Edited by CATIA ANTUNES and JOS GOMMANS

Exploring the Dutch Empire

Agents, Networks and Institutions,
1600–2000

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PREFACE

Catia Antunes and Jos Gommans

The idea to put together this book was inspired by the 2002 volume *Globalization in World History* edited by A.G. Hopkins. It happened in two ways. First of all, this was the first major effort to understand globalization in historical terms. More than a decade after its publication, our volume would like to take on the important issues raised in that book, but apply them more specifically to the experience of the Dutch Empire. Second, the Hopkins book was a collaborative effort made by colleagues from different fields but from one academic institution: Cambridge University. Although being in one academic environment may limit perspectives, it also has the major advantage of a long-term and in-depth engagement with the thoughts and ideas of colleagues. As was the case with the Cambridge volume, our book is the result of ongoing discussions among various colleagues at the Leiden Institute of History, all of whom, in one way or another, have addressed empire and the related phenomenon of globalization as an important historical phenomenon. All authors are respected specialists in their fields and often deal with issues that go very much beyond the Dutch sphere. Many of them are as closely affiliated to the discipline of history as they are to African, Atlantic and Asian Studies. We hope that this orientation will ensure that the volume will indeed highlight the much neglected Dutch voice, but not without comparing and connecting it to the global and (re-) embedding it in the local. Hence, by evoking the global, this book should be seen as a modest collective endeavour to further close the still existing gap between Area Studies and Colonial History, both of which not only share a long Leiden pedigree, but also a rather problematic rootedness in the Dutch Empire. It is the very notion of empire in its particularly Dutch guise that will be critically interrogated in this book, by peeking through the cracks of the official façade to better understand the formal and informal operations of Dutch agents, networks and institutions, both in and beyond the Empire.

This book begins with an introduction in which the participation of Dutch agents, networks and institutions in the bridging of global and local affairs is underlined by historical theories regarding agency, social network theory and new economic institutionalism, all of which are theoretical links which will be further contextualized in Parts One, Two and Three of this book, respectively. Part One provides four examples of local inter- and intra-agency in Dutch-dominated areas or in areas with a significant Dutch presence. Authors look at the solutions provided by local agency, while also

providing insights into globally developing trends, by stressing the importance of identity, group formation, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism in an ever-changing world. Part Two focuses on the different ways in which the organization of Dutch networks encapsulated the dynamics of the Dutch impact in the early modern and contemporary periods. Moving away from the traditional socio-economic approaches to social network theory, the authors of this section analyse networks of information, migration, military activity and postcolonial entrepreneurial organization. All these networks, singularly and as part of a broader context, became strong factors for global impact from within Dutch-controlled spheres of influence. The last Part of this book underlines the weight institutions had on the way agents and networks related to the state, and questions to what extent this relationship determined economic success or the formation of colonial and national identities. The proposed thematic division brings together local events that impacted or were impacted by global trends. Therefore, chronological or geographical parameters are of limited importance for the overall point of this book, although they figure in the conclusion which, by taking a comparative perspective, reflects on what it means to be Dutch in an increasingly globalizing world.

INTRODUCTION

Catia Antunes

Exploring the Dutch Empire

In 1602, the States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands chartered the first commercial company, the Dutch East India Company (VOC). However, the birth of the VOC did not initiate the Dutch expansion overseas. The Dutch had been looking for a place in the Atlantic and Asia since the sixteenth century, serving in functions within the Iberian empires or as private interlopers. However, the chartering of the VOC crystallized the will and determination of the Dutch State in the construction of empire and, in so doing, was able to partake in the first global age. The first global age is here understood as the period of European expansion overseas between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, defined by Amélia Polónia and Jack Owens as a 'world economy increasingly characterized by widespread collaboration, which went beyond the boundaries of countries and continents'.[1] For Polónia and Owens, this cooperation happened under the auspices of formal and informal networks whose members belonged to different world regions, lived under diverse polities and personified various cultural systems.

This book explores the implications of the institutional beginning of a Dutch process of overseas expansion. Contrary to other traditions, historians of the Dutch overseas expansion hardly ever associate this development with the construction and formation of an empire, whilst most studies about the English, the Portuguese and the Spanish cases are clearly set against a narrative about empire and imperial designs.[2] Piet Emmer and Wim Klooster, for example, have denied the existence of a Dutch empire in the Atlantic during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.[3] They argue that the Dutch played a relatively small role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as well as in the development of colonies of settlement in the West Coast of Africa and in the Americas.

