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

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## Chapter 8: Promotions and Patronage

### Introduction

For the sake of convenience, largely owing to a lack of sources, networking within the VOC has often been simply equated with kinship ties and traced solely through family-trees. Without denying the family element in networking, this thesis concentrates on a different conspicuous aspect. Networking will be seen as a system for the redistribution of wealth and power with an inherent tendency to reproduce itself.<sup>578</sup> Social reproduction is often defined as the processes which sustain or perpetuate characteristics of a given social structure or tradition over a period of time. The family element can also be traced to the servants' desire to reproduce the prevailing system in order to preserve privileged positions within a particular social group. This corresponds to the servants' view of this position as their personal possession, from which as much personal benefit as possible should be squeezed. Since income and social position were strongly linked to hierarchy, servants used nepotism to ensure prosperity for their offspring. Such tactics had to be adapted if a servant did not have any family in Asia, in which case they were probably less preoccupied with social reproduction in the East and more with earning money which would ensure his fortune and consequent social position at home.<sup>579</sup>

#### 1. The supremacy of the Republic

The supreme power over all promotions in Asia lay with the Gentlemen Seventeen in the Republic. The Directors decided on appointments to the highest positions, those in the High Government and through this power influenced all promotions. Competition in the race for a seat on the High Government was fierce, as such a position once gained spelled

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<sup>578</sup> Alan Smart, Gifts, Bribes, and Guanxi: 'A Reconsideration of Bourdieu's social Capital', in *cultural Anthropology* 8 (3) 388-408; Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques, sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris 1994); Marcel Mauss, *The gift, forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies* (London 1954).

<sup>579</sup> Van Eck and Van Teylingen seem to fall more into this group of servants.

power, fortune and an increased opportunity to exercise the lucrative pursuit of patronage. Newcomers on the Council were initially appointed to the position of extraordinary councillor, which gave them less power than that wielded by an ordinary member. The Directors naturally also appointed the second-in-charge of the High Government, the Director-General, who would normally be promoted to be the next Governor-General when the present incumbent retired or passed away. Through their power of appointment of the members of the High Government, the Gentlemen Seventeen in the Republic influenced the allocation of all other positions in Asia. Since they decided on the top positions in Asia, they had direct access to the patrons in the High Government and used their influence to gain positions in Asia for their protégés from the Republic. The powerbrokers in Asia could only ignore such a call at their peril since their own further advancement depended on the Directors. Secure in this power, the Gentlemen Seventeen probably profited from their position just in the same manner as much as their servants in Asia did. Nevertheless, the margins of acceptable personal profit seem to have been smaller in the Republic.

The whole progress of Van Eck's career shows that the influence of directors in the promotion process was dispersed and divided between institutions and powerful patrons in Asia. In the Republic itself, the organization of the VOC power of appointment was cut up along the lines of the Chambers, which each had its own commensurate share of a say in every decision. Amsterdam was by far the largest Chamber, but the opinion of the other Chambers, certainly that of the Chamber of Zeeland was not to be ignored. When a position on the High Government was at stake, it was important to canvas sufficient support in the Chambers. These regional and family loyalties played a not negligible role in the final choice, and politics in the Republic was also influential in the eventual decision. Via his relations in Zeeland, Van Eck received support from the representative of the principal nobleman of Zeeland, Jonker Jan van Borselle van der Hooghe (1746-1806). Both Van Eck and Van Borselle were related to the most powerful family in Gelderland, the Van Lynden clan.<sup>580</sup> Heartily endorsed by Van Borselle, Van Eck enjoyed strong position in Zeeland and obtained help from different highly placed

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<sup>580</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 15 November 1760, brothers to Van Eck. Van Borselle's help is proven by a letter to Van Eck recommending the brothers Charlet and by the fact that in his reply Van Eck thanked Van Borselle for his help in having Van Eck elected as extraordinary councillor.

officials, who in their turn asked him to help Adriaan Moens.<sup>581</sup> As long as Moens' good behaviour merited his position, Van Eck intimated steady support in return for their help.<sup>582</sup> Van Eck assigned him new tasks by appointing him to the Secret Council and naming him President of the Court of Testamentary Matters and the Civil Council, although this promotion did not pass undisputed.<sup>583</sup> By helping Moens, Van Eck cemented his link in Asia to Governor-General Van der Parra, who was also connected to Zeeland and its Chamber.<sup>584</sup>

Extenuated lines of communication demanded a compromise be made in attributing power over the other promotions. Decisions about promotion in the levels below the High Government were left to the discretion of the High Government in Batavia and only in exceptional cases did the Gentlemen Seventeen intervene. Consequently, with occasional exceptions, most promotions were decided in Asia by the High Government and a VOC servant was actually installed long before the formal approval arrived from the Republic. This set-up was prompted by sheer common sense leaving a position open and awaiting a decision from Holland for more than a year would have crippled the effectiveness of the VOC. This offers an explanation of why during the largest part of his career, Van Eck's main efforts were devised for the purpose of gaining help for enhancing his career from Batavia. None the less, the wily Directors made sure that their power was felt when the most important decisions had to be taken. As a matter of course, distance also limited the possibilities open to a VOC servant in Asia to exert any influence on the decision-making process on promotions by the Directors. Obviously

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<sup>581</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck. Even Moens' father recommended his son to Van Eck. He wrote to Daniel Radermacher, Elector of the city of Middelburg and Director of the VOC. He did the same to Cornelis Rien van Citters, alderman and councillor of the city of Middelburg and Director of the VOC. Gabriels, 167, The family Van Citters was the most powerful family in Middelburg and consequently in the whole province. At this time it was a strong supporter of the Orangist Stadholder clan. The fourth VOC director of Zeeland who supported Van Eck was David Grenier Verwout Noiret (1747-1778). Van Eck also thanked him for his help in helping him to seat on the high Government.

<sup>582</sup> Meanwhile Moens continued his work as paymaster.

<sup>583</sup> NA, Van Eck, 38, 9, 20 January 1764, Van Eck to Noiret. Van Eck thought Moens would have his hands full, since he also had to supervise the Secretariat of the Police. NA, Van Eck, 20, 757, 25 July 1763, Van Eck to Diderich. Favouring Moens in his occupancy of multiple functions was not undisputed in Asia as another servant claimed one of the positions assigned to Moens. He was denied on the ground that Moens was only holding two positions at the same time provisionally, which did not contravene official regulation.

<sup>584</sup> Gastra, *Zeeuwen in de VOC in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw*, 10; NA, 20, 761, 30 July 1763, Van Eck to Van der Parra. Van Eck thanked Van der Parra for the support he had received from Samuel de Jeune in Amsterdam in his promotion to the High Government, showing a clear link between Zeeland and Amsterdam.

servants working far away in Asia could not represent themselves personally in the Republic and had to rely on their friends and family at home to undertake this for them. After his appointment as Governor of the Coromandel Coast, Van Eck felt secure enough to set his sights on the High Government and began to plan for this eventuality. The friends of Van Eck in Batavia lost no time in alerting him when a seat on the High Government fell vacant.<sup>585</sup> In 1760, when two came up for grabs simultaneously Van Eck informed his friends and family in Holland to throw themselves into having him appointed to one of these, but on this occasion they were unsuccessful.<sup>586</sup> Obviously, although Van Eck did not have recourse to any kinship ties in Asia, his position in the Republic was quite strong. In Gelderland, Van Eck enjoyed the support of his cousin<sup>587</sup>, Andries Baron Schimmelpenninck van der Oye van de Pol (1705-1776) who was a leading figure and nobleman.<sup>588</sup> Around 1760, Schimmelpenninck had found favour with the faction of the future Stadholder, Willem IV and consequently controlled the distribution of the most coveted official positions in Gelderland. It stands to reason that this man must have helped Van Eck at some stage in his career.<sup>589</sup> Those in the Republic who had supported Van Eck's quest for a position in the High Government, whether family or not were determined that their support did not go unrewarded. Consequently, they showered him with congratulations, while swamping him with requests for favours, giving a textbook example of reciprocity at work.<sup>590</sup>

Since the system was complex and spanned the globe, it essentially had to be based on trust in the reciprocation of favours. With his links to the aristocracy in the Republic, Van Eck was inevitably linked to the Stadholder's entourage. In actual fact, the

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<sup>585</sup> NA, Van Eck, 27, 33, 31 January 1760, Faure to Van Eck. Faure pointing out that two empty seats had to be filled.

<sup>586</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 357, 15 October 1759, Van Eck to father and NA, Van Eck, 9, 1, 5 November 1760, brothers to Van Eck. One brother indicated he had remained in Amsterdam for a fortnight to plead Van Eck's case at length, adducing his merits and long service with the Company. Although the Gentlemen XVII found the request reasonable and well founded, it was turned down. His brother claimed he had done his utmost. The reason for the failure was a letter to the Gentlemen Seventeen, which his brother supposedly had read, in which Governor-General Mossel indicated that in these difficult times he preferred Van Eck to remain in his post on the Coast, instead of returning to Batavia.

<sup>587</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 14, 1 November 1764, aunt to Van Eck. The fact that Van Eck was related to this family is confirmed by one of his cousins, also bearing the surname Van Eck, who assured Van Eck of the respect of their mutual cousins the Schimmelpennincks.

<sup>588</sup> Gabriels, *Dienaren*, 184-185.

<sup>589</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck. since he recommended Pieter Schuijling in a letter to Van Eck.

<sup>590</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck.

