until it stretched from Cape Santo Agostinho in the south to the Rio Grande in the north. Additionally and crucially, increasing numbers of *plantadores* were persuaded to return to their plantations. By the time Van Ceulen and Gijsselingh returned to the Republic in September 1634, the colony finally seemed set for a bright future. Governance was left in the hands of a new political council, while Von Schoppe was named commander-in-chief of the army, with the title of governor.

However, things took a turn for the worse in late 1635, when a Spanish fleet of thirty sailing under Don Luis de Rojas y Borgia arrived in Brazil and disembarked troops at Jaraguá. These troops reinitiated guerilla warfare against the WIC lands, especially targeting sugar plantations and sugar mills. At the same time, the political council became embroiled in internal disagreements about the best response and continually bickered with the army commander, Sigismund von Schoppe,²⁰⁰ who advocated an aggressive policy. In his view, the only way to counter the guerilla warfare was to strike south and attack the guerilla bases in the captaincy of Porto Calvo. Although the civilian council nominally accepted his proposal, excuses were continually found to postpone such a move. The risks of an offensive strategy deterred the civilian council from adopting Von Schoppe's strategy. Rather than ending the war by going on the offensive, the council preferred to defend the areas already conquered and to deploy the troops in exhausting counter-guerilla operations. Consequently, many soldiers were transferred from the army to civilian or maritime activities.²⁰¹ At a certain point it became clear that if the dispute between the civilian and army command were to be resolved, the government of Brazil needed to be altered. This issue was discussed again in summer 1635, with the minutes of the meetings of the Amsterdam chamber recording the following on July 5 of that year:

*Has been approved, once mr. Conradus has returned, to convene a separate meeting to discuss the government of Brazil.*²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Den Heijer, 'Bewindhebbers, gouverneurs en raden van bestuur', 32.

¹⁹⁹ Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 43. Van Ceulen's first name is spelled in a number of different ways in the sources: Matthias, Mathias and Matthijs. I have chosen to use the first spelling throughout the text.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem, 65-66.

²⁰¹ Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 65.

²⁰² NL-HaNA 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 14, *Notulen van de kamer Amsterdam, Januari 1635-December 1636*.

Although minutes for this meeting unfortunately no longer exist, we do know that, on July 19, the idea of again sending specially empowered directors to the colony was contemplated, but apparently rejected.²⁰³ The discussion on sending directors back to Brazil was not confined to the Amsterdam chamber, with the minutes of the meetings of the main shareholders (*hoofdparticipanten*) in the Zeeland chamber from the same period revealing that the idea was voiced there as early as January 1635. By March of that year, the *hoofdparticipanten* recommended sending director Gijsselingh back to Brazil.²⁰⁴ However, although the company's two major chambers were thus in accord, no decision was reached, and the new administration for Brazil would have to wait another year.

This same period also saw some early experiments in the regulation of trade. Private trade for the company's stockholders (on company ships) had been allowed in 1634, but was banned again two years later, mainly due to pressure from the chambers in Zeeland, De Maze, and Stad en Lande.²⁰⁵ These chambers were the most likely to lose out if free trade was allowed, given that most trade with Brazil would then be conducted from Holland – or, more specifically, Amsterdam – and the Noorderkwartier. This underlines the WIC's importance as a mechanism for peripheral regions to secure a captive market overseas.

This provided the context in which Arciszewski's proposal for a stronger, one-headed leadership was finally accepted. Arciszewski was a Polish nobleman who had served in the States' army before enlisting in the WIC. He had been in Brazil from the start, arriving with the fleet of 1630. Ever since 1631, Arciszewski had advocated appointing a strong governor to command the army and navy and who would also have a powerful say in civilian administration. His argument was based on his personal experience of the inability of military and civilian company officials to work together, with both sides of the WIC's administration of the colony frequently clashing over strategy and their respective jurisdictions.

The choice of a new governor was, therefore, a sensitive matter. Choosing one of the two colonels (Von Schoppe or Arciszewski) already in Brazil could cause tensions between these two military men, while it would perhaps also be unwise to promote one of the old council members to such an elevated position. These Brazilian realities thus advocated for a newcomer in Brazil, but from such a social background that his position would be accepted by those who had served in Brazil for a long time, especially Von Schoppe and Arciszewski. What was required was a person with military experience, but also with enough authority to overawe the civilian council.

Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen: a German nobleman in the Dutch army

Johan Maurits (then thirty-two years old) was a remarkable choice for appointment to high colonial office in Brazil in 1636, although his perceived successes in office tend to overshadow this fact. The original reasons for choosing him are given short shrift in the literature. Boxer, for example, writes the following:

²⁰³ As appears in the minutes of the chamber of Amsterdam on July 19, 1635. NL-HaNA 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 14, *Notulen van de kamer Amsterdam, Januari 1635-December 1636*, folio 51 recto.

²⁰⁴ NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, OWIC, inv. no. 34, folio 53 recto.

²⁰⁵ P.J. van Winter, *De Westindische Compagnie ter kamer Stad en Lande* (The Hague 1978) 79.