Jessica Roitman and Gert Oostindie agree with Emmer and Klooster, although their view of the Dutch participation in the Atlantic is somehow more nuanced. They concur that the Dutch did not hold an empire in the Atlantic; however, they stress how important the Atlantic space was for Dutch colonies and for the Dutch Republic in terms of mobility, income and exchange.[4] Furthermore, they stress the role that the Dutch agents and networks played in connecting empires and overcoming borders throughout the whole Atlantic, with particular emphasis on the Caribbean.[5]

At the same time, the specialists on the chartered companies strongly argue that the primary interests of the VOC and the West India Company (WIC) were paramount for shareholders and main participants and therefore state intervention was rather the exception.[6] This position has been further strengthened by Oscar Gelderblom, Joost Jonker, Abe de Jong and Henk den Heijer's intake on the companies as mostly a business enterprise, rather than an empire-building agent.[7] Generally, the Dutch expansion overseas remains a matter of commercial expansion.[8]

More recently, Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans have asserted that VOC and WIC were different organizations, with different goals and very diverse outcomes, although the fact that they were both chartered by the same political body (the States General of the United Provinces) provided them with the same political matrix and informs to work from. Nonetheless, both authors remain reluctant in assuming this relationship as determinant to the construction of a Dutch empire since, they argue, both companies were dominated by the maritime provinces of the Netherlands (Holland and Zealand) and their main cities (Amsterdam and Middelburg), while the States General was a representative body of many other provinces and many more towns.[9]

The following chapters will contribute to this ongoing debate by *Exploring the Dutch Empire* from the seventeenth through the twentieth century. The chapters are organized around three binding elements in empire building, namely agents, networks and institutions. Some of the chapters will focus on towns and cities where Dutch institutions and companies held sway over the territory and were, therefore, free to establish mechanisms of colonial governance, while others have taken the perspective of a Dutch expanding empire without the physical binding to specific spaces. What they all have in common is the set of solutions that Dutch entrepreneurs, companies and administrators found when encountering other peoples, establishing means of exchange and ultimately founding long-term entangled relationships between the Dutch Republic, and the later Kingdom of the Netherlands and the territories overseas.

Agents, networks and institutions

The analysis of the participation, contribution and impact of the Dutch and their empire is achieved by a set of snapshots (case studies) of different instances in which Dutch intervention and/or participation made a short- or long-term difference in the way local actors, global networks and world exchanges took place. The careful selection of these instances has been categorized within specific conceptual frameworks of agency (agents), interconnectedness (networks) and power (institutions). Together, these three categories influenced, determined and shaped the way the Dutch, the Dutch Republic and the Kingdom of the Netherlands faced the challenges

and took advantage of the benefits to be had from early modern and contemporary empire building.

The concept of agency is generally perceived by the participating authors as the possibility of acting or being acted upon. This implies that Dutch agents and local agents appear prominently and are treated equally and consistently throughout this book. Perry Anderson proposes the division of agency into a tripartite structure of agent archetypes. These archetypes are defined by the goal setting of the agent himself and include private agents, public agents and collective agents.[10] Throughout this book, these three types of agent appear prominently in different chronological contexts and in diverse areas of the world, often simultaneously. On the other hand, the case studies within this book challenge Anderson's proposal, because he fails to mention the nature and implications of the different types of agency that characterize the different types of agents.

The first four chapters, by Jos Gommans, Maurits van den Boogert, Anita van Dissel and Robert Ross and Anne-Lot Hoek, stress the importance of agency, using as their point of departure private agents operating in Cochin (Kerala), the Ottoman Empire, the Indonesian Archipelago and Zambia, and employ a chronology that starts in the seventeenth century and brings the reader well into the twenty-first century. Although all these authors emphasize the importance of private agents, Van den Boogert and Van Dissel analyse a process of transition from private agency into collective agency and show how this transition determined the tradition of Dutch intervention and influence in the Ottoman Empire and in the Dutch Indies. On the other hand, the chapters by Gommans, Ross and Hoek stress the development of private Dutch agency when exposed to and facing specific, quickly moving local contexts. The adaptability of private agency is translated in Gommans' work by a re-definition and re-evaluation of the concept of cosmopolitanism in a study of the negotiated entanglement between Dutch rulers and Cochin's prominent cross-cultural population, while in Ross and Hoek's work, private agency gains a global form under the auspice of ambitious non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with inflexible structures unsuited to facing local Zambian demands.

This volume embraces Anderson's typology of agent goal setting at local level, as exemplified by the work mentioned above. However, the study of agency is in this context followed by an in-depth analysis of structures, causality, (ir)rationality and free will naturally rooted in the art of agency and deeply influential in the outcome of empire. This position reflects an attempt to answer Alex Callinicos' criticism of Anderson concerning the power and nature of agency, the interaction between the different structures of agency (networks and institutions), the causality behind agency, the balance between rational and irrational decision-making processes on the part of agents and the consequences of personal choices.[11] For this reason, the contributions in the first part of this book underline the impact and shortcomings of Dutch and local agency, ultimately conceiving of a set of agent-related and dependent mechanisms of colonial impacts.

Even if this book argues for the vital importance of actions of specific agents in the construction, development and dispersal of an empire, the efficiency of these agents is questionable when organized into action groups. As Anderson puts it, agents with a public goal run the risk of becoming ever less efficient when clustering their interests, because personal goal setting may at times (or frequently) supersede the interest of the official goal setting of the cluster. In our view, clusters of local agents engaged in and impacting on empire are better perceived when analysed under the theoretical magnifying glass provided by social network theory.