Stadhouder's support came in return for Van Eck's help to Van Teylingen. When the news of the death of the mother of the future stadholder Willem V (who now came under the tutelage of his mentor Van Brunswick) reached the Coast in 1759, Van Eck paid his respects and offered his condolences to Van Teylingen on the death of his patroness. He intimated that he hoped this would not mean a change in fortune.<sup>591</sup> Van Teylingen had earlier boasted that the Princess of Orange, the wife to the deceased Willem IV and mother to Willem V, had sent a letter of recommendation to Governor-General Mossel on his behalf. Van Teylingen's cousin Van der Mieden, President of the Court of Holland and Zeeland,<sup>592</sup> had persuaded her to do so. Even after the Princes of Orange died, Van Teylingen still retained the support of such influential men as the Duke of Brunswick and the Count of Wassenaar, as his family was in favour with both them.<sup>593</sup> Van der Mieden even indicated to Van Teylingen's father that he had not understood why his son had not been promoted to second-in-charge of the Coast directly after Van Eck was promoted to the office of Governor.<sup>594</sup> With the support of Twickel the Count of Wassenaar, Van Teylingen was assured of the help of various gentlemen in Amsterdam. Van Eck's link with Secretary of the Council in the Republic, Pieter Steijn, gave him entree to the Hasselaars, Steijns and Mossels. With the support of Van Teylingen's network, Her Royal Highness had sent a letter to Mossel which led to Van Eck's promotion to the position of Governor of the Coromandel Coast.

### 1.1 Investing in 'friendship'

From the point of view of Batavia, family networks were certainly important, but their principal use was as solid indicators of trust, social and financial involvement. Obtaining patronage by marrying into an established and powerful VOC family in Batavia unquestionably helped to build a successful career in Asia. Such as step ensured

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<sup>591</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 327, 17 July 1759, Van Eck to Van Teylingen.

<sup>592</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 47, 1 July 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>593</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 50, 6 July 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>594</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 52, 14 July 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

social standing, enhanced career opportunities and provided capital for private ventures. The few women with the desired descent available played a pivotal role in this process. In order to marry a potentially influential bride, employees were willing to pay massive amounts. Unquestionably, the financial advantages accruing such a marriage for an employee far outweighed the importance of love.<sup>595</sup> Women only had the freedom to choose when their choice happened to match the political preferences of the *pater familias* and this oldest male in the family jealously guarded the family's social position.<sup>596</sup> Marrying into a powerful family network acted as an insurance, providing protection against unforeseen and potentially harmful incidents.<sup>597</sup> Apart from providing protection, everybody was well aware that if an employee had a powerful patron, family or not, and it was from this perspective that he was judged.<sup>598</sup> Sometimes, having powerful protectors obviated the necessity of employees having to depend on their direct superiors. In such an invidious situation, if these superiors were to retain control they had to seek the support of their own patrons.<sup>599</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> For example, when a former VOC chief in Japan visited Batavia he bought off the previous engagement of the Widow Van der Does for 30,000 rix-dollars, in order to be able to marry her himself NA, Van Eck, 26, 3, 12 February 1759, anonymous to Van Eck. (...)

<sup>596</sup> NA, Van Eck, 27, 17, 20 January 1760, Riemsdijk to Van Eck. When a niece of Van Riemsdijk (at that time member of the High Government and later on Governor-General 1775-1777) wanted to marry a 'mere' captain, Van Riemsdijk quietly intervened. He succeeded in preventing the engagement by instigating the transfer of the captain to a distant VOC settlement. He then professed his preference for a suitable replacement. Unfortunately, the candidate himself had no intention of marrying Van Riemsdijk's niece, as he had set his sights on an alliance with an even more powerful family. He later married the daughter of Vermont, thereby securing an alliance with Mossel and De Klerk.

<sup>597</sup> NA, Van Eck, 35, 33, 15 September 1763, Van der Spar to Van Eck. After several garrisons had been slaughtered in Ceylon at the beginning of the Rebellion, the High Government was looking for someone to blame. In an official report sent to the Gentlemen XVII they pointed finger at the Commander of Gale, Abraham Samlant, for having handled the situation inadequately, as he had not employed proper strategies nor had he coordinated the retreat from the forts. Nevertheless, the correspondence of Governor Van Eck, who had been charged with conducting the official investigation into the affair and subsequently writing the official report, offers another perspective. Even before the investigation commenced, Van der Spar, member of the High Government, had asked Van Eck to blame Samlant. The reason was to protect the reputation of Van der Spar's nephew who had been the commander of one of the murdered garrison. NA, Van Eck, 38, 28, 1 April 1764, Van Eck to Van der Spar. Van Eck promised to do what Van der Spar asked of him and subsequently blamed Samlant.

<sup>598</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 36, 1 June 1759, Mossel to Van Eck. As soon as word had come that Canter Visscher ignored official VOC instructions and let French soldiers enter into the fort of Sadraspatnam, resulting in its loss, Mossel intervened and asked Van Eck not to be too severe. Canter Visscher enjoyed the support of a VOC Director who in turn was a good friend of Mossel. Before an enquiry had even been started, Mossel had already instructed Van Eck on the desired outcome.

<sup>599</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 54, 28 July 1759, Van Teylingen to van Eck. After encountering problems with Vlaming, Van Teylingen did not dare correct him since he had been recommended by Mossel and asked Van Eck to do so on his behalf. NA, Van Eck, 20, 333, 20 August 1759, Van Eck to Vlaaming and 20, 335,

Kinship ties certainly helped and having family in the upper echelons made life relatively easy, but it was not all plain sailing and it also meant that individual success depended on the success of the entire family. Individual prospects of success could quickly fade with the loss of familial protection. As Governor of the Coast, Van Eck had been ordered by Governor-General Mossel to give his nephew a good position. Conscious of what was riding on his success, Van Eck put enormous effort into finding him a suitably good position.<sup>600</sup> The combination of finding a position which combined safety and the promise of fortune was essential to Van Eck's decision, but he was also fully aware that appointing an inexperienced VOC servant to a senior position created problems.<sup>601</sup> As he was handicapped by his lack of experience, the position of the nephew was not as strong as presumed, since it had certainly not escaped anybody's notice that he had prevailed through his family's connections. As long as the nephew's patron was in power, the other employees had a vested interest in helping him. Van Eck claimed they all clearly realized that a helping hand was tantamount to helping their own fortune.<sup>602</sup> After his uncle and patron died, and his influence was buried with him, the nephew was no longer considered a worthwhile investment. The period of protection had been too short for him to acquire the necessary skills and experience to take care of himself and his career suffered a severe setback.<sup>603</sup>

Trust was reflected not only in family networks and attributed to friendship, but it was also repaid at different levels of reciprocity. It is a tremendous task to measure the reciprocity of favours as they were played out at different levels exactly. Both Van Eck and Van Teylingen strove to keep their relationship as cordial as possible. A good illustration is that they refused to charge each other commission on private business

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20 August 1759, Van Eck to Van Teylingen. It also reflected badly on a superior, if his subordinates behaved in a manner thought unbecoming for a servant.

<sup>600</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 664, 7 July 1761, Van Eck to Mossel. Van Eck made up his mind to send Mossel's nephew to Sadras. Despite pressure from Mossel to make his nephew Chief of Palicol, Van Eck decided that the position of second-in-command at Sadras was the best option, since it was still open as a consequence of several promotions and the political situation on the spot was more tranquil than that in Palicol.

<sup>601</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 659, 3 July 1761, Van Eck to Mossel and NA, Van Eck, 20, 555, 22 October 1760, Van Eck to De Klerk. To remedy his inexperience in the service of the VOC, the nephew was put under the guidance of an old and very senior employee. With his guidance, the nephew would be able to cope with his task and learn to deal with the indigenous rulers.

<sup>602</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 522, 25 August 1760, Van Eck to Bronsveld.

<sup>603</sup> Perhaps the fall of Van Teylingen can be explained by a similar loss of power of his family in the Republic.



transactions. Van Teylingen declined a commission of 5 per cent after he had taken care of some business for Van Eck during a trip to Madras, because `Van Eck had always given him what he wanted in a gracious and a generous way`. Obviously, he wanted to keep this balance by not being paid for his work.<sup>604</sup> Van Teylingen's father talked of the affection and esteem, which Van Eck had shown for his son and for his family.<sup>605</sup> He hoped to respond on an appropriate occasion by unfeigned acknowledgement and indebted gratitude.<sup>606</sup>

When success was the servant's portion, family and friends were entitled to a share. Van Eck's success in the war against Kandy attracted enormous attention and the door to the most powerful people in the Republic was opened. Van Eck was very pleased to hear of the approval of the Prince of Orange and his mentors Brunswick and Willem Bentinck for his work. He received letters from the Duke of Brunswick recommending people in his service. One such case concerned a certain Captain-Lieutenant Von Arnheim who was serving in Ceylon.<sup>607</sup> Van Eck did his utmost to comply with what was asked of him by promoting Von Arnheim to Chief Adjutant in the planned campaign against the king of Kandy.<sup>608</sup> Van Eck stressed that this was naturally attributable to the good behaviour of the person involved. Another indication of Van Eck's gratitude to Brunswick is the fact that he sent the latter a present.<sup>609</sup>

Attaining a higher position opened up new opportunities and attracted friends, to whom it was necessary to reciprocate. In Van Eck's case his attainment of the position of

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<sup>604</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 90, 15 October 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>605</sup> NA, Van Eck, 36, 3, 9 October 1764, father of Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>606</sup> NA, Van Eck, 38, 6, 20 January 1764, Van Eck to D van Eck.