*‘We do not know how many people the Heeren XIX considered in this connection before they made their final choice; but we do know that after consultation with the States-General and the stadtholder, their choice fell on Johan Maurits, count of Nassau-Siegen.’*²⁰⁶

Johan Maurits was born in Dillenburg in 1604, the thirteenth child of Jan VII of Nassau-Siegen and his first child by his second marriage.²⁰⁷ This high number of siblings caused acute problems within the family in later years as the estate had to be divided among them, thus precluding a handsome inheritance for Johan Maurits. Having so many children also weighed heavily on the income of Jan VII, who had already been impoverished by his support for the war against Spain. Johan Maurits consequently received little formal schooling before the family’s money ran out and, as a result, he entered the army in 1620, aged sixteen.²⁰⁸ His father was the son of John the Elder, the elder brother of William the Silent, and so his first cousins included both the stadholders Maurits and Frederik Hendrik. This link with Frederik Hendrik seems to have been of crucial importance to the future career of Johan Maurits. As a young officer in the army, he spent the summer months on campaign, and the winter months at the stadholderly court in The Hague, where he continued his studies and mingled with high society.²⁰⁹

We should not be deceived by the family name, however, as there were circumstances mitigating against Johan Maurits’ success. In the first place, the fact that the family estate did not lie in the Republic meant that the family did not qualify to be admitted to the *ridderschap* of any province. This closed the door for exercising political influence and working through the provincial networks of self-advancement. The family’s impoverished state also meant that there was no hope of buying a title (or *ridderbofstad*) in another province. Johan Maurits was therefore unable to use the Provincial States. This was a serious problem as officer appointments and promotions in the army were often decided by the province on whose *repartitie* the particular company was paid.²¹⁰ The Nassau name should not, therefore, deceive us; unlike the stadholders, the Nassau-Siegen family had very limited political power and thus limited access to the patronage relations that could ensure advancement. His relationship with the stadholders was thus the only road open to Johan Maurits, and this proved critical in his rapid advancement in the army. Both more senior positions (colonel and higher) and field appointments could be decided on by the stadholder without conferring with the provinces. Thus, Johan Maurits was quickly promoted by his relatives, from pikeman in the guard of Frisian stadholder Willem Lodewijk in 1619, to cavalryman in 1620, captain in 1624, lieutenant-colonel in 1626 and full colonel in 1629.²¹¹

Johan Maurits was present at various important sieges and battles during this period, including the sieges of Oldenzaal (1626), Grol (1627), ’s Hertogenbosch (1629), Venlo, Roermond and Maastricht (1632), and Rheinberg (1633), besides numerous small skirmishes.²¹² His great breakthrough came in 1636, during the Siege of Schenkenschanz. This border fortress

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, 66.

²⁰⁷ M.E.H.N. Mout, ‘The Youth of Johan Maurits and aristocratic culture in the early seventeenth century’, in: E. van den Boogaart, H.R. Hoetink and P.J.P. Whitehead (eds.), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen: A Humanist Prince in Europe and Brazil, Essays on the occasion of the tercentenary of his death* (The Hague 1979) 12-38, 13.

²⁰⁸ P.J. Bouman, *Johan Maurits van Nassau, de Braziliaan* (Utrecht 1947) 6-8.

²⁰⁹ Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 68.

²¹⁰ Olaf van Nimwegen, *‘Deser landen krijchsvolck’: Het Staatse leger en de militaire revoluties (1588-1688)*, (Amsterdam 2006) 34-35.

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, 36.

²¹² Bouman, *Johan Maurits*, 12-15.

at the forks of the Rhine had been taken by the Spaniards by surprise. Its crucial position in the German-Dutch border lands and its domination of all upstream river navigation meant it was imperative for this fortress to be recaptured as soon as possible. From early August 1635 until mid-April 1636, therefore, the Dutch army besieged the fortress. Commanding the operations was Count Willem van Nassau-Siegen, assisted by his half-brother, Johan Maurits.²¹³

The fortress finally fell on April 18, after an attack led by Johan Maurits. This success made him a famous man in the Republic.²¹⁴ Importantly for his future career, he also met the young Elector of Brandenburg, Friedrich Wilhelm, when the latter visited the siege works. Back in 1632, however, and even before this newfound fame, Johan Maurits had acquired a plot of land in the center of The Hague, where he had begun building a stately home. The house, the Mauritshuis, was to become both an icon of seventeenth-century Dutch architecture and the reason for Johan Maurits' near-bankruptcy in 1636.²¹⁵ The architect, probably Jacob van Campen, had been allowed a great deal of freedom in designing the house, and this drove up the costs. Johan Maurits had inherited a third of the lands of Siegen in 1623 and he may have overestimated his income from this source.²¹⁶ During the previous years, Johan Maurits had spent much of the winter months – the off-season for military campaigns – at the stadholder's court in The Hague, where he had come into contact with important people such as Constantijn Huygens, the secretary of the stadholder and who became a personal friend and neighbor. Crucially, the meetings of the XIX were also held in The Hague and this allowed a quick conclusion to the negotiations in 1636, when Johan Maurits was offered the governorship of Brazil.

Appointing Maurits: the Dutch side

Johan Maurits thus had some experience as a field commander at a junior level, and may have received training in strategy and tactics from his brother and the stadholder. There were, however, many junior field commanders in the Dutch army. What made Johan Maurits special was his close link to the stadholder, Frederik Hendrik. The question then becomes why the WIC thought association with the stadholder was important in the first place. To understand this we first need to understand the political and military situation in the Republic in the mid-1630s and the role and ambitions of Frederik Hendrik.