For Harrison White, individuals or agents construct their lives and actions by crossing multiple social and cultural contexts, as Van den Boogert and Gommans so eloquently explain for the Ottoman and Kerala cases. Every social context imposes upon the agent a new set of rules for personal and collective engagement. When the context changes and, therefore, there is a differentiation in the rules governing the interpersonal relationships, common identities and personal loyalties change. In White's argument, the identities and loyalties that fence off the limitations of inter-agent interactions are the same that transcend those borders and allow agents a perennial status of singular and collective participation throughout their lives. Ultimately, the participation of agents in different networks (individually or in clusters) ensures that society is built around specific social nodes, often characterized as 'principal agents'.[12]

White's definition of a network has, at times, raised concern about whether networks are reliable structures or chaotic organizations.[13] This book suggests that the social, economic and cultural success of any network is strictly linked with its capacity to self-organize and in so doing enhance the power and assertiveness of individual agency. On this point, authors may share Francesca Trivellato's view that 'networks (. . .) were not unstructured entities: they were built on legal conventions and shared norms and expectations'.[14] For these reasons, self-organization, trans-imperialness and cross-culturality were at the heart of the type of networks that represented the outcome of agency within the Dutch spheres of influence.

In Chapters 5 to 8, Catia Antunes, Erik Odegard, Joris van den Tol, Charles Jeurgens, Peter Meel and Thomas Lindblad centre their case studies on the analysis of more or less structured networks throughout the Dutch sphere of influence. Even if studies of historical networks have mostly privileged the early modern period, these four chapters plead the importance of these approaches in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ranging in their topics from entanglement to information and migration, and including military and economic networks. These chapters generalize the relevance of networks (in their various forms) for, on the one hand, the construction of empire (Antunes, Odegard, Van den Tol and Jeurgens, in Chapters 5 and 6), and, on the other hand, for the fluidity, adaptation and survival of that same empire (Meel and Lindblad, in Chapters 7 and 8).

The networks of businessmen, administrators, colonists, information and knowledge brought to light by Antunes, Odegard, Van den Tol and Jeurgens (Chapters 5 and 6) in Brazil and in the Indonesian Archipelago and beyond, during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, illustrate the process of imperial expansion and domination that the Dutch state and Dutch colonial players went through. For these authors, this expansion was due to the workings of clearly designed networks of exchanges controlled by private and collective agents, but appropriated and exploited by the central state soon thereafter. Faced with demands by the central state and dealing with local contingencies, these case studies move beyond the concept of 'networks of empire' as conceptualized by Kerry Ward, stressing instead the importance of local and global exchanges of information (Antunes, Odegard, Van den Tol and Jeurgens, in Chapters 5 and 6), peoples (the case of migration to Suriname presented by Meel in Chapter 7) and capital (as demonstrated in Chapter 8 by Lindblad's approach to postcolonial economic development in Indonesia).[15]

If, for Antunes, Odegard, Van den Tol and Jeurgens (Chapters 5 and 6), networks formed the backbone for the construction of empire, for Meel and Lindblad (Chapters 7 and 8), networks represent the fluidity and adaptation of empire to historical change. Meel, in Chapter 7, focuses his argument on the permeability and flexibility of the imperial project when analysed under the 'gaze' of migratory flows originating far from the metropolis, more often than not from the world periphery at the time. These migratory movements created a circulatory movement of people, traditions, ideas and religious beliefs on a scale never seen before. Even if this migration was essential for the functioning of the imperial project, the empire was only marginally interested in these networks that were to so profoundly shape colonial and postcolonial identities to a degree never seen in centuries past. The question of identity is further explored in the form of economic identification in a postcolonial world by Lindblad in Chapter 8. He stresses the decreasing importance of the economic imperial and colonial identity in postcolonial Indonesia, by mapping out the economic network of the affairs of a multinational shipping company. Once again, the fluidity of this nexus made collective agency of the *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij* (KPM) as a global enterprise, the means of circulation of capital and goods in the aftermath of the Indonesian decolonization process.

The participation of agents and networks in the historical process of a Dutch empire, that has been envisaged and translated into different chapters in this book, although evident in the actions of agents and the cooperation and interconnectedness of networks, is better understood when assessing the role institutions played with (or against) those same agents and networks. It has been assumed in this collective work that institutions are organizations or sets of legal rules that regulate the relationship between individuals, groups and polities (or the state). This definition is broader and less economically focused than the well-known conceptual suggestions by

Douglass North and Robert Thomas, who have anchored the definition of institution as 'an arrangement between economic units that co-operate or compete'.[16]

The long-lasting effect of Dutch creation, imposition and negotiation of institutions worldwide influenced profoundly the way global exchanges were tolerated, negotiated and imposed. Chronologically, the chapters in this book show a crescendo from toleration, through negotiation and imposition (Wim Boot, Henk den Heijer and Alicia Schrikker, in Chapters 9 to 11), coming to a renewed negotiated outcome in the twenty-first century (Gert Oostindie in Chapter 12). However, contrary to what might be expected, institutional arrangements were not the sole creation of the expanding colonial state or enterprise. Dutch agents and institutions faced serious obstacles and hindrances while operating in the sphere of local states and polities. The example of the Dutch operations in Japan is a case in point, portrayed by Wim Boot (Chapter 9) as an obvious case of adaptation and negotiation when the Dutch chartered company faced institutional limitations imposed by the Japanese shogunate. Although limiting, these limitations did not mean the end of Dutch–Japanese exchanges – on the contrary. The nature of the connection between VOC and the Shogun became heavily negotiated, with Japanese institutional determinism maintaining the upper hand in the relationship.