<sup>607</sup> And who according to the letter, had served under the brother of Van Brunswick.

<sup>608</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 800, November 1764, Van Eck to Van Brunswick. (...)Uw Hoog wel Geborene bij desen ook dienden kennisse te geven, van zeker kleijnaardig dog fraaij van boven tot onder gewerkt en uijtgebeeld stukje verzilverd kanon, van omtrent twee voeten lang, door zijn Hoog wel Geborene onder andere, dan ook mede aangebragt, en door ons in den boedel gevonden, welk kannonnetje, zijn Hoog wel Geborene integenwoordigheyd van veele heeren zo in Candia als hier, eens en andermaal en zelfs aan ons wel verhaalt heeft, geschikt te hebben, om present te doen, aan zijne Hoogheijd, den Hertog van Wolfenbüttel van wien zijn Hoog wel geborene verleden Jaar een zeer complice brief erlangd had, ter recommandatie, van een dit jaar uijtgekomen Capteyn Luijtenant, thans capitain d'Heer van Arnhem; en welk canonnetje, benevens nog eenige andere dingen /: als min of meer criticq en volgens 't gemeen gerugt, zo niet tot de kroon, ten minsten tot de goederen van den Koning van Candia behoord hebbende, dus door ons met intentie om dezelve zo 't mogelijk en gepermitteerd was, successive aan Uw Hoog wel Geborene: zo tot aardigheijd als gedagtenisse van zijn Hoog wel Geborene in natura toe te zeden (...).

<sup>609</sup> NA, Panthaleon Van Eck, 60, 1, 10 November 1765. A little '*sierkanoonetje*' captured during Van Eck's last campaign against Kandy.

Councillor in the High Government in 1762 seems to have been a watershed: he now also attracted the attention of people not related to him. In return for their help, Van Eck was obliged to reciprocate favours. Apart from concentrating on the Stadholder's entourage, Van Eck's efforts were directed towards the most esteemed members of the Amsterdam Chamber. From this juncture, Van Eck was most staunchly supported in the Chamber of Amsterdam by Director Hope.<sup>610</sup> Van Eck thanked him for his help in having him promoted, indicating it was impossible to return the favour requested since the person Hope recommended had never arrived in Ceylon.<sup>611</sup> Hope then recommended a man named Philyn Bath, a rich man's son, who had made himself impossible in Holland and was subsequently sent to Asia.<sup>612</sup> This was a more difficult recommendation to comply with since Bath's character was far from praiseworthy. Another man whom Van Eck became involved with was Jan Agges Scholten van Aschat, an important figure in the Amsterdam Chamber.<sup>613</sup> Scholten van Aschat had given a certain Lannoy the position of assistant. This man claimed that he was related to Van Eck.<sup>614</sup> Scholten's help had already been an outcome of Van Eck's assistance to De Bordes. His agent Cordua, had indicated to Van Eck that if he were to help De Bordes, in the future Scholten would lend Van Eck his assistance. This alliance was substantiated when Van Eck later became Councillor Extraordinary.<sup>615</sup>

This gentlemanly ideal of friendship had to be personally enforced, before any exchange of favours took place. In order to help Van Eck to achieve a higher position, his brothers had to vouch for him personally in the Republic. They did so in order to prove those invested with the power to appoint that their help would not pass unnoticed. Van

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<sup>610</sup> Gaastra, in Blussé en Ooms, *kennis en compagnie*, 66, (...)The most known and most influential among them was Thomas Hope, banker and merchant, and from 1756 until 1770 Director of the VOC. His position with the VOC was strongly reinforced by the fact that the stadholder Willem V, who turned into chief-Director in 1766 and in doing so had enormous influence on the VOC and who named Hope to the man representing him on the Company Board. In doing so, Thomas Hope had been put in a position in which he was able to claim the chair of both the meetings of the Gentlemen XVII as of the Chamber of Amsterdam, although he wisely refrained from executing this (...).

<sup>611</sup> NA, Van Eck, 38, 5, 20 January 1764, Van Eck to Hope.

<sup>612</sup> NA, Van Eck, 34, 10, 4 December 1762, Hope to Van Eck.

<sup>613</sup> NA, Van Eck, 37, 6, 16 December 1765, Scholten van Aschat to Van Eck.

<sup>614</sup> NA, Van Eck, 37, 3, 8 December 1765, Lannoy to Van Eck. This is supported by the fact that Lannoy's father also sent a letter to Van Eck, indicating that he wanted some help, since they were related.

<sup>615</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 42, 25 May 1759, Cordua to Van Eck.

Eck's brothers not only talked with all the Gentlemen Seventeen,<sup>616</sup> they also took the trouble to speak with the *Hoofd-participanten* or main shareholders in the VOC.<sup>617</sup> A Committee of *Hoofd-participanten* had the right to attend the meeting of the *Heeren Seventeen*, in which they had an advisory vote on promotions.<sup>618</sup> Sweers, a *Hoofd-participant* in the VOC, also threw his weight behind Van Eck.<sup>619</sup> If favours could be distributed, potential friends were easy to find. De Witt from Dordrecht was thanked for securing the seat on the High Government for Van Eck.<sup>620</sup> De Witt was an alderman and former mayor of Dordrecht, which probably gave him some leverage in the VOC Chamber of Rotterdam. He recommended Garlacius Rosier and in his response Van Eck stated that he was happy to honour this recommendation.<sup>621</sup> Van Eck received letters from all over Holland from persons with unclear connections to the VOC. For instance, Daniel Depus, a prominent Amsterdam merchant, was thanked by Van Eck for his help in having him promoted to councillor.<sup>622</sup> Jan Lambers and his son, Albert Nack, and Jan Lollings, all merchants in Amsterdam, were likewise thanked for their congratulations and Van Eck promised them that he would see what he could do for them in the future.<sup>623</sup> All in all, we can say that by retaining the right to make decisions on the top promotions in the Republic, the Directors and politicians held a strong card in influencing promotions in Asia. Borne aloft on all this support led Van Eck to the position of Councillor

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<sup>616</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck.

<sup>617</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck, (...) the 'wealthiest' gentlemen of Amsterdam, who had something to say in this affair.

<sup>618</sup> NA, Van Eck, 37, 8, 18 December 1765, Sweers to Van Eck.

<sup>619</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 20, 16 December 1765, brother to Van Eck. In exchange, Sweers recommended Etienne Magert, Van Haemsteede and Van Otte, all of them from the city of Amsterdam. NA, Van Eck, 26, 35, 1 June 1759, Van Rheden to Van Eck. Van Eck was obliged to honour the recommendation of Boreel, public prosecutor of the Admiralty in Amsterdam, who had recommended Louis Fellitas through Van Rheede.

<sup>620</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck.

<sup>621</sup> NA, Van Eck, 38, 4, 20 January 1764, Van Eck to De Witt. Van Eck promoted Rossier to public prosecutor of Jaffna. He added that this was the best occupation for an *onderkoopman* in the Government of the island.

<sup>622</sup> NA, Van Eck, 38, 10, 20 January 1764, Van Eck to Depus.

<sup>623</sup> Merchants from Amsterdam were not the only parties to send Van Eck congratulations, these also poured in from the former Governor of Macasser, Roelof Blok, who at that moment was living in Enkhuizen. Another letter of congratulation came from Van Westhoven, who had been a neighbour of Van Eck on the Herenstraat in Batavia eighteen years earlier. He now lived in Alkmaar, and decided to send Van Eck some salmon, in order to renew their old friendship.

Extraordinary and according to his brother, he was the first to be appointed Councillor Ordinary; taking precedence over Haksteen and future Governor-General Alting.<sup>624</sup>

## 1.2 Persuading patronage in Asia

Without the help of a powerful patron in Asia, it was impossible for a tyro employee to pursue a successful career in the East. However, a patron was not omnipotent, promotions depended on other factors and others persons as well. The patron held an interest in speeding up the career of his protégé as his investment would pay off earlier, as a consummation devoutly to be wished in such an unhealthy environment. Van Eck had a well-disposed patron in Van Rheden, who looked kindly upon him and succeeded in helping him make his career. As a member of the High Government in Batavia, Van Rheden could exert his influence on the Governor-General in order to obtain promotions for his protégés.<sup>625</sup> In another incident, he tried to exert his influence by writing the Governor of the Coast, Vermont, asking him to promote two of his protégés. After Vermont declined to help, Van Rheden's patience with him was exhausted because all his earlier requests had also been in vain. In 1756 Van Rheden wrote Vermont a letter stating he would no longer bother him with useless, vain solicitations, but find other ways to improve the position of his friends Van Eck and

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<sup>624</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 6, 15 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck.

