

# Early Dutch presence in North America

The West India Company`s relationship with its Dutch patroonship

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## Abstract

Denne oppgaven tar oss tilbake til sekstenhundre tallet og til den nederlandske kolonien i Nord-Amerika. Nærmere bestemt vil oppgaven ta for seg det Nederlandske vest-indiske Handelskompaniet, samt det nederlandske patroon-skapet som senere skulle vise seg og bli redningen for en vakkende nederlandsk koloni.

Kiliaen van Rensselaer er sentral i denne oppgaven, da han var en av de ledende og mest fremtredende skikkelsene blant kompaniets direktører. Hvilken innflytelse van Rensselaer hadde på det Vest-Indiske Handelskompaniet (WIC) og dens politikk frem mot 1640 belyses. Selv om oppgaven legger stor vekt på van Rensselaers innflytelse, tar oppgaven også for seg de mange problemene som lå til grunn for og åpnet opp for et patroon system.

Som en av direktørene i WIC kunne han effektivt ta i bruk sin innflytelse med det formål og endre dens politikk. Oppgaven danner grunnlag for en forståelse av de ulike problemene WIC møtte i kampen om å etablere en fruktbar koloni i Nord Amerika. Disse utfordringene la i stor grad grunnlag for det nederlandske patroon systemet. Det var også i denne sammenhengen at Kiliaen van Rensselaer skulle komme til å spille en viktig rolle for koloniens fremtid. Han var en forkjemper for å åpne kolonien opp for private investorer, noe som førte til stor motstand innad i WIC da dette var i strid med den nederlandske oversjøiske politikken om handelsmonopol.

I to versjoner av frihetsbrev la WIC frem flere retningslinjer som ga rike investor store privilegier mot at de ved privat kapital brakte kolonister over Atlanteren. Denne oppgaven viser at det foreligger flere endringer som gagnet de enkelte patroonene, blant annet Kiliaen van Rensselaer. Ved å analysere og drøfte de to versjonene bidrar oppgaven til og kaster lys over hvordan van Rensselaer systematisk endret WICs politikk knyttet til frihetsbrevet til å inkludere flere forbedrede privilegier. Oppgaven forklarer og argumenterer for at oppveksten til van Rensselaer i Amsterdam spilte en stor rolle ved å forme ideene rundt van Rensselaer. Til slutt vil oppgaven diskutere van Rensselaer's egen koloni som skulle overleve både det Nederlandske WIC og kolonien Nye-Nederland.

Denne oppgaven viser tydelig at van Rensselaer, ved hjelp av sin standhaftighet endret politikken som var ført av WIC.



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Jesper Nicolai Abel

**“New Netherlands is the  
epitome, and the noblest of  
all countries,  
a blessed province,  
where milk and honey flow”<sup>1</sup>**

## **1 Introduction**

The above quotation by Jacob Steendam, who in a biblical metaphor depicts New Netherlands as a land of milk and honey, a place in which the four basic elements of the world manifest themselves in the colony. Moreover, it is “a happy land,” “a very Eden.” With his praise of New Netherlands, Steendam appears to have been genuinely impressed by the natural beauty of the place and its plentiful resources.<sup>2</sup> This was usually the reaction of the Europeans who began settling in the lower Hudson Valley and around New York’s harbor. Nowhere else in North America would the beauty and abundance of the physical environment evoke such extravagant praise.<sup>3</sup> The colony of New Netherland is described in many ways as a veritable Land of Cockaigne.<sup>4</sup>

*“New Netherland one of the most wonderful lands under the sun...There is plenty of everything. One can catch birds by the neck, wild and domesticated game birds in abundance and grapes grow wild there”<sup>5</sup>*

Dutch oversea history might begin with the revolt against Spain, which broke out in the 1560’s. The Spanish affliction was more apparent in the Low Countries than in other part of the world, and the seven speaking Dutch provinces formed what would become the Dutch Republic. The Republic of the Dutch United Provinces was not bigger then Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined. With somewhat two million people it represented a mere corner in European scale, yet, its struggle for Independence and the Dutch greed for

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<sup>1</sup>A poem by 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch poet Jacob Steendam, collected from the new Netherlands institute. <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/additional-resources/dutch-treats/early-impressions-of-new-netherland/>.

<sup>2</sup>Jacobs (2009) “*New Netherland*” p.7.

<sup>3</sup>Burrows &Wallace (1998)” *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*” p.3.

<sup>4</sup>Land of Cockaigne refers to an imaginary land of great luxury and ease. It is a land of plenty in medieval myth. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Cockaigne> , <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockaigne>.