Institutional negotiation remained a feature of Dutch expansion as much in the East as in the West. According to Henk den Heijer (Chapter 10), in Elmina, institutions were mostly Dutch in nature in what constituted an exceptional transposition of institutional traditions from the metropolis to the colonial setting, although the daily functioning of these institutions and the outcome of the institutional processes was a permanent negotiation between Europeans (of different backgrounds and religious beliefs) and Africans (of different ethnicities and subjects of different polities). Following in the footsteps of the historical traditions that have privileged institutional transposition[17] and institutional negotiation,[18] den Heijer (Chapter 10) adds nuanced insights into the institutional developments in the Gold Coast by underlining the undeniable cooperative nature of institutional exchanges. Similar arguments are brought forward by Schrikker (Chapter 11) for the case of Ceylon. This cooperative nature highlights, once again, the strength of individual and collective agency and the power of networks within a context of overwhelming dominance of the locality.

The negotiable character of institutions is further explored by Oostindie in Chapter 12. He refuses the inevitability of institutional imposition, even in the twenty-first century. In the case of the Dutch Antilles, institutional change was as much a negotiated project lead by collective agents and networks as in the Early Modern period. The power of the nation state is, therefore, broadly questioned and the assertiveness of local, decentralized identities form the backbone of Oostindie's argumentation on institutional adaptability and compromise.

The plurality of what constitutes agency, the complexity of networks and the ever mutating institutional status portrayed in this book are anchored in a history of entangled connections that force historians to move beyond comparative history and engage in a locally based analysis of deeply rooted global processes.[19] What this book underlines and supports are the power struggles and historical discontinuities engrained in the fibre of a process of maritime expansion initiated by the Dutch, but developed, negotiated, influenced and transformed by a myriad of individuals, networks and institutions that were neither Dutch nor European.

Notes

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10 P. Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: Versobooks, 1980), pp. 19–20.

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12 H.C. White, *Identity and Control: A Structural Theory of Social Action* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Harrison C. White, *Markets from Networks: Socioeconomic Models of Production* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

13 G. Reza Azarian, *The General Sociology of Harrison C. White: Chaos and Order in Networks* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2005).

14 F. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 163.

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18 L. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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Agents

South Asian Cosmopolitanism and the Dutch Microcosms in Seventeenth-Century Cochin (Kerala)[1]

Jos Gommans

For if a universalist secular ethic is indeed superior on rational grounds to other moralities, this means there must be multiple intellectual and cultural sources of such ideas whether European, Asian, American, or African.

JONATHAN ISRAEL[2]

The belief that we are destined to live in a universal civilization is a commonplace in societies shaped by Enlightenment thinking. Yet it has scant support in history. In truth, it is not a result of historical inquiry, but rather the product of a discredited philosophy of history.

JOHN GRAY[3]

Introduction

In the past two or three decades there has been a growing public and academic debate about the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism. After 9/11, this debate gained a new sense of urgency. Even historians could not stay aloof and some of them felt the need to tackle the now burning issue of the historical antecedents and alternatives to what seemed to be(come) a devastating clash of civilizations. Who or what was to blame for this sudden polarization? Was it really brand new or was this just the most recent eruption of a much older but sadly neglected religious conflict? The issue of cosmopolitanism seems to be the latest avatar of a much older discussion about the meaning of the Enlightenment. Since the advent of the Enlightenment, three basic questions crop up all the time: is there just one Enlightenment? Is there just one trajectory leading to it? Is it a blessing or a curse to humanity?[4] With the risk of losing nuance, I would suggest that most postcolonial and postmodernist scholars – very much in line with the slightly older penchant of the Frankfurt School – would be inclined to see present-day fundamentalism and communal conflict as an unintended Frankenstein created by European Enlightenment. Hence, from their point of view, we should not try to save this so-called Enlightenment by strengthening it, but we should instead get rid of it and look for inspiration from some more open and more tolerant pre-Enlightened societies within or beyond the borders of its supposedly European cradle.

Meanwhile, in the background of this grand debate, some historians rediscovered cosmopolitanism as an antidote to the rising tide of fundamentalism. Fortunately, a growing number of both defenders and detractors of the Enlightenment recognized the need to historicize cosmopolitanism as the neglected backbone of conviviality and tolerance. One of the most persuasive representatives of this group is the American historian Margaret Jacob, who just recently studied the emergence of cosmopolitanism in early modern Europe. For Jacob, to be cosmopolitan means the ability to experience people of different nations, creeds and colours with pleasure, curiosity and interest, and not with suspicion, disdain or simply a disinterest that could occasionally turn into loathing. In tracing the origins of this 'benign posture', she looks to various social practices in early modern Europe, but particularly those pertaining to science, trade and freemasonry. For Jacob, the city was the natural habitat of the cosmopolitan – and since she only discusses the West, we could perhaps add the adjective 'European' to the statement.[5] An equally articulate argument that Enlightenment and cosmopolitanism go together and should be seen as Western phenomena is offered by the British historian Jonathan Israel. Although Israel does not use the label of cosmopolitanism, it comes very near to what he defines as 'comprehensive toleration', which is an integral aspect of what he calls the Radical Enlightenment. Israel convincingly argues that although it is a universal phenomenon, it has a specific European

trajectory with, interestingly, the Dutch Republic as its earliest epicentre. Although he stresses its European genesis and turns a blind eye to the non-Western contributions to the latter, he accepts that there is no reason why we should search only in Western philosophical traditions to find its intellectual roots.[6] This is an important desideratum to which I will return later.