The military situation in the Republic had stabilized after the siege of 's Hertogenbosch in 1629. The Spanish counterattack through the Veluwe and to Amersfoort in an attempt to force the lifting of the siege was the last time Spanish troops managed to achieve a foothold in the core of the Republic. The Spanish taking of Schenkenschanz in 1635 proved stillborn because of the large Dutch counterattack throughout the winter of 1635-1636. With the situation at the front slowly stabilizing, the war went into a new phase, with lower stakes. No longer was the war being fought over the very survival of the Republic itself, but more over the conclusion of a treaty on the most profitable possible terms. This also marked the end of the period of major successes for Fredrik Hendrik, who had earned his nickname *Stedendwinger* (taker of cities) because of the successes in the early period of his stadholdership.

²¹³ G. de Werd, *Schenkenschanz: de sleutel van den hollandschen tuin* (Cleves 1986) 49. For a general strategic background, see: Olaf van Nimwegen, *'Deser landen krijchsvolk': Het Staatse leger en de militaire revoluties, 1588-1688* (Amsterdam 2006) 208.

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 55-56.

²¹⁵ For the architecture of the Mauritshuis, see: J.J. Terwen, 'The buildings of Johan Maurits van Nassau', in: Boogaart, Hoetink and Whitehead (eds.), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen*, 55-141.

²¹⁶ *Ibidem* 9, 19.

The military stability on land in the 1630s set the stage for some important political battles in city halls, the Provincial States and the States-General about the conduct and proper goals of the war, the size of the army, and the navy's importance in protecting against the increasingly damaging depredations of the privateers from Dunkirk. The WIC had been founded in large part to pursue the war against the Iberian enemies in the Atlantic. More so than in the case of the VOC, the WIC was a product of war and intended to make war.²¹⁷ The company's privileges with regard to the use of force in its charter area placed it in the position of an acting admiralty for that area since it was also allowed to hand out letters of marque on its own authority. By giving the company the right to defend its own shipping, the admiralties were spared the responsibility of operating in Atlantic waters, thus allowing them to focus on the convoy battles and cruises against Dunkirkers. The war also provided an opportunity for the WIC to attack Iberian shipping and colonies, thus offering an important source of income for the company.²¹⁸ Brazil was at the heart of the company directors' vision for their South Atlantic shot at empire and profitability. For this, continuation of the war was a crucial precondition. The WIC directors were thus more inclined to support the pro-war factions surrounding the stadholder. This sentiment was especially marked in the province of Zeeland, a hotbed of both Calvinist activity and Orangism. However the ending of the threat to the very existence of the Republic put the WIC in an adversarial position with regard to the increasingly high numbers of merchants who suffered heavily at the hands of the Dunkirk privateers and who favored a negotiated peace. This increasingly served to isolate the WIC from mainstream merchant society in a way not encountered by the VOC. This also meant that the WIC faced increasing political opposition as its position in the South Atlantic became direr.

Although these developments were still well in the future in 1636, the background to the appointment of Johan Maurits is becoming increasingly clear. Johan Maurits was mentioned for the first time by name in the secret minutes of the meeting of the XIX on July 28, 1636:

Monday July 28, 1636

In opening the meeting mr. Conradus gave a speech stating that it should be inquired upon which conditions gen. Count Maurits van Nassau should be willing to let himself be employed by the West India Company as Governor-, Admiral- and Captain-General of the Brazilian Coasts. He also gave the circumstances under which he had formed his opinion [that Maurits should be chosen]. It was approved that this should be undertaken with alacrity.²¹⁹

Unfortunately, though the minutes say that 'Conradus' (the Latinized version of Albert Coenraets Burgh) gave his opinion as to why Johan Maurits should be asked, this opinion itself has not been recorded. It must have been a convincing case, however, as the meeting agreed that Johan Maurits should be asked. It was further agreed upon that all members of the meeting should remain silent on this decision and that '*it being a matter of pure management, no consultation* [with the

²¹⁷ P. Emmer, 'The West India Company: 1621-1791: Dutch or Atlantic?', in: L. Blussé and F. Gaastra, *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas trading Companies during the Ancien Régime* (Leiden University Press: Leiden 1981) 71-95, 72-73.

²¹⁸ Between 1623 and 1636, the WIC captured 547 Iberian ships, valued at 7 million guilders and with cargoes worth another 45 million guilders. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 66.

²¹⁹ NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 2, page 153. *Secrete Notulen van de Heeren XIX*, page 253. '*Bij de heer Conradus opening gedaen sijnde, dat sijne Gen[ade] Graeff Maurits van Nassau beboort versocht sijnde op redel. Conditien sijn persoon wel mocht laten imployeren in dienst van West Ind. Comp. als Gouverneur Adm. Ende Cap.n Generael van Brasilsche Custen ende van circumstantien waerdoor sijn E. sulcks opinie hadde geconcipieert. Is goetgevonden opde gevoebelijckste voet sulcx te onderstaen.*'

separate chambers] *was required.*²²⁰ The decision to appoint Johan Maurits to the position of ‘governor-, admiral- and captain-general’ of Brazil was taken solely by the XIX, without consulting the chambers on this issue.

It is worth examining the background of the men at the meeting of the XIX to see whether their personal backgrounds can tell us something more about their reasons for choosing Johan Maurits. Table 3 gives the names of delegates at the meetings of the XIX in the summer of 1636. The column ‘Remarks’ provides additional information on the individuals’ involvement with the new governmental model for Brazil.