<sup>5</sup> The quotation is from Evert Willemzoon’s own description of New Netherland. Collected from: Praak M (2005) “*Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth century*” p.112.



making profit would enable them to become the center of European trade in the early modern era. With their war cry “*Oranje boven [Orange above]*”, the Dutch would plunder Spanish ports throughout the Americas, Asia and Africa, and at the same time conducting profitable trade. Moreover, the Dutch government would in the 1620`s establish the West India company or the WIC. The Company functions was to explore, protect and conduct business in the New world settlements, but also, as we will see, to inflict damage upon their long-time enemies.

Of further importance, it would be sufficient to mention that due to the military costs of its “imperial” infrastructure coupled with opposition by other Dutch merchants and its failure to establish a lucrative trading monopoly in the Western Hemisphere, the WIC found itself with a large debt. This debt eventually led to its liquidation as a company in 1674.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of this study is not to examine the Dutch uniqueness as a commercial empire in the seventeenth century but rather to give a somewhat detailed description of WIC and its early Dutch proprietary ventures in the colony of New Netherlands, especially to focus on the Dutch Patroonship system. This paper will look at the social and economic features that evolved around Dutch patroons and their patroonships, as well as the legacy of this system. Another topic of importance is that of the WIC and its role in relation to the fur-trading business of the colony and to the patroonship plan.

Because I wish to bring the Dutch-fur trade into this paper, I think it is wise to also mention the Native Americans and how they looked at the Dutch merchants and settlers. This is because the Native Americans often played a major part in the European colonial fur-trade. By drawing the Native Americans into a paper that will address the Dutch role in colonial America, I will manage to get a closer look at their relationship with the Dutch. Furthermore, I contend that a good relationship with the natives meant stronger ties and a more effective trade. In addition, this will permit me to give a more precise description of the Dutch fur-trade and the role it played in the Dutch colony.

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<sup>6</sup> Koot (2015) p.1.

## 1.1 Research Question and the aim of study

When addressing the patroonship (*Patronenschap*) in the Dutch colonies of New Netherlands, I will first give my description of the essence of patroonship and what it meant for the colonies.

I will then try to depict who the patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer were and to ask if there were some particular requirements which was needed to be fulfilled to be eligible for a patroonship. Afterwards I will give a description of van Rensselaer and his life, to consider the ideas behind the patroonship scheme. Talking about van Rensselaer, I find it necessary to give a short notion of how the city of Amsterdam would influence his idea and also why Amsterdam was the best place for van Rensselaer to be at the time.

This study can be seen as a study of the Dutch oversea empire in North America during its Golden Age. Therefore, the goal of this paper will first be to explain in details the Dutch West India Company's "*struggle to establish a Dutch colony in North America in the early years*", and then look at the later patroonship plan, in which I contend emerged as a consequence of this struggle.

As we can see, we focus on two Dutch institutions in the Dutch colony of North America; The West India Company (Abbreviated; WIC) and the system of patroons, with van Rensselaer as a person of interest. The main agenda of this study will be to look at *the relationship between the Dutch West India Company and its system of patroonship and how this relationship developed through the years from 1629 until 1640.*

The research question, however, will be to look at van Rensselaer's influence on the WICs policy towards the colony of New Netherlands, with the emphasis on the scheme of patroonship.

### **How did Kiliaen van Rensselaer change the Company's policy towards the installment of the patroonship plan**

The focus throughout the paper will be on topics that I find to be of importance in relations to the statement above.

How did the relationship with the WIC develop? The advantages and benefits of the patroon-system within the colonial/imperial context will also be of interest here. To be able to connect

the Dutch WIC to the institution of patroonships, a second focus will be on the company`s struggle in the time of its birth in 1621 until the installment of the patroon system by 1629. This will serve as a historical background to the relationship between the company and the system of patroons. Therefore, the timeframe chosen here will stretch from the early 1620`s, which is the beginning of the WIC to the creation of the patroon system. A treatment of the patroonship system and of van Rensselaer`s influence upon this system will be extended to the year 1640.

It is important to note that the WIC and the later patroons engaged in their separate relationship with the natives, and therefore, a third focus of interest will be on the Dutch relations to the native inhabitants of the New World and to develop some commentary on how this developed. In addition, we will consider whether the relationship with the natives effected the company`s relation towards the patroonships.

Most historians today know that the earliest relations between the Indians and European settlers evolved around trade- and especially the fur-trade, but did this also affect the relation between the patroon and the WIC. Our tentative answer to this is “Yes.” Accordingly, the Indian-Dutch relationship is seen as germane to this study. Another key question which will be addressed has to do with the patroons desire to lead and govern the colony`s economic system.

What kind of economic, governmental and political power was bestowed upon patroons and how did this effect the relationship with the West India Company?

