



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**In the shadow of the company : the VOC (Dutch East India Company)  
and its servants in the period of its decline (1740-1796)**

Nierstrasz, J.C.

**Citation**

Nierstrasz, J. C. (2008, November 5). *In the shadow of the company : the VOC (Dutch East India Company) and its servants in the period of its decline (1740-1796)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13267>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13267>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
Glossary .....	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
1. The historical debate: the decline of the VOC .....	2
1.1 The relationship between Company and servant.....	5
2. A new approach to decline .....	7
2.1 Institutional change .....	8
2.2 Case studies.....	10
2.3 Comparisons.....	12
<b>PART I.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Power &amp; Trade.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 1: India, caught in a dead-end street.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.The Europeans in Asia: power and trade.....</b>	<b>18</b>
1.1 A spicy advantage to trade.....	19
1.2 Change in government.....	23
<b>2 The Indian battlefield: a land of opportunity.....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.1 The Anglo-French struggle for power.....	29
<b>3. An unresponsive VOC.....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1 A furtive response to fundamental dangers.....	35
3.2 A failed design to emulate .....	40
3.3 Negotiating with indigenous rulers.....	42
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Ceylon, a cinnamon paradise in jeopardy.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>1. Enforcing a monopoly .....</b>	<b>47</b>
1.1 Status quo .....	50
<b>2. Estrangement and conflict .....</b>	<b>53</b>
2.1 Negotiating internal conflict.....	57
2.2 Increasing pressure on the king.....	62
2.3 External factors.....	64
<b>3. Solving dilemmas by war.....</b>	<b>68</b>
3.1 Military intervention .....	71
<b>4. A new status quo .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>PART II.....</b>	<b>81</b>

Monopolies & Private trade.....	<b>81</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Deconstructing the intra-Asian monopoly of the VOC(1743-1796)....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>1. Monopolies and trade: the VOC's intra-Asian monopoly .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>1.1 The limits of the intra-Asian trade of the VOC .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>1.2 An alternative solution: Dutch private trade (1743-1796) .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>1.3 A dual system of trade .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>2. Freedom of trade and decline .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Private trade with Batavia.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>1. Private trade to Batavia.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>1.1 Negotiating private trade privileges .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>1.2 Guaranteed profit and extended benefits .....</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>2. Private trade from Batavia to the Coromandel Coast.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>2.1 Protecting privileges .....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>2.2 Social exclusion.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Country trade on the Coromandel coast.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>1. The VOC Empire and country trade .....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>1.1 Institutional advantages .....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>1.2 Unregulated control.....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>1.2 Use of VOC facilities .....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>2. Long-distance country trade.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>2.1 Financing trade .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>2.2 An international community of trade .....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>PART III .....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Profits &amp; Fortunes.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Company profits and servants fortunes .....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>1. Structural use of informal institutions .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>1.1 Balancing interests .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>1.2 The paradox of less to offer but more to take .....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>2. Hierarchy as a tool of control .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>2.1 Personal interest in appointments .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>2.2 From nepotism to redistribution of wealth.....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Remuneration and corruption .....</b>	<b>177</b>

<b>Introduction</b> .....	177
<b>1. A troubled relationship</b> .....	178
<b>1.1 A legal share</b> .....	180
<b>1.2 Down the hierarchy</b> .....	184
<b>2. Corruption</b> .....	185
<b>2.1 Up the hierarchy</b> .....	194
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	196
<b>Chapter 8: Promotions and Patronage</b> .....	199
<b>Introduction</b> .....	199
<b>1. The supremacy of the Republic</b> .....	199
<b>1.1 Investing in ‘friendship’</b> .....	203
<b>1.2 Persuading patronage in Asia</b> .....	209
<b>2. Social reproduction</b> .....	213
<b>2.1 Balancing personal interests</b> .....	219
<b>2.2 Distribution of wealth</b> .....	222
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	226
<b>PART IV:</b> .....	<b>229</b>
<b>Conclusion and Comparison</b> .....	<b>229</b>
<b>Chapter 9: Dutch decline and British dominance</b> .....	231
<b>Introduction</b> .....	231
<b>1. Monopolies and private trade</b> .....	232
<b>2. Empire and private trade</b> .....	238
<b>3. Profits and fortunes</b> .....	241
<b>4. Power and trade</b> .....	248
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>253</b>
<b>1. Primary sources</b> .....	253
<b>1.b Unpublished primary sources</b> .....	253
<b>2. Secondary sources</b> .....	257
<b>Samenvatting</b> .....	<b>268</b>
<b>Curriculum vitae</b> .....	<b>272</b>



## Acknowledgements

The best compliment I have ever received is that I never seem to be bothered by the chaos surrounding me in daily life, as in my head I am structured and well organized with a clear sense of direction. There is no better illustration of this point than my academic career. It feels as if I have been working on my PhD for ten years, with many digressions outside History. In hindsight, however, every little step I have taken was essential to gearing up towards writing this thesis. For me, all these little steps simply are part of a process in which I have sorted out my many imperfections. Luckily many people have kindly lent me a helping hand along the way. Without their kindness, this thesis may never have poured forth from my pen and I am sure it would have ended up smothered beneath the turmoil of my daily life. I am more than grateful for all the help I have received and I want to express my gratitude here.