Table 3: Individuals present at the meetings of the *Heren XIX* in summer 1636

| Name | Chamber | Remarks |
|---|------------------|---|
| G. van Arnhem | States-General | Signed contract with Maurits |
| Albert Coenraets Burgh (Conradi) | Amsterdam | Proposed Johan Maurits as governor-general; signed contract with Johan Maurits and councils |
| Reynier Reael | Amsterdam | Signed contracts with councils |
| Pieter Duvelaer | Zeeland | Signed contract with Maurits and councils |
| Johan Raijt | ? | |
| Jan van der Marct | Amsterdam | Signed contract with councils |
| Johan Gijsselingh | Zeeland | Became member of the council in Brazil |
| Pieter van de Velde | Zeeland | |
| Cornelis Nicolai | De Maze | Signed contract with Maurits and with councils |
| Hogehoeck | Amsterdam | |
| Eduart Man | Amsterdam | |
| P. Varlot | ? | |
| Daniel van Liebergen | Amsterdam | |
| Adriaen van der Dussen | De Maze | Became member of the council in Brazil |
| P. Ben | Hoorn | Signed contract with Maurits |
| Johan de Laet | Amsterdam/Leiden | Signed contract with Maurits |
| Christoffer van Ewsum | Stad en Lande | Signed contract with Maurits |
| Pieter Evertsz. Hulft | Amsterdam | |
| Matthias van Ceulen | Amsterdam | Became member of the council in Brazil |

Source: NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 2, *Secrete Notulen van de Heeren XIX*, for July and August 1636.

Although this list is not comprehensive, it gives an initial indication of the men responsible for appointing Maurits. Crucially, as they themselves had decided that this was purely a matter of management, they did not consult with the directors of their respective chambers. The answer to the question of why Johan Maurits was chosen should consequently be sought within this restricted circle. The figure of Dr. Albert Coenraets Burgh (also Coenraetsz/Coenraed/Conradi)

²²⁰ NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 2, p. 153. ‘...als sijnde een saecke van pure directie, verstont hier in geen ruggespraek beboorde gehouden te worden.’

looms especially large as he was the person who had proposed Johan Maurits in the first place. Having encountered Burgh in chapter one, this is an apt place to provide some more detail. Burgh (a member of the Amsterdam city council from 1618 to 1647) was in many ways a typical Amsterdam regent and occupied many different positions throughout his career in municipal, provincial and generality offices. Besides being a WIC director he was, for instance, a captain of the militia, a curator of the *illustere schole* (the later University of Amsterdam), a mayor of Amsterdam in 1638, a deputy of the States of Holland for the pilotage and fire beacons on the Zuiderzee, a member of the Council of State in 1639, a member of the board of the Amsterdam in 1644-1647 and an extraordinary ambassador to Muscovy in 1647, where he died. Crucially, he started his career in the administration of the city of Amsterdam (as a council member) in November 1618, when he was appointed by stadholder Maurits.²²¹ At first glance, this may seem a crucial clue. After all, the men who were appointed by Maurits in 1618 were supposed to be fierce counter-remonstrants, loyal to Orange and pro-war, as well as being opponents of the states-party of Hooft and Van Oldenbarnevelt, who favored remonstrant (or Arminian) theology, were amenable to peace with Spain and argued for the rights of provincial and municipal government against the Generality and the stadholder. Burgh, however, seems to have been an exception. He owed his appointment to his familial ties to Pauw, of whom he was a second cousin.²²² Pauw, the powerful burgomaster of Amsterdam, had worked with Maurits to purge the council. However, Burgh turned on the counter-remonstrant faction in the council as it was he who, in 1625, encouraged Joost van den Vondel to compose *Palamedes*, a tragedy on the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt.²²³ This was just one of many changes of opinion displayed by Burgh as although he was one of the primary supporters of the *Assurantiecompagnie* in 1628-29, by 1634 he had become an important opponent.²²⁴ Why then did Burgh support Johan Maurits? The lack of details on the dealings of Burgh (which has frustrated generations of historians) and the absence of more precise records of the meetings of the XIX means that no watertight answer can be given. But we can still present a convincing hypothesis of possible reasons for Burgh to nominate Johan Maurits. The first of these is the evolving relationship between the figure of the stadholder and the city of Amsterdam. Frederik Hendrik was less rigid than his predecessor, Maurits, in religious affairs and came to support the council in 1628 in stifling protests by counter-remonstrant factions within the city.²²⁵ As a result, the faction led by the intermarried families of Bicker and De Graeff were firmly installed as the dominant factions in Amsterdam until 1666.²²⁶ Albert Coenraetsz. Burgh deftly managed this transition.

Until the second half of the 1630s, the relationship between Frederik Hendrik and the council in Amsterdam was comparatively cordial. The appointment of Johan Maurits to Brazil could consequently be construed as an attempt by an Amsterdam regent and WIC director to show support for the stadholder and perhaps as repayment of services rendered. However, Frederik Hendrik also had a more personal connection to Coenraetsz. Burgh as he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the proposed *Assurantiecompagnie* of 1629. Burgh, along with three other merchants (Elias Trip, Hans van Loon and Henrick Broen), had submitted a draft charter

²²¹ J.E. Elias, *De Vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1578-1795, deel 1* (reprint, Amsterdam 1963) 327.

²²² Ibidem, LXX.

²²³ Van Cleef Bachman, *Peltries or Plantations: The Economic Policies of the Dutch West India Company in New Netherland 1623-1639* (Baltimore and London 1969) 164.

²²⁴ Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam, deel 1*, 327-328.

²²⁵ *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam*, 269.