Such questions will be of interest for the main statement of the thesis and will be developed within this study as a whole. The patroonship of van Rensselaer is known to have been the largest and he the most successful one and it is considered to be of importance to describe him in the time from 1630s to 1640s. This will enable us to get a better understanding of the idea behind these important proprietors. These questions will broaden the research question and supplement the discussion agenda.

## **1.2 Defining the Timeframe of the study**

In this thesis on the Dutch WIC and the proprietary ventures that it established in North America, the timeframe of 1624-1640 has been chosen. This particular period will be

sufficient to give an adequate short description of the WIC and its rationale in establishing the patroon system, as well marking a context to discuss the patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer and his relationship to the company and what became the colony of New Netherlands.

The year 1624 is appropriate as this is the year the first Dutch settlers arrived in North America under the auspices of the WIC<sup>7</sup>. As van Rensselaer is considered to be of high importance to this thesis the choice of ending the timeframe at 1640 is due partly to the death of Kiliaen van Rensselaer in the early 1640`s and because the struggle with WIC which I wish to discuss came to end. Scholars which has been used in this paper seems to disagree on the exact date of van Rensselaer`s death, but they seem to agree that the time of death occurred in the early 1640`s. However, **Arnold John Ferdinand van Lear** tells in his article that van Rensselaer died in 1646 but **George Warren Sherwood** contends that it occurred already in 1644.<sup>8</sup> Be that as it may, **Janny Venema** which in her study on Van Rensselaer`s life argue that van Rensselaer buried in Amsterdam on October 7, 1643.<sup>9</sup>

We acknowledge that his patroonship of Rensselaerswyck extends van Rensselaer`s death and even the English takeover of the colony in 1664, but this will not be considered here as I wish to focus on van Rensselaer throughout the paper. In addition, the Dutch managed to retake what was now called New York in the beginning of the 1670`s, but they kept it only for a short time. Therefore, the period after the death of van Rensselaer as well as the brief time of Dutch re-takeover will not be addressed further. Eventually, the Dutch had to admit that they were too small a nation to establish a solid colony in North America compared to its British rival. Another reason the Dutch had to retreat was that much of the Dutch resources was lost due to the British takeover in the 1660s.

### 1.3 Method

I believe that the WIC and it fur-trade business was not the only major system which affected the Dutch New Netherlands, so therefore I wish to split my paper into four sections, with the emphasis on Chapter Two and Three. This study will therefore address WIC`s struggle leading up to the creation of the patroonship-system. Then I wish to move the attention to the

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<sup>7</sup> It exists an uncertainty whether 1624 or 1625 can be labeled as the start of Dutch colonization. 1625 is the year when Manhattan was first settled.

<sup>8</sup> Sherwood (1931) "THE PATROONS OF NEW NETHERLAND" p.283 & Van Lear (1909) "The patroon system and the colony of Rensselaerwyck" p.231.

<sup>9</sup> Venema (2010) "*Kiliaen van Rensselaer*" (1586-1643) p.283.

scheme of this system, with the emphasis being on the patroon, Kiliaen van Rensselaer and his estate of Rensselaerswyck.

What will be Chapter 1 of this paper aim to give a historical background to the two following chapters with the goal to demonstrating how the Dutch got involved in North America.

The chapter two, then, will go more in depths on the WIC and its struggles as they sought to establish trade and develop a trading post and colony. At the end Chapter Two, a discussion of two charters will be presented. These charters of "*Freedom and Exemptions*" were the formal legal document that finalized the creation of the patroonship, and our treatment of the documents will present a good coherent explanation of what this system represented within the context of the early development of the colony. I will compare and discuss the changes made in the charters and I contend by doing so will bring us closer to a further understanding of van Rensselaers influence.

Such a discussion will provide a solid historical introduction to what will be the content of Chapter Three; namely a more detailed discussion of the Dutch patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer and the part he played in the later development of the colony.

I will state here that the emphasis in that chapter will be on the patroon van Rensselaer and of the affairs during the first decade of his patroonship, as I wish to give a description of van Rensselaer and his business and policy throughout this section as well as to discuss in more detail the ideas which were behind the patroon system and some of the challenges it addressed in the New World setting.

This paper will aim to look at both the WIC and the Grand patroonship plan. Therefore, chapters on both topics will be developed.

I will treat this study with a chronological approach but with a thematic aspect to it. This approach has been chosen in the belief that such an approach will enable the author to give a satisfactory description of the WIC, the origin of the patroonship system, as well as a sketch of the system`s development to the 1640`s. I will treat many aspects involved in the earliest stages of the WIC and all the themes throughout the paper will relate to the different stages of the colony, its problems and challenges in the first years of the Company`s effort and the later rise of the patroonship.