Whereas Israel focuses on the history of ideas, another British historian, Harold Cook, has similarly stressed the importance of the Dutch Republic in the making of modern science. Although his work does not specifically deal with the issue of cosmopolitanism, it implicitly proposes that modern science could only emerge under the unique conditions of global trade as it converged in the highly cosmopolitan Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century. By neatly following in the footsteps of the Dutch polymath Casparus Barlaeus (1584–1648), Cook aims to demonstrate that knowledge (*sapienta*) and commerce (*mercatura*) are closely intertwined activities that spring from the same mental category. According to Cook, 'to gain their true ends, both the sage and the merchant had to act according to the dictates of natural virtue: to moderate their desires, to cultivate honest conduct in all things, and to value all matters in helping them to their ends'.[7] More than Israel and most other Enlightenment historians, Cook is highly sensitive to the way the Republic's cosmopolitanism grew out of its intensified confrontation with the wisdom and the commodities of other non-Western societies. More so than Jacob, both Cook and Israel argue that much of the modern world that we know today originates from the highly cosmopolitan Dutch Republic and, as an offshoot of this, that the latter imposed a significant cosmopolitizing impact on their overseas colonies, in particular on their Atlantic colonies. Lately, this second aspect has been (perhaps a bit too) enthusiastically embraced by the American journalist Russell Shorto, who claims that the American idea of universal civil rights actually has Dutch roots although, in his test case, the 'magic touch' occurred somewhat earlier and more directly at a time when New York was still New Amsterdam.[8] Although all these historians seem to agree on the manifold blessings that Dutch cosmopolitanism brought to at least part of the Atlantic world, they are also very much aware that through slavery and the slave trade these same Dutchmen also played a far more sinister role in global history. Obviously this paradox is grist to the mills of those who are more sceptical about the fruits of European Enlightenment and for whom the contrast is hardly a surprise.

An influential sceptic is the American philosopher Stephen Toulmin. He feels that something went terribly wrong after the Renaissance. Toulmin is referring to the seventeenth-century dawn of modernity, this 'inexhaustible cornucopia of novelty' as he calls it, with new ways of thinking about nature and society. This involved a transition from a more relativistic humanism à la Montaigne to a more radical enlightenment à la Descartes. The latter view accepts matters of universal, timeless theory as being entitled to an exclusive

place in the agenda of philosophy. So respect for complexity and plurality (we read cosmopolitanism) – the local, the oral, the particular and the timely – gave way to abstract, timeless, universal theory, divorced from concrete problems. According to Toulmin, this paradigm shift was actually a reflection of the European crisis of religious persecution or, as the leading Sanskritist Sheldon Pollock has it, 'it was the peculiarly violent wreckage of pre-modernity in the West that produced its modernity'.[9] In other words, at a time when no one else saw anything to do but continue fighting an interminable war, intellectuals were reasoning their way out of political and theological chaos. By 1620 people in political power and theological authority in Europe no longer saw Montaigne's pluralism as a viable intellectual option: scepticism (we read cosmopolitanism's cultural relativism) had become unacceptable, certainty was more urgent now.[10]

Interestingly, Toulmin's argument ties in well with the debate on Orientalism in which scholars have questioned the almost timeless context of Edward Said's approach by looking for some meaningful historical breaks. For example, the well-known German historian Jürgen Osterhammel observes an almost Toulminian shift from an open-minded to a more systematic, orientalist perception of Asia as the essential other. Not surprisingly, for Osterhammel, all this occurs slightly later at the dawn of real colonial domination in the nineteenth century.[11] Indeed, in arguments like this, not so much Enlightenment but colonialism is to blame for what seems to be a growing epistemological and ethical divergence between not only the past and the present, but also the East and the West.

With the discussion about Enlightenment raging on, there has been a discussion about the inception and the meaning of the term 'cosmopolitanism'. Although it was used a bit earlier, it is only in the eighteenth century that being cosmopolitan becomes one of the professed ideals of the Enlightenment. This happens at a time when, in the context of emerging nationalism, it is also increasingly used in a defensive mood. This is particularly true for European communities that lived abroad and necessarily had to interact with other religious and ethnic communities.[12] For someone like Toulmin, by the time cosmopolitanism was turned into an ideal of the Enlightenment, it had already ceased to be social practice.

Interestingly, several historians of South Asia have recently reiterated a similar argument, but by giving it a spatial dimension. Along with Toulmin, they generally agree that cosmopolitanism is not some known entity existing in the world, with a clear genealogy from the Stoics to Immanuel Kant, something that simply awaits more detailed description at the hands of scholarship. These authors, aiming at 'provincializing' Europe, seek cosmopolitan genealogies from the non-European world by simply exploring how people have thought and acted beyond the local. For them, this particular modernity – as a product of European Enlightenment – duplicitously undermines true cosmopolitanism, because it seeks to separate and purify realms. So we should do without modernity. Though we may not

always have known it, we already are and have always been cosmopolitan. It is the task of the historian to explore these cosmopolitan practices beyond the Western genealogy of the Enlightenment.[13] Following this line of reasoning we should seek cosmopolitanism as a social practice both *avant* and *après la lettre*, both within and beyond European Enlightenment.