²²⁶ Ibidem. Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam* LXXXIII-LXXXIV.

for this company in December 1628.²²⁷ The historiography of this proposed company is somewhat divided, depending on the author's background. The company proposed always bringing to sea sixty escorts to escort Dutch merchantmen in European waters from Dunkirk privateers. In return for this service, all merchantmen entering and departing the Netherlands would have to buy maritime insurance from the company, and the company would also be granted a monopoly on Dutch trade along the North Coast of Africa and the Levant until Smyrna, as well as the Greek Islands, with the right to build fortifications, conduct diplomacy and so on; in other words, all the usual perks of a Dutch chartered company. In his naval history, Elias focused on the maritime insurance and warship-equipping side of the proposal, while Klein focused on the connections with the established Levant traders who were dissatisfied with the performance of the *directive van de Levantsche handel*, chiefly Elias Trip.²²⁸ Klein suggests that the other proponents used Burgh, who was better-connected politically, as a broker to advance their ideas since he, unlike the others, did not fit the profile of being engaged in the Levant trade.²²⁹ Although Frederik Hendrik enthusiastically supported the idea, it was stifled in 1629 by opposition from most cities in Holland, including Amsterdam. The issue of the *Assurantiecompanie* thus also presents itself as a case of factional strife in which an underlying faction not well represented in the council attempted to gain control of a vast slice of Dutch trade and commerce, as well as the important financial instrument of naval insurance.²³⁰ Yet by the time the plan was proposed again in 1634, Burgh had evolved into one of its main opponents.²³¹ This may have reflected his changing position in the Amsterdam council and which would see him elected mayor four years later – clearly he had by then gained the trust of the dominant Bicker-De Graeff faction. The appointment of Johan Maurits to Brazil could thus also be seen as part of the personal political maneuvering of Albert Coenraetsz. Burgh, who tried to balance his position in Amsterdam with currying the favor of the stadholder. Although these assertions cannot be proved as there is simply not enough material about Burgh to be conclusive, they do place the appointment of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen to 'governor-, admiral- and captain-general of Brazil' in a more complex political and economic environment.

These titles are themselves quite revealing as they closely mimic the stadholder's official title of captain-general of the army and admiral-general of the fleet. The way the office of the governor-general of Brazil was conceived consequently owes more to army hierarchy and the stadholderate than to the governor-generalship in the VOC area, where the office was less strongly military in orientation and more mercantile and commercial. This suggests that the WIC did *not* take the idea of appointing a governor-general from the VOC. Rather than 'translating' this office from the VOC's Asian world, it can be argued that the WIC's governor-general was a translation of the Dutch office of the stadholder. This background may also help explain why a Nassau was chosen for the job.

²²⁷ '1628-29. Concept van eene Compagnie van Assurantie en van haar Octrooi', *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht*, 23 (Kemink en Zoon, Utrecht 1867), 138-178.

²²⁸ Elias, *Schetsen*, deel 1, 122-128. P.W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw: Een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt* (Van Gorcum: Assen 1965) 317-320.

²²⁹ Klein, *De Trippen in De 17e Eeuw* 319-320.

²³⁰ Of the four men, only Burgh had a seat on the council.

²³¹ P.J. Blok, 'Koopmansadviezen aangaande het plan tot oprichting eener compagnie van assurantie. 1629-1635', *Bijdragen en mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht, een-en-twintigste deel* (Amsterdam 1900) 1-160, 143-150.

Indeed, the office of the stadholder is much more important for understanding the dynamics *within* the WIC than it is in the case of the VOC. The stadholder served as the head of the military in the Republic, while many officers in the WIC army had served in the States' army before joining the WIC. Some, like Johan Maurits, retained their army commissions while serving the WIC, thus providing the stadholder with a direct link to high WIC officials. The stadholder could also serve as a platform through which WIC subjects and servants could voice their frustration about the directors' management. This had happened in the year leading up to the appointment of Maurits, when the political councils in Recife had sent one of their own, Carpentier, to the Republic with three letters, one each for the company directors, the States-General and the stadholder. In these letters of February 21, 1636, the councils in Brazil complained about being forgotten and ignored by the company's management. The letter to the stadholder thus contained the following explanation for their petition to the stadholder:

*'For our lords and masters the honorable directors of the West India Company have, either through inability or negligence, let this grand wholesome conquest deteriorate, not sending such quantities of people, of ships, of supplies and ammunition, of money and merchandise, and all that is very necessary for the conservation of this great conquest. Therefore we have so repeatedly written, lamented and prayed so many times.'*²³²

The stadholder was thus already involved in Brazilian affairs even before the appointment of Maurits. It could make sense, therefore, for the company directors to choose someone close to Frederik Hendrik so that the stadholder would effectively push for support for the company with the Generality and the admiralties.

From then onwards, things moved quickly. The minutes reveal that, by August 5, a select committee had spoken to Johan Maurits, had sought and received the approval of the stadholder, had talked to the States-General about Johan Maurits retaining his army position, and had also drafted a contract for him.²³³ Although the minutes of the meetings of the XIX suggest Johan Maurits to be largely a passive party, this is likely a reflection of the institutional nature of the sources. Johan Maurits' insistence that he should retain his army commission shows that he was in fact quite shrewd. Not only did retaining his position mean that he would have a job upon return to the Netherlands, but also that in the years to come he would not simply serve the WIC, but also the Generality. Johan Maurits used this to great avail to argue for his continued correspondence with both the States-General and the stadholder, against the wishes of the XIX. This was highly significant, as will become apparent in chapters six and eight. In addition, by August 5, a contract for the newly selected *Hooghe en Secrete Raden* (the High and Secret Council), which would work with Maurits, had been drafted. The choice of council members is again revealing: both Johan Gijsselingh and Matthias van Ceulen were appointed, as was Adriaen van der Dussen. Johan Maurits would thus be assisted in Brazil by three directors of the company, representing the three biggest chambers: Amsterdam, Zeeland and De Maze. In addition, two of these men (Gijsselingh and Van Ceulen) had been in Brazil before. Even, therefore, in appointing a powerful governor who would centralize government in the colony, the company's separate

²³² NL-HaNA 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 51, item 38, letter of the Recife council to Frederik Hendrik, February 21, 1636.