My fellow TANAPers, Ryuto Shimada, Muridan Widjojo, Sri Margana, Hoang Anh Tuan, C’hui Hsin-hui, Nirmal Devasiri, Binu John, Anjana Singh, Ghulam Nadri, Alicia Schrikker, Kwee Hui Kian, Liu Yong, Bhawan Ruangsilp, Ricky Goedeman, and Ota Atsushi, have been a huge inspiration to me in their courage in chasing their dreams all the way over the world. Marijke van Wissen-van Staden was always there to give me a helping hand, for which I am grateful.

The CNWS provided me with a stimulating environment in which it was possible to be both historian and social scientist. My special thanks go out to Ilona Beumer, Willem Vogelsang and Wilma Trommelen who have always provided help for all my logistical problems, even in my world-wide travels. I would like to thank Prof. Ter Haar, Sabine Luning, Willem Vogelsang and Guita Winkel for hosting the Cohort Meeting as well as my fellow Cohort-members for participating. Their comments find their reflection in my work and I cherish the memories of all the cross-disciplinary discussions we had. Furthermore, I would like to thank my teacher and class of Academic English for all the wise lessons. I hope they will see that I have taken good notice of their advice in this thesis. My colleagues in the History Department always provided me with stimulating talks and sound advice.

This thesis would not have been possible without the friendly hospitality of various archives all over the world. These institutions in The Hague, Paris, Aix-en-Provence, Jakarta and Colombo, have provided me with an animated, vital environment for my scientific fieldwork. A special thanks goes out to the foundation de Prix de Paris, which funded my stimulating stay in France of a year. In reassuring me in my capacity to write English, the corrections by Hanna Nierstrasz, Jessica Roitman and Rosemary Robson have helped a great deal in writing this story in style. I also need to mention my roommates Filipa and Catia Antunes, who have often kept me company over lunch and who have a gift for providing me with sound advice. Bas, Els and Naures have all acted as a sounding board in the many moments of frustrations and happiness accompanying a

PhD, making it easier to cope. With Damian, Hans and Andreas I have spend many times philosophizing about life which was a pleasant distraction in my daily work. My friends, Michiel, Kim, Mandy, Aafke, Fokko, Verzana and Berber have always succeeded in taking my mind off my work, for which I am thankful, so thank you guys. The camaraderie I have found in my posse, Jess, Guus and Tijmen, is of an unprecedented level. As we developed true friendship, they really made me feel at home at university. Last but not least I would like to thank my family. My parents have always been my greatest fans. They have always supported me and shielding me from people who did not believe in me, stimulating me to pursue my own dreams instead of succumbing to other people's frustrations. My brother and sisters, Hugo, Maartje and Hanna, as well as their partners and kids, Jennifer, Pieter, Veia, Emelie, Koert and Thije, thank you for your patience and support. My warmest thanks goes out to Esther, who always stood beside me in rough times, making this thesis just as much her work as it is mine.

## Glossary

<i>Adigar</i>	One of the two principle ministers in the Kandyan kingdom.
<i>Chaliassen</i>	The Sinhalese caste responsible for peeling the cinnamon.
<i>Corle</i>	Administrative subdivision of a dessavony.
<i>Dessave</i>	Administrative head of a province.
<i>Dispensdorp</i>	Villages leased out as payment for offices.
<i>Eijsch</i>	The yearly demand of goods issued from Europe and Batavia for the official needs of the Company.
<i>Fiscal</i>	Public prosecutor.
<i>Free-burghers</i>	Europeans under VOC-rule, but not in VOC service.
<i>Gamme</i>	Sinhalese village.
<i>Heren XVII</i>	Board of directors of the VOC in the Republic.
<i>Hoge Regering</i>	The highest VOC authority in Asia, seated in Batavia.
<i>Kobangs</i>	Gold bars from Japan.
<i>Lakh</i>	A unit in the Indian numbering system equalling one hundred thousand.
<i>Lascorin</i>	indigenous soldiers.
<i>Ola</i>	official message written down on palm leaf.
<i>Opperhoofd</i>	Chief.
<i>Nawab</i>	Viceroy of a province in the Mughal Empire.
<i>Pagodas</i>	Unity of currency current on the Coromandel Coast.
<i>Parsse</i>	Official meeting, where the inhabitants pay homage to their lord.
<i>Plakkaatboek</i>	Compilation of <i>plakkaten</i> .
<i>Plakkaten</i>	Proclamations issued by the VOC.
<i>Sangha</i>	Buddhist monastic order.
<i>Sepoy</i>	An indigenous Indian employed as soldier, but dressed and disciplined in the European style.
<i>Vidaan</i>	Chief of a Sinhalese village.



## **Abbreviations**

ANRI	Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia.
COAM	Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer.
EIC	East India Company.
HR	Hoge Regering.
KITLV	Koninklijk instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Royal Netherlands Institute of South-East Asian and Carribean Studies)
NA	Nationaal Archief of the Netherlands (The Hague).
Rs	Rupees.
Rds	Rijksdaalders (Rixdollars).
SLNA	Sri Lanka National Archives.