<sup>625</sup> Although it is possible Van Eck was related to Van Rheden, a more probable link between the two men is the Chamber of Amsterdam, where both of them began their careers. Whatever the reason, the strong mutual involvement of the two men is underlined by a partnership in a privately owned ship plying the waters of the Indonesian Archipelago. On their possible family relationship: NA, Van Eck, 9, 19, 28 November 1764, Brother of Van Eck to Van Eck, (...) Wat de familie aangaat zijn welvaarende, suster van Lijnden heeft reets ses kinderen twee soons en vier dogters, den oudste soon legt tot Weegeeninge op de Latijnsche school, sij heeft mij gesegt als weederen moest kraame, dat tot nogh soo niet is, als het een soon was Wel edel Geborene te laate benoeme (...). And *Nederland's Adelsboek 1956*, 49e jaargang (Van Stockum, Den Haag), blz 522, (...) Bij K.B. d.d. 13 Oct. 1860, nr 60, werd ditzelfde bepaald voor de nagelaten weduwe en de kinderen en verdere wettige afstammelingen van Jhr Lubbert Jan Aland van Lynden (...). These two men may, as stated, have enjoyed some sort of kinship tie and, if they were related at all, it was an indirect link by a marriage into the family Van Lynden. Van Eck was connected to the Van Lynden family through his sister. *Nederland's Adelsboek 1956*, 49e jaargang (Van Stockum, Den Haag), 523, XI. Derk Wolter van Lynden, heer van Hemmen, Blitterswijk en Clörath, 1659-1712, tr 1699 Anna Ursula van Reede, 1669-1749. while Van Rheden's connection to the family is less sure.

Hagemeister.<sup>626</sup> Van Eck's career did not proceed as fast as he would have desired and he had to sit out his time philosophically, awaiting the day when he would be first in line; leaving it to his patron to search for shortcuts. Not long afterwards Van Rheden must have found some alternative, because Van Eck was promoted to Chief of Palliacatta.

Although the patronage of a powerful protector was essential, if a protégé did not adhere to the creed of 'For the benefit of the Company', this protection was worse than useless. As a middle-ranking employee on the Coromandel Coast in 1756, Van Eck tried to attract attention to himself by scrupulously observing the Company's credo. He worked on projecting an image of doing his job neatly. Yet every VOC servant had to walk the knife-edge between serving the VOC and making his personal fortune. A good example of this was when Vermont made a fatal career mistake in letting French enter inside the walls of Nagapatnam, an incident we have already described.<sup>627</sup> His behaviour endangered the position and brought calumny on the name of the VOC, made his position as Governor untenable. Despite his actions which were tantamount to treason, his powerful protectors swung into action and practised damage control. Even though the Governor-General could do nothing to prevent his dismissal, Vermont was at least given the alternative of asking for retirement instead of being simply sacked and placed in the public pillory.<sup>628</sup> No word of the real reason for this solution ever found its way into the official correspondence, but from Vermont's will we learn that in gratitude for all his help, he had made Mossel his universal heir.<sup>629</sup>

As he rose in the hierarchy and assumed on more responsibility, a servant found he had more possibilities to orchestrate his own career. On promotion, the position of a VOC servant could change structurally and offer him new ways to attract attention and be promoted. On Van Eck's appointment as Chief of Palliacatta, he received a letter from Van der Parra,<sup>630</sup> advising him to tread in the footsteps of his successors<sup>631</sup> and continue

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<sup>626</sup> NA, Van Eck, 22, 1, 10 June 1756, Van Rheden to Vermont.

<sup>627</sup> NA, Van Eck, 19, 25, 18 April 1758, Meroz to Van Eck. His reckless decision led to violence against employees and allowed the French troops a complete grip on the town. In the end, his decision escalated into an infringement of the VOC's sovereignty and went against the general motto 'For the benefit of the Company'. To us, Vermont's actions may seem reckless, but the real reason behind his behaviour was even more devious. Vermont had used his prerogatives as a Governor to sell the VOC stocks of provisions to the French army, guaranteeing himself excessive personal gain and profit.

<sup>628</sup> P. Groot, *Accompaniments to letters from Negapatam*, (Madras, 1911, Government Press), 183.

<sup>629</sup> NA, Van Eck, 27, 36, 2 February 1760, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>630</sup> At that time member of the High Government.

to be liberal in the favours these gentlemen had given Van der Parra by sending him merchandise for his *Huijsgebruijck* or domestic use.<sup>632</sup> Later, other members of the High Government entered in correspondence too, and also started ordering goods with Van Eck, but at different levels of involvement. The privilege of helping the members of the High Government to acquire articles for their *Huijsgebruijck* were institutionalized and were attached to certain functions. For instance, on Van Eck's departure from Palliacatta, he was unable to carry out the orders fully and was asked to hand them over the order to his successor.<sup>633</sup> At first sight Van Eck's effort to satisfy *Huijsgebruijck* demands did not bring in much for himself, because he often had to advance money to obtain goods and frequently had to forgo a commission for his work. Nevertheless, Van Eck wished his customers to feel satisfied and made sure the desired goods were of the best quality in relation to their price and that they were delivered quickly. This structural change and control over one's own career came with a price tag, which employees were happy to pay in order to strengthen their position for further advancement and related fortune. At the same time, both sides wanted to avoid the impression that there was a certain interest involved in these transactions. To stress the non-commercial side to the story, a pretext was adopted by which the merchandise was ordered in the name of the members' wives.<sup>634</sup> To avoid further confusion on the subject or to create the impression that the services offered were illegal favours enhancing Van Eck's position, he sometimes adopted the expedient of offering gifts in return. The existence of the knife-edge was clearly revealed when Van Eck began slipping in extra gifts himself. In one case, his gifts were bluntly refused and he was ordered to refrain from sending gifts in the future.<sup>635</sup>

Although most of the trade conducted under the entry of *Huijsgebruijck* was said to be essential to the households of the members of the High Governments closer scrutiny shows, it was often actually a commercial proposition. On the death of Van Rheden in

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<sup>631</sup> Teesiman and Vermont.

<sup>632</sup> NA, VOC, 13, 1, 18 October 1754, anonymous to Van Eck, (...)The Messrs Vermont and Teesiman during their worthy stay in Paliacatta have had the courtesy to supply me annually with all sorts of necessities for my household. I want to request you kindly and candidly to replace the last-mentioned, which will also give you occasion to prove your friendship (...).

<sup>633</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 9, 15 February 1759, Van der Parra to Van Eck.

<sup>634</sup> For instance, Van Eck sent his regards to Van Velden's wife in order to emphasize the goods were meant for her.

<sup>635</sup> NA, Van Eck, 15, 7, 14 April 1756, Van Ardenne to Van Eck.

1761, the merchandise he had recently bought from Van Eck was sold at auction giving an insight into the possible markets for these goods. It transpired that some of the buyers were employees, but the majority of the stock was bought by Chinese merchants.<sup>636</sup> Since as a friend, Van Eck never charged a commission fee for the domestic use orders and no taxes were paid, this sideline gave the members of the High Government a very competitive edge. This one-upmanship is illustrated by the incident in which De Klerk<sup>637</sup> wrote how his mother-in-law had lost money on a shipment from the Coast because she had to pay for taxes and for cargo space. In turn, De Klerk had sent a similar shipment of cloth at exactly the same time, and he succeeded in making a handsome profit, because he had procured them through the *Huijsgebruijck* channel. De Klerk thought it highly amusing that he had out-competed his own mother-in-law commercially, at the same time providing evidence that he had sold off the merchandise he obtained for domestic use.

The direct relationship between *Huijsgebruijck* commissions and advancement in position is hard to prove, but it at least provided a handy pretext to enter into correspondence with the most powerful. As a successful private trader, Van Eck's position in his network strengthened. After he had established contact with members of the High Government through commissions for *Huijsgebruijck*, he began receiving letters from the most powerful indicating their support for his career.<sup>638</sup> In April 1761, De Klerk promised to compensate Van Eck with something pleasant in exchange for the beautiful cloth he had sent.<sup>639</sup> Shortly afterwards, in 1757 Van Eck was promoted to second-in-charge,<sup>640</sup> and two years later De Klerk gave some very simple advice to Van Eck : (...) *sit out your time with Governor Vermont without making trouble. Your position in Batavia is very strong , because you are surely familiar with the fact that Vermont has a plenty of credit with His Excellency (Governor-General Mossel), who seems very fond of*

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<sup>636</sup> NA, Van Eck, 42, 1, 1 January 1760, goods sold at auction after Van Rheden's death.

<sup>637</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 6, 13 February 1759, De Klerk to Van Eck.

<sup>638</sup> De Klerk, signalling that he had heard his two superiors on the Coast were working against Van Eck. De Klerk advised him to explain his situation to his friends in Batavia, in order that they could take the necessary precautions.

<sup>639</sup> NA, Van Eck, 15, 4, 11 April 1756, De Klerk to Van Eck and 15, 11, 14 June 1756, De Klerk to Van Eck.

<sup>640</sup> NA, Van Eck, 16, 3, 20 April 1757, Van der Parra to Van Eck.

him, so patience is necessary to fulfil your own and your friends' wishes (...).<sup>641</sup> Not long afterwards, Mossel indicated that since Van Eck was second-in-charge, he would be next-in-line for Governor when Vermont left the Coast.<sup>642</sup> At a lower level, a similar mechanism of supplying cloth in return for a promotion was played out more openly. As Governor of the Coast, Van Eck simply thanked Vrymoet for the cloth he had received in return for promoting him.<sup>643</sup> The combination of private trade and improving one's position was not considered corruption, but was even supported ideologically by an official memorandum from Mossel.<sup>644</sup>

## 2. Social reproduction

All servants sought for fortune, status and power for themselves and for their families, during their own lifetime and if possible for future descendants.<sup>645</sup> Within the group of servants, there were two tendencies for fostering social reproduction each with a geographical origin at work. In both cases the ultimate goal of networking was getting ahead, a guarantee of jobs for friends and making money. In the initial period, the first and foremost goal of Company servants was to earn a fortune and return to the Republic,

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<sup>641</sup> NA, Van Eck, 19, 13, 27 February 1758, De Klerk to Van Eck, (...) Voor het overige staan uw Edele sakens ten desen hoofdplaats soo verre mij bewust is op eenen goeden voet, en ik wil hopen dat uw Edele: de tijd die het nog dueren mogt met den heer Gouverneur sal weten door te brengen / in een harmonie die die sonder opspreken blijft dewijl het uw Edele niet onbekent kan sijn wat credit sijn Edele bij sijn Excellentie heeft, die soo ik mij niet bedrieg hem een bijzondere genegentheijt is toedragend / een weinig gedult is er absolut noodig om uw Edele goede vrienden en uw Edele eigen wenschen haast vervult te sien. (...)