To begin, a section on its origin and first stages of development of the colony leading up to the installment of the patroonship is presented, because this will enable the reader to gain an understanding of why the Dutch believed it necessary to create such a plan for its North American colony. What follows then is a section on the particular circumstances within New Netherlands in the late 1620`s. The goal of this section is to show that there existed in the mid-1620s, among colony`s supporters, a discussion over the future of the colony as the WIC encountered several serious problems. These problems and the discussion constituted the historical background for the Dutch leaders to issue first one charter in which to establish the “*ground rules*” and sketch the key institutions of the colony, and then for the founders to create a subsequent charter and to create the patroon system.

The writings of the second charter, with its creation of patroonships can, therefore, be seen as a critical response to the colony`s crisis of leadership and the numerous problems of economic production and profit for company interests. I contend that this elaboration of the colony`s history and the assessment of the second charter will enable me to get to an answer of how the van Rensselaer managed to influence and change the relationship the WIC had to the colony of the New Netherlands.

## **1.4 The patroonship as a response to colonial problems**

In this section, I offer a brief sketch of the main features of the patroonship system. It will provide a brief description of the Dutch patroons the economic and political arrangement in which they functioned. It will also introduce the key ideas in the description and analysis of this particular response to distinct problems faced by the colonial founders in its earliest years.

As we will see, in order to meet several economic and political challenges facing the colony and its leaders of New Netherlands in the middle of the 1620`s, the Patroonship system was established in the early Dutch settlements in 1629. The Dutch directors of the WIC hoped to make the colony thrive once more after a period of political uncertainty and difficult economic circumstances.

The Dutch patroon system was developed and its features are written into a charter by business and governmental supporters back in the home country. This charter under the name of *Freedom and Exemptions* was written in 1629.

In addition to this charter, newly available historical sources speak of an earlier charter relating to the formation of the New Netherlands colony and the implementation of the patroonship plan as the colony developed. A further discussion on the two charters that established the framework and in a number of details actually created the patroonship plan will be discussed later in the paper. When discussing the charters, I will refer to the original Charter by its original name “*Freedoms and Exemptions*,” however, the Charter of *Freedoms and Exemptions* has also been referred to by contemporary historians in the field as the “*Charter of Liberties*.” This Charter, however, I believe is used when referring to a different version of *Freedoms and Exemptions*.

First, let us offer a working definition of the patroon and the system of colonial landholdings in this period. *A patroon was a title given to wealthy merchants who had strong ties to the West India Company.* In other words, the patroons owe their position to the personal and business connection they had to the company and its supporters in the Netherlands.

The definition given by today's dictionary when searching the word patroon is “*a person who held an estate in land with certain manorial privileges granted under the Old Dutch government of New York and New Jersey.*”<sup>10</sup>

Another definition given is “*the proprietor of a manorial estate in New York originally granted by Dutch rule.*”<sup>11</sup>

“*[...] Freedoms and Exemptions for the patroons, masters or private persons who will plant any colonies in, and send cattle to New Netherland, drawn up for the benefit of the General West India Company in New Netherland and for the profit of the patroons, masters and private persons.*”<sup>12</sup>

The patroons were given a tract of land in return for investing their capital goods into the colony of New Netherlands. Today, this can be understood as a form of Manorial Lordship. A manorial lordship is not a noble title, but a semi-extinct form of landed property. Lordship in

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<sup>10</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/patroonship> (Uploaded: 18/11). See also <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/digital-exhibitions/slavery-exhibit/slave-labor/article-30-charter-of-freedom-and-exemptions-1629/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patroon> (Uploaded: 1/11/16).

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/digital-exhibitions/slavery-exhibit/slave-labor/article-30-charter-of-freedom-and-exemptions-1629> (Uploaded: 23/03/17) & VRBM (1908) p.138,139.

this sense is a synonym for ownership and in this context, it is understood as **vassal-in-chief**, which labels a person who held lands under various types of feudal land tenure. It is acknowledged, however, that the Colony of New Netherlands and its patroonship system has been much criticized in its aftermath by modern historians. Ever since 1846, the Dutch patroonship system has been branded as an extension of the European Feudal system, which dominated Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Edmund B. O'Callaghan, who was, in fact, the first historian to devote time and attention to Dutch Colonization in Early North America, asserted that the patroonship system "*Transplanted to the free soil of America the feudal tenure and feudal burdens of continental Europe.*"<sup>13</sup>

However, I contend that the Dutch patroon system somewhat differed from this old form of feudalism.

This study will elaborate on these features. Again, I intend also that this thesis contribute further discussion on New Netherlands among European readers, as well as to increasing their understanding of a topic that I think has not been much studied or even mentioned when talking about the history of American colonization.