²³³ NL-HaNA 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 2, p. 255. *Secrete notulen van de Heeren XIX*, July 1636.

chambers tried to exert their influence in the colony. Johan Maurits would thus be backed up by men directly representing the interests of the chambers.

It is especially interesting to see that the XIX were in close contact with both the stadholder and the States-General during the process of appointing Johan Maurits and the new council. The speed at which the process took place is also astounding when one considers the normally very long-drawn-out decision-making process in the WIC's central organ. By late August 1636, Maurits had set sail for Brazil with four ships.²³⁴ The fact that this was fewer than the thirty-two ships initially promised to him would become typical of the relationship between motherland and colony in the coming years: grand promises of help and support, but meager actual support.

Commanders, directors and governors-general

From the appointment procedure it already becomes apparent that the WIC may have designed its office of governor-general primarily to suit its candidate, rather than looking for a candidate to fill a pre-existing vacancy. It is worthwhile testing this hypothesis, however, by comparing the office of Johan Maurits to other high WIC commands and the VOC's office of governor-general to see what the differences and similarities were between his position and that of other high colonial officers in the service of the Dutch chartered companies. This section will therefore compare the powers granted to Johan Maurits as governor-general of Brazil to the powers devolved to the VOC's governors-general, as well as to the composition of councils in other WIC colonies in the mid-1630s so as to identify any models that may have influenced the company in designing the office of the governor-general of Brazil.

In describing the exploits of Johan Maurits in Brazil, a comparison is often made with the VOC's governors-general in Batavia, as the following quote illustrates:

*To compare Jan Pieterszoon Coen and Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen with one another is to place a burgher focused on trade and profit against a humanistically educated and military skilled nobleman, related to the Orange stadholders.*²³⁵

Although the comparison between Johan Maurits and Coen may seem puzzling at first glance, this comparison with the VOC governors-general has been made more often in the literature.²³⁶ The main point of this comparison often seems to be to elevate Johan Maurits to the role of a 'humanist prince in the New World', while disparaging other Dutch colonial administrators.²³⁷ A well-known and especially disparaging evaluation of the role of the governor-general in Asia is given by Scammel in his well-known work *The First Imperial Age*:

²³⁴ Casper Barlaeus and S.P. L'Honoré Naber, *Nederlandsch Brazilië* (Dutch translation of the *Rerum per Octennium...*, The Hague 1923) 38.

²³⁵ Horst Lademacher, 'Jan Pieterszoon Coen und Johann Moritz van Nassau-Siegen – Vergleich zweier Exponenten früher niederländischer Kolonialpolitik', in: G. Brunn and C. Neutsch, *Sein Feld war die Welt: Johann Moritz van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679), Von Siegen über die Niederlande und Brasilien nach Brandenburg* (Münster 2008), 93-104, 93. 'Jan Pieterszoon Coen und Johann Moritz van Nassau-Siegen miteinander zu vergleichen heißt einen auf Handel und Gewinn geeichten Bürger einem mit den oranischen Statthaltern verwandten, humanistisch gebildeten und militärisch geübten Adligen gegenüberzustellen.'

²³⁶ Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 66.

²³⁷ The phrase 'a humanist prince in the New World' also derives from Boxer.

*His [the governor-general] rule was authoritarian, not to say absolute, with the city's 'free burghers' denied, on Company orders, any elected representation. The governor-general controlled that army of clerks and book-keepers an empire of commerce demanded and such small groups of colonists as VOC policy permitted. The heads of the various Asian factories, commanders of forts and residents at the courts of local rulers bound to the Company by treaty were all supposedly under his authority.'*²³⁸

According to Scammel, the VOC's governor-general had near-absolute vice-regal powers, unchecked by others. Closer examination of the VOC's governmental model reveals this claim, however, to be largely untrue. Lower-ranking servants of the company were not bound to the governor-general personally, but instead to the High Government of the Indies as a whole (consisting of the governor-general and the council of the Indies). The instruction of 1617, which regulated the relations within the council, stipulated that the governor-general would act as president of the council of the Indies. Until 1646, this council was composed of five ordinary members, in addition to four extraordinary members commanding outlying posts such as Ambon, Banda, Coromandel and Tayoan (Taiwan).²³⁹ Though the governor-general presided over this council, he could not ignore its opinion. Decisions were taken by a majority vote, and the governor-general could thus be outvoted. It was only if votes were tied that the governor-general had the privilege of forcing a decision by casting a double vote. In some cases, the council did indeed systematically oppose the governor-general and force his resignation.²⁴⁰ In other words, rather than allowing for absolute rule by the governor-general, the VOC's governmental model offered some checks and balances on the power of its most important servant.²⁴¹

In comparing the office of the governor-general in Batavia with that of Johan Maurits in Recife, there are some notable differences. Firstly, Maurits had only three council members to work with. This made the tie-breaking double vote all the more valuable: Johan Maurits needed only one council member on his side in order to get his way. Secondly, Johan Maurits was personally the commander-in-chief of the army and naval forces in Brazil, and allowed to appoint army officers on campaign.²⁴² The VOC, by contrast, had originally designated the command over the army and navy to two separate councilors in its High Government. As a rule, the VOC's governor-general did not leave Batavia to lead the troops in the field, whereas although Maurits was checked by a council, the small size of this council meant that the governor-general was all the more powerful. Unifying the role of president of the council and commander-in-chief of the army and navy thus represented a clear break with the VOC model, as did the size of the council. We may thus reject the claim that the office of Maurits was modeled on the VOC position of the same name. Did the WIC, then, draw inspiration from its other Atlantic possessions?