<sup>642</sup> NA, Van Eck, 18, 8, 15 November 1757, Mossel to Van Eck.

<sup>643</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 424, 29 February 1760, Van Eck to Vrijmoet.

<sup>644</sup> NA, VOC, 4747, Mossel 1752, bedenkingen over de intrinsiquen staat van de VOC. In this memorandum, Mossel encouraged private trade since it would teach employees how to conduct trade and the VOC would profit from these experienced and capable servants in more easily fulfilling the annual *Eijsch*. According to the memorandum, future members of the High Government should be selected from the most skilful traders, who would be the most capable of running such a trading organization as the VOC. From this perspective, domestic use was a good way to judge whether an employee was capable of supplying the right goods at the right price. This reasoning links *Huijsgebruijck* more tightly to the network system and offered a barter trade for favours received.

<sup>645</sup> This is often called social reproduction. Social reproduction is often defined as the processes which sustain or perpetuate characteristics of a given social structure or tradition over a period of time.



using networking as a way to forge ahead in their quest to make money, but increasingly, as time passed a group of men with roots in Asia emerged. They did not have a desire to return after retirement. The attempts of this group were not geared to social reproduction in the Republic but they had their sights set on social reproduction in Asia. This change in course inevitably slightly altered the manifestation of social reproduction. These servants' efforts were directed towards making a career, a fortune in Asia and safeguarding the career perspectives of their family in the East. By remaining in Asia, these families held a strengthening grip on decision making and power brokerage in Batavia.

There were still many retiring servants who wanted to return to the Republic in order to enjoy their fortune and build a future at home. The first step on this path was to send the fortune home via the VOC bookkeeping. In order to disguise the exact amount of their wealth, fortunes were also sent home through agents in Holland and Asia.<sup>646</sup> The sender and recipient were known only to each other and to the agents.<sup>647</sup> In the VOC archives plenty bills of exchange sent from Asia to Holland by and to his agents are to be

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<sup>646</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 386, 5 December 1759, Van Eck to his brothers and sisters, (...) dewyl onse heer vader out en zwak begint te werden en zyne gesteldheyt niet toe sal laten om zigh met myne affaire te bekommeren en selfs daar in om te zien soo hebbe ik raatsaam g'oordeelt de broeder Alandt en Jacob Willem benevens zyn Hoog wel geborene tot myne generale gemagtige aan te stellen om myne zaake te behandelen ten welke eynde een procuratie hier nevens gaat (...). Van Eck's money was sent home through agents, but was ultimately destined for his family. At first Samuel van Eck, Van Eck's father, was the recipient of the money, but after 1759 bad health no longer allowed him to take care of Van Eck's business and his brothers took over. NA, Van Eck, 9, 13, 30 August 1764, Alandt to Van Eck, (...) Het heeft den vrijmagtigen godt behaagt na sijn onveranderlijk raets besluijt onser waerden broeder den Hoog Wel Geboore Heer Alandt van Eck ritmeester in het regiment cavallerij van den heer Generaal Majoor Van Eck, amptsjonker des ambst Voorst, nadat seedert seeven maenden veel smerte aen het opbreeken sijner quetsuure aen het hoofd heeft uijtgestaan deese namiddagh om twee ure in den ouderdom van drie en Veertigh Jaare en eenige daagen, soo wij op goede gronden vertrouwen in sijne eeuwige heerlijkheijt over te neemen (...)and 9, 18, unknown date, family to Van Eck. When one of the brothers, Alandt, died of a strange disease in 1764, Jacob Willem took on the full responsibility of all the work and his brother-in-law, Antonij George Van Eck, Lord of Vergana, Judge of Arnhem and of the Veluwe Fringe was given power of attorney.

<sup>647</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 386, 5 December 1759, Van Eck to his brothers and sisters, (...) Om zigh in tydt en occasie van te kunne bediene het zoude niet kwaat zyn een van de beyde broers zigh ten eerste naa Amsterdam begaf of anders by een brief aan eenigh bekende aldaar schreef om zigh op het Oost indisch huys t'informeere of met de scheepe van Batavia in het laast van dit of het begin van het aanstaande jaar vertrokken geen geldt per assignatie op de Compagnie was overgemaakt het welke aldaar voor d'Heeren Hugo Pieter Faure en Davidt de Cordua in cas was geteldt om in Amsterdam weeder uyt gekeert te werden aan d'Heer Jaen Sallinieres, Coopman aldaar en tegens wat tydt dat geldt staat betaalt te werden (...). One of the tasks his brother had to perform was to go to Amsterdam and ask Salinieres for the money received from India.

found.<sup>648</sup> Van Eck had send a total of f600,370 to Holland via bills, through the mediation of his agents. Apart from the official channels, Van Eck resorted to other ways of getting his money to Europe, although the total sum of these transactions is relatively insignificant.<sup>649</sup> In return, his agents only sent goods to Asia in order to give Van Eck a little comfort.<sup>650</sup> After the money had been retrieved from the agents in Holland by his brothers, it was invested to give the family a sustained better life in the Republic. It was ordered according to various priorities.<sup>651</sup> The highest priority was to pay off the family debts. This construction may have reproduced a normal pattern: if the eldest son was sent out to Asia it is quite safe to assume his family was in financial straits. Consequently, we see that Van Eck's first aim, as eldest son, was to take care of his family. As soon as he

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<sup>648</sup> In the end, Van Eck sent f359,074 to Holland from Batavia, in the name of the people mentioned earlier on. Apart from the money sent via Batavia as Governor of Ceylon, he sent f115,200 in the name of Felitas to Holland from Nagapatnam and f126,096 from Ceylon via different persons to his agents in Holland. By order of Van Eck, his agents in Batavia, Faure & Da Cordua and Mossel & Booms, had been regularly sending money to Europe. In Holland the money was always received by his agents Salinieres or De Bordes & Ooster, except when Van Eck sent over money in his own name. Transactions from provenance other than Batavia are harder to trace, since Van Eck was less consistent in the agents he used, but proof is furnished since the agents receiving the money in Holland are the same (also Salnieres and Ooster& De Bordes). Luckily, Van Eck's agents on the Coast and in Ceylon are also mentioned in the letters to his brothers, giving an additional check.

<sup>649</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 700, 20 September 1761, Van Eck to brothers. We have already seen Van Eck bought up wage slips, but the amount he conveyed to Europe in this manner seems to have been limited, even insignificant in comparison to the amounts sent through bills on the VOC. Van Eck also used unauthorized ways of sending his money home. When he wound up his trade in India, Dumont, a French trading partner, paid the money he owed in French bills of exchange on the Royal French treasury. Van Eck was obliged to accept these bills, because the French had no money available because of the Seven Years' War. His brothers were asked to have these bills, amounting to 25,000 rupees or 6000 French livres, paid out.

<sup>650</sup> Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia*, 299, (...) In addition to the Asian commodities, the table summarizing the contacts with the Dutch republic also includes the items "on freight" and "on recognizance". These concern goods that the VOC personnel were allowed to ship at their own expense since 1743. The Gentlemen Seventeen granted this privilege under strict rules and restrictions in the hope of discouraging illicit private trade. The servants mainly sent beer to Asia, and Chinese tea to the Dutch Republic. (...) In turn, the brothers invested money to ship goods for personal use over to Asia. From time to time Van Eck requested such goods to be sent to Asia from Europe as good wine, tobacco. While permission to ship tobacco was easily obtained, wine was a different story. Permission was hard to obtain and one had to pay for the *kassen* to be able to ship wine. Van Eck was not always happy with what he received, he thought the tobacco of inferior quality. NA, Van Eck, 9, 16, 27 November 1765, brother to Van Eck, There were also special deliveries, including the silver service Van Eck ordered from Europe. His brother was looking for the best quality-price ratio and decided to buy in Amsterdam. Ooster took care of the shipment of the cutlery, for safety reasons it would not be shipped as one consignment, but in different ships. Ooster received f38,000 to buy the service and to ship it over to Ceylon. It was insured for 25 per cent as Lubbert Jan had ordered.

<sup>651</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 2, 7 January 1761, brothers to Van Eck. The fastest time that the brothers ever received a letter from their brother was six months, but normally it would take about nine months to a year. The correspondence to his brothers is mainly concerned with this problem of money. It was Van Eck who decided how and where to invest the money, although the brothers had a certain room to exercise their own initiative, as Van Eck was so far away.

commenced sending money home, he made the interest on his capital available to his sisters living on the Overbeek estate to cover their living expenses.<sup>652</sup> The concern about taking care of his family is also conspicuously present in his will. His brothers and sisters all received one share each, while his stepmother and stepbrothers and sisters, received one share as a group. His sisters had been included in earlier deals, and were very happy with this, because this wealth gave them better chances on the marriage market<sup>653</sup> and his brothers also dropped hints about starting a family. After repaying his own debts and taking care of his family, Van Eck ordered his brother to invest what was left safely,<sup>654</sup> although it has to be said that often emotional value or status aspirations were also attached to investments.<sup>655</sup> Apart from a sound investment in land, the brothers looked for more commercial avenues.<sup>656</sup> They bought bonds on the county of Zutphen to the value of 16,000 guilders.<sup>657</sup> In search of further opportunities Van Eck and his brothers looked

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<sup>652</sup> NA, VOC, inv 6862, 4207, 26 January 1764, Will of Van Eck and NA, Van Eck , 9, 1, 5 November 1760, brothers to Van Eck, (...)We shall invest your money the moment it has been received in the most advantageous way in your name and according to your wishes the profits will be given to our unmarried sisters until further. (...)