In going through history books about the great colonial powers in the New World during the seventeenth century, I have noticed that the Dutch colonial period in the U.S is rarely mentioned and hardly given any space. The few times when the Dutch is mentioned it is typically only one or two sentences or maybe half a page. I can personally connect to this. When taking lectures about American History, I can only recall that the colony of New Netherlands were mentioned once and that in a sentence regarding the British. To be sure, an emphasis on the British role in American colonial history makes sense, but this deficiency in historical recognition is unfortunate.

It is conceivable that this neglect is related to the fact that the Dutch colonial presence in America was limited to a very short period during the 1600's when compared to the other colonial powers whose presence persisted for a much longer time. In this context, then, it seems more important to address the British or even the French when talking about the American past. This thesis, however, presupposes that the Dutch did, indeed make a significant contribution in at least one region of the continent, for a 50-year period.

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<sup>13</sup> Roper L.H & Van Ruymbeke "*Constructin*" *Early Modern Empires*" p.301.



So that the reader can grasp the full extent of my topic, I would like to begin by describing who the Dutch were in the seventeenth century. To do this, I find it necessary to look at the Dutch history in the period from the late sixteenth century to the first explorations by Henry Hudson in 1609. The year 1609 is chosen as a starting point since it served as a break from a war with Spain and enabled the Dutch provinces to pursue other interests beyond military ones.

## 1.5 Historical background and context

It was the ideas and the different social and economic customs that the Dutch settlers and merchants brought to the new World, historical commentators might say that the colony of New Netherland may reflect in part, their own “*Mother Country*”. As Gerald F. DeJong says in his book:

*“It is for this reason that knowledge of the Netherlands is useful for understanding the Dutch in America”.*<sup>14</sup>

The Netherlands in the seventeenth century experienced a rapid growth of wealth during “the Golden Age” in which the first half is characterized by the Eighty Years War. The Treaty of Münster in 1648 marks the end of this war, but also the official independence of the Netherlands.

*“The political patchwork of the Union of Utrecht, formulated as a last-ditch effort to assert the Netherlands’ independence from Spain, was forged by war into something resembling a nation-state.”*<sup>15</sup>

For a long time, the low country had been under Spanish rule, which can be seen as a tyrannical rule by the Spanish king Phillip II and his government. Like the United States that many years later revolted against British rule so did the Netherlands revolt against its Spanish rulers. In the 1560’s, led by the prominent William of Orange the Dutch tried heroically to vanquish the Spanish forces that were stationed in the Netherlands, who had inflicted heavy financial demands on the region for far too many years. The Dutch would have hounded

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<sup>14</sup> DeJong, Gerald “*The Dutch in America, 1609-1974*” 1975, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Rink, Oliver: “*Holland on the Hudson*” 1986 p.17.

Spanish and Portuguese ships and Dutch troops fought all over the Western and Eastern Hemisphere.<sup>16</sup>

When, in 1584, William of Orange fell after being shot by a Catholic fanatic, his successor, Maurits of Nassau took his place as the leader of the revolt. On April 9, 1609, he managed to establish a truce with Spain, known as the Twelve Year-Truce. By the time of Truce, the Dutch Golden Age had begun and they found themselves one of the World's great maritime powers.

It was in this context that Henry Hudson sailed under the auspices of the Dutch flag in the service of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC) onboard the *Halve Maen* (*the half-moon*). The Dutch presence in North America and the origin of the New Netherlands can be traced back to April 6, 1609.

Hudson was commissioned to find a passage to India and the "Spice Islands" to the lucrative East. When he encountered problems along the way, he decided to turn the ship around and rather look for a westward passage through America to the Pacific. In doing so he disregarded his own instructions, but after he returned his reports to Amsterdam sparked some interests among the merchants back in the Republic.<sup>17</sup> Be that as it may, when reaching the present site of today's Albany, Hudson would assert,

"[...] *The land is the finest for cultivation that I have ever seen.*"<sup>18</sup>

The information that was brought back to Holland by Hudson and his crewmembers from the voyage awakened interest among the Dutch entrepreneurs and wealthy merchants back in Amsterdam. Before Hudson had set sail on the return voyage, he had managed to trade a small amount with the Indians, and the possibility of trade with the Natives was highly intriguing to these Dutch businessmen. Therefore, between 1609 and 1614, several exploring and trading voyages were made to North America, encouraged by the good prospects for profitable fur trading. These searches often ended up in fierce competition for otter and beaver skins with other national (and perhaps international) explorers and traders.

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<sup>16</sup> Burrow & Wallace (1998) p.16.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid: p.77-79.

<sup>18</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1898) p.15.