In order to further deconstruct the exclusive nature of cosmopolitanism, we should also start to question whether its *locus classicus* is really the European city. It seems that the conditions in the early modern imperial courts, both in Europe and Asia, were at least as conducive to cosmopolitanism. By far the best case of the successful dissemination of Dutch cosmopolitanism is neither provided by the city of New Amsterdam, nor by any other Dutch colonial city, but by the royal court of Governor-General Johan Maurits van Nassau in Brazil.[14] Quite different from the universal variety of the likes of Diderot or Kant, the cosmopolitanism of kings was neither very systematic nor very consistent. Emperors across the world looked for cheap and flexible solutions to establish universal peace in their highly composite and diverse realms. As long as it was ambiguous, eclectic and open to negotiation, cosmopolitanism always proved to be an extremely convenient and peaceful option. Hence, a wide array of religious and cultural views could converge in the imperial court without necessarily clashing with each other. Therefore, cities can hardly claim a monopoly on the ideal of cosmopolitanism as it has always been, albeit to various degrees, the natural companion to empire. *Padshah, chakravartin, tsar, caesar,* all these are representations of cosmopolitan leadership which, in principle, could exist in one person, next to each other and catered to the diverse needs of all those who followed this person. It follows then that we should not exclusively look to the city as the fount of cosmopolitanism and universal toleration. Jacob suggests that alchemy was one of the first fields in which the cosmopolitan spirit did emerge. For his part, Harold Cook stresses the crucial contribution of neo-stoicism in the rise of modern science. But since both alchemy and neo-stoicism were extremely fashionable in court circles, it can hardly be perceived as an urban activity. With all due respect to Jacob and Cook, we could even add that neither science nor trade but art paved the way for the ever widening cosmopolitanism that characterized the early modern imperial courts from the German lands to southern India.[15]

It is at the temporal and spatial crossroads of this debate that I would like to reassess the meaning of Dutch cosmopolitanism in Asia. Interestingly, when shifting the perspective from the Atlantic to Asia, the Dutch impact becomes far less pronounced. East of the Cape, it seems that neither Dutch cosmopolitanism nor Dutch slavery and the concomitant slave trade have created any academic steam. But considering the forceful arguments of Israel and Cook and the huge contrast with the Atlantic, we should at least try to investigate how Dutch cosmopolitanism fared under the Asian sun. But we should also avoid a one-directional analytical exercise by taking into account other ways of being cosmopolitan and how the Dutch responded to these.

For this occasion, I will take up Toulmin's plea to be more sensitive to the local, the oral, the particular and the timely.[16] To begin with the first, I will focus on the Indian city-*cum*-court of Cochin. Through oral reports, we get the impression that it had already been the most cosmopolitan place on the Indian subcontinent for centuries. We will revisit Cochin's Indo-Dutch history through the eyes of two particular Dutchmen who ruled that city during the second half of the seventeenth century: Rijklof Volkertsz van Goens (1619–1682) and Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein (1636–1691). Although both were compatriots and operating on the same spot, they also were part of an altogether different social class and a different generation.

Cochin's cosmopolitanism

In sharp contrast to the recent craze about the Dutch heritage of toleration in the Atlantic world, Cochin's public image of cosmopolitanism hardly touches upon any Dutch contribution.[17] According to the famous Indian intellectual and political psychologist Ashis Nandy, Cochin remained unaffected by Western ideas of secularist cosmopolitanism and it is actually still one of the few cities in India where the indigenous, precolonial traditions of cultural pluralism refuse to die. Through the ages, Cochin had attracted people from all across the Indian Ocean. As the imagined successor of the ancient city of Muziris (Cranganore; Kodungalloor), Cochin can claim a history of two millennia of attracting traders and their wares from almost every corner of the eastern hemisphere. As a commercial hub, it naturally became a nexus for the exchange of ideas, cultures and religions. Along with a mosaic of different ethnic groups, Cochin counted among its population a wide array of religious minorities ranging from so-called 'white' and 'black' Jews, Roman Catholics, Syrian Christians, Muslims and Protestants. Although the majority now follows Hinduism, this label hides an enormous variety of heterodox sects and groups with their own rituals and practices of worship. Despite the amazing communal diversity on such a cramped plot of land, Nandy claims that Cochin has not seen any bloodbaths, or even a proper riot. Not denying difference and conflict, he suspects that most memories of communal strife serve as mere props to the community's self-esteem and self-definition rather than as stereotypes having murderous implications. For Nandy, Cochin's peculiar cosmopolitanism is not so much the triumph of urban trade, rationalism or secularism – this would indeed have been the Western route to cosmopolitanism. Actually cosmopolitanism was there, somewhat uncannily, before it was formally launched as part of the Enlightenment project in South Asia, under the auspices of a series of colonial regimes. Hence, Nandy discards history as a trustworthy guide for really understanding Cochin's particular story and instead prefers to embrace the mythic Cochin of the memories and stories of