<sup>653</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 18, unknown date, family to Van Eck. His commitment to his family was also revealed during his lifetime when other members of his family asked for support. At first, his brothers were very reserved, and refused to hand money out without Van Eck's permission, because they did not dare to give money which was not their own to a third person. When his aunts were refused aid, and Van Eck heard of their financial problems and their cry for help, he ordered his brother to give them f100 straightaway. When his aunts received this money they were in tears because Lubbert Jan had thought so well of them.<sup>653</sup> After the family debts had been paid off Van Eck gave both his brothers f6000 outright.

<sup>654</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 386, 5 December 1759, Van Eck to his brothers. The fact that Van Eck prioritized financial safety, meant he bought a large areas of land. The first thing he ordered his brothers to do was to: (...) if there are any debts on the Overbeek estate, these have to be paid off first, the rest of the money should be spent on buying the surrounding estates (...).This also meant repurchasing the estate of Overbeek from their stepmother, who had obtained part of the estate on the death of her husband, Van Eck's father. This land was bought back from her for 2000 guilders.<sup>654</sup> Then the brothers tried to get their hands on estates in the vicinity of Overbeek, and began their quest for land by buying 'de boereplaats op Jerusalem' which they bought for f8236. With the addition of the newly bought *Boereplaats*, Overbeek was now valued at f22,236. Afterwards they bought two paper-mills in the near vicinity for f10,000, making a total of f32,236.

<sup>655</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck, 9, 2, 7 January 1761, brothers to Van Eck and 9, 4, 17 November 1763, brothers to Van Eck. With these acquisitions of land, emotional value often played a role, but they were also seen as investments. The annual income from all these investments generated was about f800, but at times when timber and corn were expensive it could be f50 to f100 more. The brothers did not leave it at that and on the sale of the estate of *Reijswijck* in Gelderland, only Van Eck's relatives were entitled to buy and Van Eck succeeded in doing so for f12,000.

<sup>656</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 18, no date, family to Van Eck. The idea was to rent these lands to tenants and repairs were made to attract tenants by new investments worth f200 in the estate of *Rijswijck*. New trees had to be planted, because farmers could not do without wood and for their use a plot of land was converted into pasture an undertaking costing 300 to 400 guilders.

<sup>657</sup> Although they had to pay a initial fee of f200 to obtain the bonds they would receive 3 per cent interest a year from then on. The course of these bonds also counted and in November his brother indicated that the

across the North Sea, since England offered better interest than the Republic: (...) *it would do us no harm if you were to prefer employing a part of the money in England against 4 per cent interest or more, still you will have to consult with merchants or experts about what kind of investment would be the most secure and yield most(...)*.<sup>658</sup> Heeding this advice, his brother enlisted the services of an agent in England, Muilman Brothers, merchants in London.<sup>659</sup> To underline the international dimension of the investment, his brothers invested money in France as well, assuring it was giving good profit (6 ½ per cent in total).<sup>660</sup>

An extrapolation of the activities of the brothers brings to light various facts about the plans Van Eck had made for after his return to the Republic. There were plans afoot to buy a house in Arnhem, because in winter ‘everybody’ of importance and who could afford it lived in town. It was judged better to act quickly, because good opportunities for buying housing were few and far between. It was better to strike while the iron was hot as later the lack of a good opportunity might lead to problems, just as it had done with a recently appointed judge in Arnhem, who was in trouble because he was not able to find a place of residence in Arnhem, who was obliged to have a residence in the town as a prerequisite of his position. In the long run, such a house meant entry into the government of the city and access to the higher positions in the hierarchy at a national level, in turn giving a prospect of a tidy income. In order to pave the way for Van Eck to have a political career, his brothers began informing him about changes in politics in the province of Gelderland.<sup>661</sup> After Van Eck’s death in 1765, his brother assumed his role as

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stock he had bought in February for 128 per cent was now fetching 138 and 139 per cent.<sup>657</sup> In 1763 they bought obligations on the ‘Quarter of Nijmegen as well as 4000 guilders in private bonds on the same conditions and rent.

<sup>658</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 700, 20 September 1761, Van Eck to his brothers.

<sup>659</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 3, 5 August 1762, Brothers to Van Eck, (...) In order to take care of our business in our name, we have approached the Messrs Henry Muilman, Peeter Muilman, and Richard Muilman, merchants in London. They are members of a family from Amsterdam (...). NA, Van Eck, 9, 11, 27 November 1762, brothers to Van Eck. They were given power of attorney to invest Van Eck’s money and purchased annuities on the Bank of England for the sum of £2000, with an expected interest of 4 per cent. According to the brothers, this investment was one of the most popular in Holland and later they told Van Eck the English investments were doing quite well. They had bought them at 73 ¼ per cent and they were now fetching 88 per cent, which meant a nice profit.

<sup>660</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 18, unknown date, family to Van Eck.

<sup>661</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 19, 28 November 1764, brother to Van Eck, 9, 3, 05 August 1762, brothers to Van Eck, 9, 4, 17 November 1763, brothers to Van Eck.

leader of the family and aspired to a political career. Even before Van Eck's death, his brother had already been admitted to the peerage of Gelderland, providing him with new means of acquiring money and power. He foresaw losses in the first year, but looking farther ahead it would help him obtain a profitable job and subsequently a prosperous life. It was a particularly good time to become a member, since the peerage had only eighteen members at the time. As a consequence of his election, this brother had to quit his job in the army, which he did without regrets. Eventually, it was this brother who profited most from his eldest brother's labour and fortune. Although he had kept a low profile while his older brother was alive, doing what ever he asked of him, the tables were turned when Van Eck died. He succeeded in obtaining an influential position and he married soon after.<sup>662</sup>

In Asia, servants who decided to remain also nurtured the same dreams, but wanted to fulfil them on the spot. Remuneration was found within the VOC hierarchy, so the primary goal was to search for profitable jobs for family members, eventually leading to more nepotism in Asia. Their fortunes did not need to be remitted to the Republic, but investments were made in Asia itself. As we have seen, as time passed these servants had to invest more in order to capitalize on their privileges. Under these circumstances, it was easier to capitalize on the family fortune if servants did not return. In the context of this newly evolving situation, the Company servants with powerful family connections in Asia were in a better position than those sent from Europe who did not have such connections. They were probably even less 'corrupt' as they had family capital at their disposal. Given their situation, the desire to remain in Asia was a logical choice as it made it easier for the servants to capitalize on the new opportunities presented by the decline of the VOC. The wisdom of their choice is underlined by the increasing risk in sending money to the Republic as the VOC steered a steady course for bankruptcy.

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<sup>662</sup> NA, Van Eck, 9, 18, unknown date, family to Van Eck and 9, 16, 27 November 1765, brother to Van Eck.

## 2.1 Balancing personal interests

Van Rheden had been the strongest supporter and patron of Van Eck and had made sure he was always the first person to congratulate him with successes in his career.<sup>663</sup> However important Van Rheden may have been to Van Eck's career, the death of this patron in 1760 did not have a big impact on the latter's rise in the hierarchy. Van Eck made himself useful to other powerful servants and De Klerk quickly replaced Van Rheden as his principal patron.<sup>664</sup> Mossel had not always been favourably disposed towards Van Eck, but after the latter's appointment to Governor of the Coast he changed his mind. Not to mince matters since Van Eck could not be ignored when it came to promotions on the Coast, the Governor-General and Van Eck needed each other. When Van Eck heard rumours of Mossel's return to Europe, he made sure he set a new course. As the obvious successor to Mossel, Van Eck turned to Van der Parra, indicating possible improvements which might enhance the position of the VOC in the region.<sup>665</sup> Van Eck also discussed reforms in the private trade, explaining to Van der Parra the weak points in Mossel's system and proposing measures for improvement.<sup>666</sup> As soon as the information of Mossel's retirement proved false, his stream of recommendations dried up.

Even if networks functioned well, the combination of different interests did not always yield the expected result and tensions were created. After his promotion to Governor of the Coast, Van Eck and Weijdom, Chief at Jaggernaijkpoeram, had serious disagreements. Weijdom failed to inform Van Eck about what was going on in Jaggernaijkpoeram, but wrote extensively about the events there to his patron, Mossel, in

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<sup>663</sup> NA, Van Eck, 25, 5, 9 November 1758, Van Rheden to Van Eck, (...)The principle purpose of this letter is to congratulate Your Honour with your felicitous appointment to the Government of the Coromandel. I humbly again refer to the content of the same and I do not conceal that the thought behind my letter will have been clear to you already before receiving this letter, however I wshall be the first who has brought this favourable change to your attention. (...).

<sup>664</sup> NA, Van Eck, 27, 32, 30 January 1760, Bleeker to Van Eck.