By October 1614, when the competition with other merchants from the Republic itself threatened to spoil their trade, a group of Amsterdam merchants received a charter of Monopoly from the States General of the Dutch United Provinces, enabling them to form a company. Today, this group is known as the “*New Netherland Company (De Compagnie van Nieuw Nederland)*.”<sup>19</sup> These merchants, who had previously been competing with each other, could now work together to maintain a low price of the colonial trade goods and realize greater profit.<sup>20</sup>

This charter of monopoly, given by the Dutch government, granted the merchants the exclusive right to all trade in the Dutch colony of New Netherland in a period of four years.<sup>21</sup> With a monopoly of trading rights in the territory, they were now able to pursue trade with the Indians in a specific region.

“[...] *Situated in America between New France and Virginia, Whereof the sea coast lie between the fortieth and forty fifth degrees of latitude, now named New Netherland.*”<sup>22</sup>

Under this charter members of the company conducted several voyages in the region during the period from 1614 until 1618, when suddenly their application for renewal of the monopoly was rejected. Consequently, the company was disbanded.

Professor **Jaap Jacobs** who specializes in Dutch colonial history explains that the New Netherlands Company was rejected in its request for a continuing monopoly because of the expected foundation of the WIC, which was already in motion by the time of the application for renewal.<sup>23</sup> This new Dutch West India Trading Company [*Geocroyerde West-Indiche Compagnie (WIC)*] was established in 1621 by wealthy merchants who organized the company in five offices, called chambers, (*Kamers*), supervised by a board that consisted of 19 members, known as the *Heren XIX* (The Lord Nineteen).

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<sup>19</sup> The New Netherland Company was a chartered company compiled by private Dutch merchants, who invested together in transatlantic voyages to keep the prizes for furs to a minimum. The company received a monopoly of trade going to and from North America for a period of four years. See Jaap Jacobs, “The colony of New Netherlands” p.26,27

<sup>20</sup> Venema (2010) P 190 & Jacobs (2009) p.20-26.

<sup>21</sup> The States General dates back to the 1460’s and is an assembly-made up by one representative from each province- to discuss common issues. It functioned as the governing body of the Dutch republic, in which each province had a single vote. See Maarten Prak “*The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century.*” p 10-23 & Edwin G. Burrows & Mike Wallace “*Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*” p. 15-20.

<sup>22</sup> DeJong: p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.26.

The New Netherland Company can in many ways be seen as the predecessor of the WIC, due to its sole right to carry out trade in North America, for four years (and possibly a bit longer). The fact that it was disbanded in 1618 makes it a valid notion to claim that until the establishment of the WIC in 1621, the Dutch Republic experienced a period of free trade in North America. By this, I mean that there is a short period where no monopoly rights took place. If this were the case, then it is highly conceivable to believe some privateers executed trading business with the Native Americans, at least for a brief period in the early 1600s.

Following this period, in the WIC charter, stockholders in the Netherlands were given the sole right to conduct and execute trade over a much wider area than first specified for the New Netherland Company. By contrast, where the rights of its predecessor had been restricted to North America alone, the WIC stockholders could carry on their trade from the West coast of Africa to the Western Hemisphere as far north as New-found land, including New Netherland. Not only that, but the board of nineteen directors was permitted to establish and govern colonies as they saw fit, the right to form alliances and meet out justice as well as maintaining an army and a fleet. (All this, subject only to the supervision of the State's General).<sup>24</sup> This may indicate that the WIC was ruled by the government back in the Netherlands and not by its own private investors.

In its twenty-five articles, the WIC showed remarkable similarities with their counterpart and sister-company in the East, the East India Trading Company (Dutch; *De vereenigde Oost-Indische compagnie: VOC*), when it came down to the structure and powers. Like the VOC, the WIC two purposes: to make money by trade and to make money by making war on Spain.<sup>25</sup> To that end, each of the companies had its own private army and navy, almost unlimited powers of peace and war as well as control of vast human and material resources.<sup>26</sup> Even though they were structured in a somewhat similar way, their length of monopoly differed from the eastern company. While the WIC received a monopoly of all trade in the Western Hemisphere for twenty-four years, their counterpart, the VOC, enjoyed its monopoly for twenty-one years.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> DeJong: p.11,12.

<sup>25</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1998) p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1998) p.17.

<sup>27</sup> Venema (2010) p.85,86,174.

Although the charter had been relatively similar to that of the VOC, the political climate in the Western Hemisphere and the Atlantic was very different from that of Asia, and this was a factor which contributed to the struggle of the WIC, why it was to become less successful in their ventures as compared to its sister company in the east. This, in effect, has been put the WIC somewhat in the shadows of the more successful VOC. Maarten Prak mentions three reasons why the VOC so outpaced the WIC in business success (and in historical reputation).