When comparing the office of Johan Maurits with other WIC commands, the first striking thing is the difference in nomenclature: Maurits was the only governor-general that the WIC ever appointed; other areas under the WIC's control had to make do with a vice-director, director or director-general. This reflects the importance of Brazil in the WIC's plans, and

²³⁸ G.V. Scammel, *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion c.1400-1715* (Cambridge 1989) 155.

²³⁹ J. Aalbers, *Rijckloff van Goens: Commissaris en veldoverste der Oost-Indische Compagnie, en zijn arbeidsveld. 1653/54 en 1657/58* (Groningen 1916) 12-13.

²⁴⁰ This happened to Rijckloff van Goens during his tenure as governor-general in 1677-1681.

²⁴¹ F. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (7th revised edition, Zutphen 2002) 66.

²⁴² Though not the officers of troops in fortresses; these officers were appointed by the council as a whole.

perhaps also the higher status of Johan Maurits as an individual. It is important to keep in mind that, in 1636, the WIC controlled very little territory in Africa: only Fort Nassau on the Gold Coast, and the island of Gorée. In the Americas meanwhile there was the vast but sparsely populated territory of New Netherland in the north, and scattered holdings in the Caribbean: Bonaire had been taken in 1633 and resorted under New Netherland; Curacao had been conquered a year later, followed by Aruba in 1636; Tobago was colonized in 1632, but this was a private venture of the Lampsins family of Zeeland; of the Leeward islands, Saba had been taken in 1632 and St Eustatius in 1636, while the WIC had also had interests in the Virgin Islands since 1625. In addition, there were private ventures on the 'Wild Coast' of the Guyanas, mostly from Zeeland. This list is thus not an impressive showcase for a WIC empire in the Atlantic in the mid-1630s. In addition, many of these proprietary colonies were attacked by Spain in the years to come (including Tobago, the Virgin Islands and St. Maarten in the 1640s). The WIC also contemplated whether some of its conquests, for example Curacao, should be retained.²⁴³ This underlines that the weight of the WIC's attention in 1636 was directed to the South Atlantic, where it hoped to extend its possessions in Brazil and attack the Portuguese in Angola and on the Gold Coast. The one exception was the colony of New Netherland in North America, which was supposed to be integrated into the South Atlantic system as a supplier of grain to the plantation colonies in Brazil.²⁴⁴ A comparison of the position of the governor-general of Brazil with that of the director of New Netherland can thus perhaps best highlight some of the similarities between these two offices, as well as some of the things that made the office of governor-, admiral- and captain-general exceptional.

Although, by the mid-1630s, the colony of New Netherland was still small and of relatively limited significance to the WIC, it could have served as a model for the administration of Brazil. Since 1625, responsibility for governing the North American colony had been entrusted to a director and a council. This council was initially composed of four men besides the director, but this number quickly increased to nine. Additionally, captains of WIC ships visiting the colony had a seat and a vote on the council during their stay in the colony.²⁴⁵ Although this latter provision met with resistance from the colonists, who were only allowed two seats on the council, the provision was maintained until 1647.²⁴⁶ The director and council were collectively responsible for governance, and on occasions the director was outvoted by the council.²⁴⁷ Although there are few documents still extant on the organization of governance in the North American colony's early years, there were clearly some important differences between this and the government of Brazil, with the most important of these being, again, the size of the council. The small size of the High and Secret Council in Brazil put Johan Maurits in a very privileged position compared to his contemporary colonial colleagues. This difference would have been immediately apparent through the titles of captain and admiral-general that were bestowed on Johan Maurits in addition to that of governor-general.

²⁴³ For example, NL-HaNA 1.05.01.01 OWIC, inv. no. 34, fol. 52 recto. The minutes of the *hoofdparticipanten* of Zeeland mention that it was in their opinion best to abandon the island.

²⁴⁴ J. Jacobs, *Een zegenrijk gewest: Nieuw-Nederland in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1999), 194.

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 108-109.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 111.

²⁴⁷ J. Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and London, 2009) 65.