<sup>665</sup> See Chapter One: Mossel's strategy of building smaller fortresses was useless in Van Eck's eyes he thought the Company should focus its attention on one major fortification, Nagapatnam. He also explained how he wanted to pay for larger fortifications and more soldiers for the garrison by imposing new taxes. As we have seen, Van Eck's plans were unrealistic as the indigenous merchants revolted. Denying that the merchants were not in favour of his new system, Van Eck blamed Vick and his employees for stirring up the merchants.

<sup>666</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 260, 5 February 1759, Van Eck to Van der Parra.

Batavia.<sup>667</sup> This silent resistance to Van Eck may have been caused by the fact that most employees had been promoted by Vermont and therefore obviously orbited in another sphere of influence. These issues hindered work and, although Van Eck was Weijdom's superior, neither desisted from pestering the other.<sup>668</sup> When Weijdom was dismissed in 1760 because of illegally transporting French soldiers, Van Eck mentioned Weijdom's negligence in informing him as a second reason for sending him to Batavia.<sup>669</sup> Weijdom retorted to this duplicity by accusing Van Eck of tax evasion on his private trade ventures in Jaggernaijkpoeram. Weijdom died on his way to Batavia and this ended the dispute, although Van Eck did not understand why Mossel had believed '*whatever this uncouth lout could dream up when he had his belly full of brandy*'<sup>670</sup> and underlined he personally had always pursued the interests of the Company.<sup>671</sup> Such a clash of personalities shows life could be made difficult for a Governor by one of his subjects and unquestionably if his tormentor enjoyed the protection of a powerful patron this offered possibilities for resistance. When the position of the Company was in danger, differences could be set aside and the most suitable candidate was chosen. Just before Van Eck's letter requesting furlough to Europe arrived in Batavia, the High Government promoted him to Governor of Ceylon. On hearing the news, Van Eck changed his plans and accepted the offer. This was an unexpected opportunity. Normally it would have taken him years and considerable amounts of money to reach the position of Governor of Ceylon, but because of the crisis situation he was launched into a very profitable position. Whether or not Van Eck felt himself obliged to accept the post, it was obvious the prospects of making his fortune were greatly expanded by his promotion and prompted him to accept.

One of the consequences of the system was that everybody was aware of the games being played and this knowledge lay behind the resistance shown to certain

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<sup>667</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 81, 29 November 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>668</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 98, 11 December 1759, Weijdom to Van Eck, the only letter Weijdom privately addressed to Van Eck asked him for reinforcements.

<sup>669</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 81, 29 November 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck, (...) His Honour has the intention of asking Mr Pigot to give him and his traveling companion a passport in order to be able to leave overland for Pondichery, but the matter that has astonished me most is the the fact that Weijdom has not written anything about these circumstances although he has had plenty of opportunity. (...).

<sup>670</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 645, 6 June 1761, Van Eck to De Klerk, (...) Het is onbegryplyk hoe zyn Excelentie soo veel geloof heeft kunne geeve aan alles wat dien lompen fleegel maar voorgedraage heeft en die wanneer de maag vol brandewyn hadde maar ter papier stelde wat hem in het hoofd kwam. Hy is doot en dierhalve sal maar best zyn van het daar by te laate (...).

<sup>671</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20,543.

promotions. The best example of such a construction is Christiaan van Teylingen, who was very successful in using his networks to build his career. The fact that he was made Governor of the Coromandel Coast within ten years of his arrival in Asia, might prompt us to think he was a particularly talented man. Contrariwise, a different image emerges from his letters, since his career was tainted with fights and strewn with conflicts. Van Teylingen was invariably locked in arguments with everybody and then rushing to Van Eck, his superior, full of complaints about the treatment he had received from the employees he was supervising. Most of these arguments had to be solved by Van Eck's intervention, as he enjoyed more respect. Van Teylingen insisted that his subordinates were doing nothing more than playing games to see if he was on top of things.<sup>672</sup> Even employees lower down in the hierarchy were alerted to Van Teylingen's lack of experience in doing his job and refused to trust a man who had risen too quickly in the hierarchy. Van Teylingen had to dismiss a employee who had wilfully counteracted his orders by referring to the orders of the second-in-charge, blatantly indicating that he could not be bothered with obeying Van Teylingen's orders.<sup>673</sup>

The VOC history, the longest sitting Governors-General are often accused of having been most corrupt and nepotistic, while Governors-General with shorter terms of office enjoy a better reputation.<sup>674</sup> Apart from the obvious explanation that the latter group had less time to make mistakes and commit serious errors in judgement, repayment of past favours provides an alternative and more structural reason for this opposition. Since there were limited possibilities for promotion to the highest position, it invariably took the Governors-General some time to repay all their friends who had helped them.

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<sup>672</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 100, 20 December 1759, Van Teylingen to Van Eck. When Van Teylingen ignored the advice of several employees with more experience in the appointment of the new Chief of Palliacatta, he was asking for trouble and the other employees started to rebel. One of the leading employees, Joncheere, consistently sabotaged Van Teylingen by reporting he always said he did not know when he was asked something at a professional level, even though in the eyes of Van Teylingen what he had asked was for the sake of the Company or based on knowledge of what had been done in the past. Instead, he often proposed that Van Teylingen look up the information in the VOC books, causing Van Teylingen a great deal of extra work. If Van Teylingen asked for the requisite papers, Joncheere always forgot to bring them and answered he had forgotten as he was old and his memory was failing. What disgusted Van Teylingen was that Joncheere was un-cooperative but at the same time he acted in a very friendly fashion paying Van Teylingen all sorts of compliments. Nevertheless Van Eck and Van Teylingen refrained from openly attacking Joncheere for 'the sake of his wife and children', or whatever the real reason might have been.

<sup>673</sup> NA, Van Eck, 27, 46, 11 March 1760, Van Teylingen to Van Eck.

<sup>674</sup> L.P. van Putten, *Gouverneurs-generaal van Nederlands-Indie*.: Deel 1: Ambitie en onvermogen : 1610-1796 (Rotterdam: ILCO-productions, 2002); F.W. Stapel, *De gouverneurs-generaal van Nederlandsch-Indie in beeld en woord* (Den Haag: Van Stockum, 1941).



Since these friends were often not family, to recompense their support they had to help servants outside the confines of their own family to promotions first. Only after doing this, could they turn their attention to concentrating fully on their family, which was seen as more openly nepotistic. Under these circumstances, viewed superficially without taking everything into proper consideration, short-term Governors-General are more easily seen as less corruptible, simply because they could only go as far as paying back all their friends. To become a Governors-General it was impossible not to be an adherent of and an adept at the system of networking and repaying favours.

## 2.2 Distribution of wealth

The prospect of acquiring a fortune depended on securing a position with the VOC, obliging the employees to play the game of networking and making competition for promotions tough for others. After assuring his recall to Batavia on his own terms, Vermont was anxious to ensure the position of Governor for his trusted associate Vick who should have owed him a favourable transfer of power.<sup>675</sup> Because as second-in-charge Van Eck was the logical successor and stood in their way, a devious plan was contrived.<sup>676</sup> Vermont and Vick kept the information about the moment of Vermont's resignation to themselves. They waited until the last VOC ship of that season was ready to sail, making sure their letters to friends in Batavia were on board.<sup>677</sup> After the ship carrying the letters was out of sight, Vermont notified Van Eck of his resignation.<sup>678</sup> Having to wait half a year for the next ship to leave for Batavia, Van Eck was outmanoeuvred of any chance of directly influencing the decision making process in

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<sup>675</sup> NA, Van Eck, 25, 59 november 1758, Van Rheden to Van Eck.

<sup>676</sup> NA, Van Eck, 19, 43, 16 July 1758, Vick to Van Eck. On Van Eck's promotion to deputy, Vick had informed him that this promotion assured Van Eck of the next promotion to Governor. Only recently superseded by Van Eck, Vick felt he was ever more entitled to the position of Governor on account of his seniority, although he assured Van Eck the opposite was true.

<sup>677</sup> P Groot, *Accompaniments*, 183, In order to support Vick's promotion, Vermont recommended Vick as Governor as well as sponsoring other employees on the Coast for promotion, with the name of Van Eck a prominent omission on his list.

<sup>678</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 77, 19 August 1758, Van Eck to Van Teylingen.

Batavia.<sup>679</sup> Cast in such an invidious situation, it was necessary to be diplomatic and silently hope and pray that earlier investment in friends would pay off. Even Van Eck realized that his chances were slim, or as he put it: *'if one does not knock, the door will not be opened'*.<sup>680</sup>

As a weapon against abuse to which the system lent itself admirably, networking was permeated with a strong moral connotation. A certain moderation in behaviour in networking was expected. Acting too rashly or being too insistent and greedy could signify the forfeiture of the respect of patrons and this had grave consequences for a career. With the next VOC ship to Batavia which sailed in October Van Eck sent a message to the Governor-General reminding him of his promise to Van Eck and to Her Royal Highness that he would succeed Vermont.<sup>681</sup> In order to show to his new and powerful protectors in Batavia that he was a worthy candidate,<sup>682</sup> Van Eck posed his candidature indirectly by writing to Batavia about the real situation on the Coast, showing how badly matters were fairing.<sup>683</sup> This precaution would also prevent people from later laying the blame on Van Eck.<sup>684</sup> In the end, even Governor-General Mossel found the conduct of Vermont and Vick presumptuous as Vick was not first in line for promotion, and therefore voted against Vick's promotion.<sup>685</sup> Nevertheless, the tactic of sending the letter on the last ship was not reprimanded and we see a repetition of this strategy on Van Eck's promotion to Governor of Ceylon, when Vick was bypassed by Van Teylingen.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> NA, Van Eck, 25, 5, 9 november 1758, Van Rheden to Van Eck. Although Van Eck was furious, he maintained his dignity. In a letter written to Vick, Van Eck indicated that Vick was in a good position, because to achieve promotion it was necessary to submit an application.