First, the Dutch arrived in America relatively late, and by the time the WIC was founded in 1621, all the other great European colonial powers were already well established in the region.<sup>28</sup> Of special import is that the Spanish and the Portuguese had dominated the Atlantic since the beginning of the sixteenth century, and they controlled vast colonies in the Americas.<sup>29</sup> The Company was therefore forced to spend a great deal of its time and resources in trying to carve out a place for itself while dealing with the fear of rivals. A third aspect, which Prak mentions, has to do with the fact that the Dutch Republic was too small a country to muster and send out as many colonists as could their larger rivals.<sup>30</sup> This meant that Dutch expansion would inevitably bring conflict with the Iberian powers, conflict for which the Dutch were at a significant disadvantage in the West.

## 1.6 Literature and sources

Given the distinct emphasis of this study, the specific sources on the patroons and the patroonship-system itself, will be meaningful, as well as the sources regarding the impact of this innovative system on the Dutch colonial efforts.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding the literature and sources on the topic, I acknowledge that only a limited number of original, primary, sources have been made available to me in this study. Apparently, many of the original documents were sadly destroyed by the fire, due to the English take-over of

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<sup>28</sup> Prak (2005) p.116.

<sup>29</sup> Venema (2010) p.175.

<sup>30</sup> Prak (2005) p.116.

<sup>31</sup> Note that the Dutch patroonship plan has in its aftermath been criticized by later historians in an ongoing discussion on whether applying the label of “feudalism” is correct. **Edmund B O’Callaghan** and **John Romelyn Brodhead** have since the 1830’s stated that the patroon system reminded them very much of the feudal system which developed in Europe during the Middle Ages. Can this be correct or is it just a false characterization?

I hope that this paper will be able to contribute to this discussion on whether such an innovative system can actually be seen as a feudal system in America as well as shed some light over the development of the colony of New Netherlands.

the Island of Manhattan. However, I must admit that even though much has been lost, fragments of some of the original documents have survived and have been translated from Old Dutch. Moreover, it seems that a number of documents and maps made of the colony before 1664 have somehow found their way to Amsterdam, and fortunately, these have survived the time.

The Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts (*VRBM*) is a collection of some of these original documents that have been translated by **A. J. van der Lear** and made available through the New Netherland Institute, and this document has been a crucial source of valuable information to this study regarding the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck. Furthermore, the respective charter(s) of “*Freedom and Exemptions*” will also be examined. The first charter entitled “*Freedom and Exemptions for patrons and Masters and Private Persons*,” will throughout this chapter be referred to as the “*Freedom and Exemptions of 1628*”. The revised second charter, “*Freedom and Exemption of 1629*,” however, would hereby be known as “*the Charter of Liberties*.”<sup>32</sup> This I do in order to distinct the two charters because this will help clarify which Charter is being discussed.

When talking about literature, however, a number of scholars have been interested in the colony, the early history of which frames the specific focus of this paper topic, and their published works have been carefully examined along with the few primary sources that I have found to be available. A number of important books that take the Dutch presence in North America into account, has been found necessary to give a detailed discussion of both van Rensselaer as well as of the WIC and its two charters of *Freedom and Exemptions*.

These include, for example, *The Dutch in America* by **Gerald F. De Jong** who grew up in a Dutch-American part of Iowa. De Jong’s approach in his book is to describe to the reader where Dutch immigrants settled and the role that people with Dutch descent have played in American life. Another author who addresses the Dutch colonial time and, in particular, the Dutch West India Company is **Oliver A. Rink**, who in his book *Holland on the Hudson* looks more at social and economic history of Dutch New York. In his work, **Rink** depicts the Dutch merchants in this early period as more or less driven by greed.

A third historian, **Maarten Prak**, offers a lively and innovative history of the Dutch Golden Age. He writes from a political, social and economic standpoint. Although, he is not writing

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<sup>32</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1999) p.28.

specifically about the colony in America, his book has to be taken into account for its explanation of how the Dutch developed their rich and prosperous economy during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The work can be helpful in an analysis of the efforts to create a prosperous economy in the colony of New Netherlands. In addition to these previous works, **Jonathan Israel**, is an English historian who specializes himself on Dutch Economic History, and his books about the topic will be useful for this paper as it explains how aspects of the Dutch economy developed after 1609.<sup>33</sup>

As we have sketched a brief account of the first trading company and its brief enjoyment of monopoly status, the book will also support an account of the first years of the colony and the serious challenges faced by supporters, settlers and leaders of New Netherlands. The second chapter will describe those challenges and discuss in some detail manner in which the first charter supported the WIC. It will then treat the creation of a second charter. Having addressed these early challenges and finally adopting the new charter, created in the 1629, the leaders in the 1630s saw the emergence of several patroonships. Because the available source material on the respective (smaller) patroons that were formed under its terms is limited, this study will give its focus on the patroonship of Kiliaen van Rensselaer, the largest of the new organizations within the colony.