its inhabitants. As a result, Nandy ignores the colonial era altogether and elaborates on the 'attitude of openness' of the Cochin kings. In the Dutch period, these kings resided in Mattancherry, just outside the European fort, in what is now known as the Dutch palace. To illustrate his point, Nandy not only builds on memories as he refers to the interesting petition of the famous Portuguese but Amsterdam-based Jewish rabbi Manasseh Ben Israel (1604–1657) to Oliver Cromwell, in which he used a messianic argument to beg for the resettlement of the Jews in England. Interestingly, Manasseh Ben Israel indeed lauds the tolerance enjoyed by the Jews of Cochin under the local king.[18] Nandy further admires the way the city landscape is designed like a beehive and so avoids the steamy melting pot layout of most modern metropoles. The unacquainted may recognize Dutch *apartheid* in what seems to be a segregated morphology but, in this case, Cochin seems to follow the usual Indian pattern in which communities prefer to live together but also very much apart. Be that as it may, for Nandy, Cochin offers a unique window to a once-flourishing and now almost forgotten alternative culture of cosmopolitanism.[19]

The cosmopolitan role that Nandy reserves for the king and court of Cochin reoccurs in the recent work of the historian Zoltán Biedermann, who is particularly interested in the ratio behind the different urban morphological structures of Cannanore and Colombo. Instead of attributing the dissimilarities to the distinct national Portuguese and Dutch traditions – the first more open and organic, the latter more segregated and planned – he feels that the presence of a royal court really made the difference. As a consequence, due to the presence of the court, Colombo was transformed into a multifunctional capital city with a truly widely incorporated identity: it became a place where the local identity of the urban population grew to be more important than other identities while, at the same time, the religious and ethnic boundaries remained blurry. When the Dutch conquered the city, king and court were removed and Dutch Colombo ended up very much like the earlier, neatly segregated, Cannanore. So with Nandy and Biedermann, we are back at the central argument about cosmopolitanism: not the early modern European city, but the Asian court inspired a precolonial cosmopolitanism *avant la lettre*.[20]

Within the backdrop of this wider discussion about the roots of cosmopolitanism, I would like to revisit the history of the city and see to what extent the Dutch conquest made a difference. Since we should not treat the almost two centuries of the Dutch East India Company's (VOC) lifespan as a whole, I will concentrate on the voices of the two most prominent Dutch commanders of Malabar in the first decades after the conquest. In the first case, I will take up Biedermann's approach and examine the way Cochin's morphology was recreated by Rijcklof van Goens. In the second case, I will turn to the next generation, to Van Goens' client-turned-rival Hendrik van Reede and see how his analysis of the history and politics of the region represented both a break with, and a continuation of, the

attitude of his predecessor. Finally, I will ask what all this tells us about Dutch and Indian expressions of cosmopolitanism.

Van Goens and the morphology of Cochin

Rijcklof Volkertsz van Goens was born on 24 June 1619 in the city of Rees in the County of Cleves, now in Germany, but in the early seventeenth century occupied by Dutch troops who turned the town into a strong fortress as part of their forward defence system in the Rhineland. Serving the Dutch army there was Rijcklof's father Volkert Boykes. When he was nine years old, Rijcklof followed his parents to join his uncle (Volkert's brother) in Batavia. Within two years, both his father (1629) and mother (1630) died. As an eleven-year-old boy, he became an adopted child of the VOC by serving various of its officials, and ultimately created for himself an impressive career as a highly successful diplomat and general – an astonishing accomplishment for an orphaned child. In 1640, he married Jacobina Bartolomeusdochter Rosegaard with whom he had five children, amongst whom was Rijcklof, jr., born in 1642, who would later follow in his father's footsteps as governor of Ceylon. In the period between 1660 and 1675, with a few interruptions, Van Goens was governor of Ceylon and after that, between 1678 and 1681, he even headed the High Government in Batavia as governor-general.[21]

The difficult personal experience of his youth during the most insecure and warlike phase of the Republic's survival in Europe and the VOC's presence in Asia must have contributed to Rijcklof becoming an assertive, harsh but also deeply religious man. His biographer, J. Aalbers, calls him a man of the seventeenth century following the Cromwellian motto, 'trust in God but keep your powder dry'.[22] He was indeed a man of his age, born on the front lines of the Dutch Republic. He was a respected member of the war-generation of Jan Pieterszoon Coen who, in his turn, left his mark by aggressively carving out an empire of his own along the maritime fringes of the Indian Ocean. Van Goens' letters breathe an incredible energy and commitment but, at times, also give a somewhat haunted impression of distrust and hatred for the outside world, Muslim traders in particular. He felt that the VOC should be self-reliant and self-supporting and not build too much on its Asian partners, who he saw as 'naturally faithless'. Strong military interventions should restrict these traders' commercial operations and command their respect. In 1658, Van Goens became commissioner and admiral of the western part of the Indian Ocean and was at last in a position to demonstrate what his policy of 'shock and awe' was capable of. First came Ceylon. After the earlier conquest of the Portuguese strongholds at Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Galle and Negombo from 1638 to 1644, Van Goens led the last stage of Dutch expansion with the occupation of Kalutara, Colombo, Mannar and Jaffnapatnam from 1655 to 1658. Van

Goens's main priority was to protect the flanks of these new settlements and possessions. Steps had to be taken before a definitive peace, which was being negotiated at that time, was concluded with Portugal. In the course of five separate campaigns, the Portuguese were driven out of Quilon (Kollam) in 1661, from Cranganore (Kranganur, Kodungallur) in 1662 and finally from Cannanore (Kannur) and Cochin in 1663.