<sup>680</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 99, 31 August 1758, Van Eck to Vick, (...) The one who does not knock will not have the door opened.(...)

<sup>681</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 153, 8 October 1758, Van Eck to Mossel.

<sup>682</sup> Like De Klerk and Van der Parra.

<sup>683</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 155, 8 October 1758, Van Eck to Mossel and 20, 158, 8 October 1758, Van Eck to Hooreman. What follows are separate letters to Mossel, Van der Parra, De Klerk and Horeman on the situation on the Coast showing Van Eck was capable of making a good analysis of the situation, and exposing what his plans for the Coast were.

<sup>684</sup> NA, Van Eck, 25, 5, 9 November 1758, Van Rheden to Van Eck.

<sup>685</sup> Vick was reprimanded for not waiting his turn. He was punished for his rash actions and his career was ruined. His patrons could no longer help him anymore. Since he had wanted to pass over the position of second-in-charge of the Coast, and obviously did not value the position, he was not even appointed to that position and it was left vacant.

<sup>686</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 753, 21 June 1763, Van Eck to Van Teylingen. He kept the date of his retirement to himself, telling only Van Teylingen in advance in order to provide him with the best opportunity to plead his case. NA, Van Eck, 38, 11, 1 January 1764, Van Eck to father of Van Teylingen. In the end Van Eck kept Vick uninformed until the last VOC ships had left. NA, Van Eck, 27, 5, 10 January 1760, Van

In such a capricious system it was easy to build up grudges. As he still harboured a grudge, it gave Van Eck huge gratification, when Vermont heaped social ridicule on himself in Batavia.<sup>687</sup>

While an employee depended at first on favours to achieve promotions, this level of dependency changed once he had achieved a position with the right to appoint, as was the case when Van Eck reached the position of Governor; he had now obtained the power to promote employees. After asking the Governor-General's consent, his propositions for promotion were normally approved (*geapprobeerd*).<sup>688</sup> The recommendation and appointment by a Governor was imbued with a certain authority<sup>689</sup> and could not easily be overturned, since if Batavia did not approve of the people promoted, the Governor's credit with the local servants would have been damaged, which was not in the interests of the Company.<sup>690</sup> This meant that the tenor of his correspondence shifted from that predominately concerned with private trade, to one preponderantly related to the more administrative task of a Governor of the Coast. Outsiders began writing him soliciting his assistance in having the employees in their network promoted. This gave Van Eck a stronger position in his dealing with more highly placed officials who asked him favours, which it was tacitly understood would have to be returned. Although Van Eck was still involved in the *Huijsgebruijck* trade through his expedition of commissions, he now also exerted influence through his right to assign positions. The one fly in the ointment was that since the presence of the VOC on the Coast was not very sizeable, he received more

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Teylingen to Van Eck, and several gentlemen in the High Government had already assured Van Teylingen of succeeding. NA, Van Eck, 20, 267, 17 February 1759, Van Eck to Van Teylingen. NA, Van Eck, 20, 267, 17 February 1759, Van Eck to Van Teylingen. Van Teylingen had profited easily from Vick's faux pas.

<sup>687</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 153, 8 October 1758, Van Eck to Mossel and NA, Van Eck, 26, 7, 15 February 1759, Van Rheden to Van Eck. He was delighted when news came of Vermont ridiculing himself socially in Batavia. After his arrival there, the story did the rounds that Vermont had taken a young girl from Bali as his wife. The girl was perceived as much too pretty for such an old man and ended up having an affair with an indigenous man, and Vermont's coachman was aware of this. After taking Vermont to the theatre, the coachman would bring the lover to the girl and warned him when he left to pick up his boss. After the affair had been going on for a while, Vermont found out and trapped the lovers *in flagrante delicto*. Enraged, Vermont killed the lover, which amused Van Eck highly since his former opponent in this matter had made himself a figure of public ridicule.

<sup>688</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 638, 24 May 1761, Van Eck to De Klerk.

<sup>689</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 59, 13 August 1759, Van der Parra to Van Eck. Even if the Governor were disgraced, his authority in past promotions would remain inviolate. Just before asking his leave, Vermont had promoted two sergeants, but as new governor Van Eck wanted these promotions disapproved in Batavia. Even Van der Parra could not change the decision, giving as excuse the fact that Vermont had too much credit in Batavia.

<sup>690</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 555, 25 October 1760, Van Eck to De Klerk.

requests than he could honour. He was swamped with recommendations or “*Overkropt met recommandaties*”, making strategic decisions inevitable.<sup>691</sup>

After he was invested with his new powers Van Eck was treated more as an equal by the members of the High Government and recommendations and obligations began to work both ways. When a servant was appointed to a better position, this was also good news for his patrons, as the servant was obliged to repay the favour received. Often promotion of protégés served as a sign of gratitude and recognition of earlier help.<sup>692</sup> On hearing the news of Van Eck’s promotion, Van Rheden rejoiced he would finally be able to obtain a *onderkoopmanschap* for Hagemeister, which had been denied to him by Vermont. It even gave them the chance to circumvent the Governor-General, who had also flatly refused to promote Hagemeister. Consequently, Van Eck was able to repay Van Rheden for supporting him for so long.<sup>693</sup> De Klerk saw similar possibilities and recommended Dormieux and Visscher, two of his protégés on the Coast. Now, Van Eck’s increased power also gave him room to bargain for new alliances with the powerful. This bargaining mechanism was at work when Schreuder recommended employees and he judiciously indicated that he would not be *onerkentelijk* or unappreciative if he were to obtain these promotions through Van Eck’s good offices.<sup>694</sup> If a promotion was considered especially significant, the Governor-General could be informed of the personal interest a highly placed employee might have in such a promotion.<sup>695</sup>

On climbing the ladder, employees normally occupied themselves less with trade and began to depend on income derived from their power. On his promotion to Ceylon, Van Eck became even more preoccupied with his network and promotions. Trade was no longer his main activity nor was he any longer depending on income from trade for his fortune. The territorial nature of the VOC presence in Ceylon meant that he had more positions at his disposal to distribute than at the trading posts in India. Invariably, more money was to be made in assigning positions, of which we have already seen plenty of examples in Chapter 7. Servants were expected to pay a substantial sum related to the

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<sup>691</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 541, 25 September 1760, Van Eck to Van Teylingen.

<sup>692</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 288, 15 April 1759, Van Eck to Hooreman.

<sup>693</sup> NA, Van Eck, 26, 7, 15 February 1759, Van Rheden to Van Eck.

<sup>694</sup> NA, Van Eck, 35, 27, 13 July 1763, Schreuder to Van Eck.

<sup>695</sup> NA, Van Eck, 20, 761, 30 July 1763, Van Eck to Van der Parra. For instance, when Van Teylingen promoted Felitas, as Governor of Ceylon Van Eck asked the Governor-General to approve this promotion as a personal favour.

income expected from their newly acquired position to their superior. Through this process of cause and effect, networking functioned as a way of redistributing money upwards in the hierarchy. This indebtedness could be paid simply in money or in merchandise or by returning the favour. The amount of the sum was related to what the position was expected to bring in over a year and was calculated to its potential income. Apparently there was an approximate knowledge of how much every position was worth in terms of income.

After 1780, this system of redistribution of wealth in the favour of the higher-ranking positions was utilized by the VOC to offset its lack of capital. The VOC found it reprehensible that while it found itself in dire financial strait, its servants were still making personal fortunes. Since it considered these fortunes had been made at the expense of the Company, the servants were asked to pay a quarter to a half of the income expected in the first year of a new position to the VOC. This ukase demonstrates that the VOC not only desired a share from the networking, but had also devised a way to tax the extraordinary income of the servants. The drawing up of lists of what each position brought in proves that knowledge of amounts of extraordinary income in circulation was widespread.

## **Conclusion**

Fortune depended on a high position in the hierarchy. In a system of increasing remuneration, the competition for higher positions became fierce. Before reaching a profitable position, a Company servant had to rely on his patron and bribes in order to achieve the desired rise in the hierarchy. When an influential post was obtained, a Company servant's position changed fundamentally. He had more room to bargain. Every position represented a certain monetary value and upon promotion, a price had to be paid to those who had been helpful in helping the servant to his new position. Depending on the competition among other circumstances, this could be in the range of around one-sixth of the whole income expected from the first year. It was common

knowledge what the most profitable positions were and how much was earned. During most of the VOC era, the money was simply seen as a personal asset for appointing servants. Later, in its death throes, when the VOC tried to use its servants to halt its decline, the position of servants deteriorated in this domain too. In 1787, the VOC introduced the *amptsgeld* which was designed specifically to appropriate part of this unofficial income. As it was common knowledge how much every position yielded unofficially, lists were drawn up in order to assess the official and unofficial income appropriate of all VOC positions. Initially, servants were asked to pay half of their assessed income in the first year of their term in a certain position to the VOC as *amptsgeld*. Although this amount was later adjusted to a lower percentage, there can be little doubt that the VOC extracted money from servants. The introduction of *ambtsgeld* is another example how the VOC used part of the formerly unofficial income of its servants.