Conclusion

The appointment of Johan Maurits to the position of ‘governor-, admiral- and captain-general of the Brazilian Coasts’ was the result of processes that had been underway ever since the capture of Recife and Olinda back in 1630. The WIC had struggled to find a governmental model that would work in the troubled conditions of Brazil. The progression of different models and the back-and-forth discussions on the issue provide a fascinating insight into the goals, objectives and worries of the company directors. They also provide insight into the ideological aspects of the WIC’s overseas administration. This insight touches on questions of identity and citizenship in the colonial context that have not been discussed in full in this chapter, but are worth examining in future research. Throughout the early 1630s the WIC tried to govern Brazil from the Republic, or at least to make Brazilian governance conform to Dutch models, as testified to by the fact that the chamber division of the seats in the original political council in Recife in 1630-1633 was based on the same nine-fold division used in the Netherlands. When this council proved ineffective, the directors sent two of their own to govern the colony. The tenure of these two men, Van Ceulen and Gijsselingh, was a unique period in early modern Dutch colonial administration as it was the only time when the two worlds of company governance – Dutch and colonial – overlapped. The fact that the issue of sending plenipotentiary directors to the colony was debated again in the summer of 1635 shows that the experiment was deemed successful enough to be worth repeating. Indeed, the council appointed in summer 1636 to serve alongside Johan Maurits was staffed solely by company directors, including Van Ceulen and Gijsselingh. The fierce criticism emanating from Brazil, both targeted at the way Brazil was governed, as well as at the company directors and their perceived lack of interest in Brazil, may have been an important consideration in drafting a fundamental change in Brazil and opting for a more powerful governor. This was not merely a question of internal company policy as, from an early stage, the Brazilian administration had lobbied with both the States-General and the stadholder. This latter figure loomed especially large in the appointment procedure for Brazil and seems to have provided a template for the new governor.

Much of the literature links the position created for Johan Maurits to that of the governors-general in the VOC Asian world. This chapter has argued that the comparison with the VOC is not enlightening as, in practice, these two functions operated quite differently, despite sharing the same name. The VOC’s governor-general in Asia had to deal with a more powerful and larger council and thus had to try to find a consensus among a majority of the council. In addition, and unlike Johan Maurits, the VOC’s governor-general did not enjoy direct control over the company’s armed forces. By contrast, Johan Maurits was in a far more powerful position vis-à-vis his three-man council.

The comparison with the administration of New Netherland has shown that this was not a direct model for Brazilian government either. Although the governance model of a council, headed by a director or governor of sorts, was widespread in the early modern Dutch colonial empire, the exact configuration of the Brazilian case is unique. This chapter has argued that the figure of the stadholder may have served as inspiration for the role of Johan Maurits. Indeed, the position of Johan Maurits as a German nobleman fits well with such a role. The title conferred on Johan Maurits also resembled that of the stadholder. Rather than modeling its highest office on the VOC’s governor-general, who in fact acted more as a main strategist and bookkeeper-in-chief, the WIC modeled its highest office in Brazil on that of the stadholder by combining civil and military function in one person. The importance of this military aspect of Maurits’ position

should be heavily emphasized. The abundance of literature on his more cultural achievements, including architecture, botany, zoology, astronomy and religious tolerance, tends to overshadow his role as a military man.²⁴⁸ For a seventeenth-century nobleman, warfare and support of the arts were, of course, part and parcel of a public performance. Emphasizing the role of Johan Maurits as a military man is not, therefore, to negate or deny the importance of his cultural exploits in displaying his power and position, but serves rather to rectify a historiography that has for too long been unbalanced in the other direction. This military side was the most important part of his job, however. Groomed by his higher-placed family members for high command, Johan Maurits could play the part of commander-in-chief of army and navy in Brazil, while also being able to fulfill the more civil side of his assignment. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Wätjen, whose work continues to be at the genesis of the literature on Dutch Brazil, talked about the *statthalterschaft*, rather than a form of governorship.²⁴⁹

This interpretation of the appointment and position of Maurits should also inform our understanding of the WIC in the mid-1630s. The close association with the office of the stadholder suggests that the WIC directors saw themselves as part of the pro-war faction in the Republic. Close association with the stadholder, which was achieved by appointing a Nassau to command in Brazil, could be seen by the directors as attractive for several reasons. The WIC directors thought the company stood to gain more from continuation of the war than from a peace settlement, with the memory of Piet Hein's capture of the silver fleet still fresh in everyone's mind. Meanwhile there were still many lands that could be conquered from the Portuguese in the South Atlantic, including preferably Angola as, crucially, the WIC still needed access to enslaved Africans to have any chance of making the sugar plantations in Brazil work. The appointment of Johan Maurits stresses the military side of the assignment. The WIC had originally been conceived as a combination of a war-making/privateering and a trading/settling hybrid, with separate accounts for each types of activity.²⁵⁰ By the mid-1630s, however, its bellicose role had overshadowed the other half of the company's corporate identity. Thus a choice for continued war, along with support of the stadholder, was vital. This would have crucial and long-lasting effects on the company's future prospects. Indeed its choice for the warring party increasingly put the company at loggerheads with many of the merchants in the Republic, who were suffering heavily at the hands of Dunkirk privateers. Merchant opinion in the cities of Holland, and especially Amsterdam, increasingly came to demand an end to the conflict. This proved catastrophic for the WIC in later years, when it became more and more dependent on support from the Dutch state. Johan Maurits thus represents a case where an individual could capitalize on existing ties – to the stadholder – to achieve a prestigious promotion. This contrasts sharply with the early career in the VOC of Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens, who, rather than capitalizing on existing networks to achieve a high position immediately upon entry into the company, demonstrated the active networking that was a prerequisite for a successful career for those from a modest background.

²⁴⁸ In recent years, attention has focused especially on the religious aspect; see, for example, Israel, J. and S.B. Schwartz, *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil (1624-1654)* (Amsterdam 2007).

²⁴⁹ H. Wätjen, *Das Holländische Kolonialreich in Brasilien* (The Hague and Gotha, 1921) 74.

²⁵⁰ From the charter of the company, point XVI: 'Datmen alle ses Jaaren sal maecken generaele Reeckeninge van alle vuytreedingen ende retouren, mitsgaders van winste ende verlies van de Compagnie, Te weeten een van negotie, ende een vandeer oorloge elck apart.'