Before dwelling on Van Goens' own designs for Cochin, let us briefly present an outline of the city's history and morphology before the arrival of the Dutch. The rise of the port town of Cochin began in 1341, when large-scale floods are supposed to have led to a southward shift in the lower course of the Periyar River and the emergence of the island of Vypin. To the south of this island at Cochin, a navigable channel was formed linking the Arabian Sea and the many lagoons and rivers in the hinterland, with the consequence that Cochin gradually was able to take the place of Cranganore (Kodungallur; the ancient Muziris) located further north, as the central port for the supply and transit of the Malabar pepper trade. In 1405, the ruler of the Perumpadappu Swarupam, one of the foremost clan territories on the Malabar Coast, moved his residence from Mahodayapuram to Cochin. In his constant struggle with the powerful Zamorin of Calicut, as early as 1500, the raja of Cochin sought support from the Portuguese, who had only just arrived in India. In that year, the Portuguese were given permission to set up a factory, and three years later, in recognition of their role in expelling the Zamorin, the Portuguese were allowed to build a fort in Cochin.

According to the Indian historian, Pius Malekandathil, the Portuguese position in Cochin was like that of the other foreign communities in the city: their rights, customs and culture were respected. As long as they respected the feelings of the natives, they were allowed not only to settle down and set up their own stations and colonies, but also to be governed by their own chiefs and law codes.[23] As has been mentioned already, the settlement pattern of Cochin was not so different from other Indian cities. The population tended to live in various segregated groups of single religious, regional and professional communities. The Cochin court was not right next to the sea but was a few kilometres further along the bay. This squares well with the observation of Sinappah Arasaratnam, who writes that Indian port-towns developed away from the waterfront and did not tend to expand on the waterfront itself.[24] Generally speaking, the seaside and the coast were either vacant or left to low castes and untouchables, well out of sight of the Brahmins and Nairs of the court area. Despite such 'natural segregation', both contemporary visitors and modern historians seem to agree that the Cochin area was blessed with a cosmopolitan atmosphere – the Hindu king himself serving as the main patron of many of the different groups and minorities. It seems that the arrival of the Portuguese did not make much of a change. At the start of the seventeenth century, François Pyrard de Laval expressed the opinion that:

> The king and the inhabitants, as well Nairs as Moucois and other Malabars, Gentiles and Mahometans, agree well with the Portuguese, and live in peace. There is a vast number of Jews there that are very rich, and all the other different nations live in perfect liberty as to religion, each having its own temple, except in the Portuguese town, which is reserved to that nation.[25]

In 1505, the Portuguese fort (Manuel) was designated the administrative centre of the *Estado da India* (until 1530), and in 1527 the settlement was granted town rights as well. In consequence, urban development largely followed a dual structure: on the northern end of the peninsula there arose the Portuguese town of Santa Cruz de Cochim, also called *Cochim de Baixo* (the lower town), and to the south-east of this, outside the ramparts, lay Mattancherry, also called *Cochim de Cima* (the upper town), with the royal palace, built by the Portuguese in 1557 but in the later Company period considerably altered, and today still known as the 'Dutch Palace', which was surrounded by a temple, a synagogue and a mosque. Mattancherry was also characterized by the various bazaars and stores of influential Tamil Pattar, Chetty and Konkanese Saraswat (*Kanarynse*) merchants. Further to the south was the quarter of the Mapilla Muslims. Apart from the many Indian merchants, there was also a flourishing Jewish trading community settled in Mattancherry and alloted space near to the palace. Despite the division between the Portuguese fort and the Cochin court, there seems to have been no clear-cut division between the two, as Pyrard states that 'between the two Cochins are continuous houses, like suburbs, and it is the same all around.'[26]

Van Goens had presented to his superiors the prospect of the pepper monopoly on the Malabar Coast, but it was a promise which proved impossible for the war hero to keep. Whatever steps the VOC took, whether by means of exclusive contracts, a pass system, intensive patrolling or watch posts, it proved absolutely impossible to prevent the 'smuggling' of considerable quantities of pepper everywhere along the coast, both by sea via Calicut and other autonomous ports and over land through the various mountain passes to Mysore and Madurai. The VOC claimed that part of the problem was the contraband trade of the numerous pirates on the Malabar Coast, but these 'pirates' were actually the various larger and smaller local trading companies which, just as did the VOC, pursued armed sea trade. The VOC could do little to nothing against the smaller ships of these companies, which could hug the coast and for whom the countless atolls in the Laccadive and Maldive archipelagos offered endless possibilities to hide from and evade VOC control. Despite the relatively large investments the VOC made in the area, the trade in Malabar was dominated by Arab and Indian shipping from Cannanore, Calicut and the Maldives, often at the cost of the trade with Cochin and other VOC settlements.[27] Other Europeans also offered the Dutch plenty of competition on this coast.