While it would be interesting for the study to give more attention to the small structures and their patroons, I find the extent of the literature and sources, on these smaller patroons to be too limited. Moreover, I intend to use the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck as a main focus of attention because it is van Rensselaer`s patroonship that is the only survivor after the British takeover in 1664, and because, sources about him and his businesses have survived in much larger scale than of the others. **Janny Venema`s** book, *Kiliaen van Rensselaer and the VRBM* collection will be of high import in the section regarding the patroonship of Kiliaen van Rensselaer. His patroonship is known among historians in the field to be the largest and the most successful one. As a consequence, I believe it valid to claim that the patroonship Rensselaerswyck may be used as a model for understanding other patroonships, and that analysis of its structures, at least some of van Rensselaer`s activities can be suggestive of the development of the smaller patroonships (and the actions of their patroons) throughout the colony, unless surviving evidence suggests the contrary.

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<sup>33</sup> Both Gerald DeJong and Oliver A. Rink discusses the system of Patroonship in their books.

In addition, I place the focus on van Rensselaer and his patroonship as I see him as the main advocate for private investments in the colony. I further contend that he played an important and crucial part during the time as a powerful advocate for the welfare of the colony as he worked with businessmen and government officials in the Netherlands itself.

## 1.7 Historiography and a Newfound Netherland

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, descriptions of the unfamiliar were sometimes couched in familiar terms, using biblical comparisons, as an attractive way to depict the Western Hemisphere to Europeans, who often struggled to incorporate “A New World” into their worldview. In this task, descriptions of travelers played a crucial role. An example here can be seen in Adriaen van der Donck’s Descriptions of *New Netherlands*, written in 1655. Van der Donck played a crucial part in presenting the setting to his fellow contemporaries through his description of the colony and of the New World.

Like Jacob Steendam in the opening homage of this thesis, Adriaen van der Donck’s motives were primarily to depict New Netherland and the “New World” as a paradise with beautiful nature and plentiful resources, in the hopes of enticing more people to come over or to invest in the trading empire.<sup>34</sup>

As we have mentioned, students of history have too little knowledge of how “investor-settlers” may have responded to such an appeal. In an interview with the director of the New Netherland Project, **Charles T. Gehring**, conducted by The New York Times in 2009, Gehring is quoted,

*“Most historians don’t think much of the Dutch; they minimize the Dutch influence and try to get out of that period as quickly as possible to get into the English stuff”.*<sup>35</sup>

Gehring’s assessment is accurate. For the most part in the history writing of colonial America, the early Dutch presence in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have barely been given any

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<sup>34</sup> Jacobs (2009) pages.1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Danny Hakim,2009.



notice when compared to the attention given to its other colonial powers. New Netherlands became the only Dutch colony in North America, a settlement with distinctive Dutch features, yet little is known of this early Dutch presence.

As Jaap Jacobs points out, “*visitors to New York City can walk the streets without being aware of its origins*”.<sup>36</sup> Much of the evidence for the ancient Dutch presence has disappeared from the city, but even so, you can still find signs of the Old Dutch regime if you know where to look. In addition, on both sides of the Atlantic, some documents regarding New Netherlands have survived, and they can bring some light to this forgotten past in North American history. Many scholars such as **Jaap Jacobs**, **Janny Venema** and the just mentioned **Charles T. Gerhring** have devoted their time to restoring some of the Old Dutch presence in the North American history. For example, you can see that many a street-names in today`s New York is of Dutch decent.

**Jaap Jacobs** mentions in his book, *The Colony of New Netherland* that over the course of its existence New Netherland grew from a small trading post of a few hundred inhabitants into a considerable settlement of seven thousand to eight thousand colonists.<sup>37</sup>

These scholars are all connected more or less to the New Netherlands Institute in New York, which is one of few places where historical study of this topic has been given it the attention it deserves. Documents regarding the WIC are also found in the archives back in the Netherlands, where some historical documents from the era are currently accessible. The commercial expansion of the Dutch into the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans provided an economic foundation of the so-called “Golden Age” of Dutch history, and the colony of New Netherland is an important episode in this history.

This commercial imperialism contributed to the growth of the Dutch wealth and the capacity of the small nation to compete against other imperial nations in the Western Hemisphere during first three quarters of the seventeenth century. I believe that the significant role of the West India Company and the development of the patroon system in the New Netherlands contribute a key feature of this successful commercial outreach in its western hemispherical aspects.

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<sup>36</sup> Jacobs (2009): p. ix.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid: p.32.

It is unfortunate, however, that so little study is done on this topic; although the scholars at the New Netherland Institute have opened up the topic, much is left unturned. Many have forgotten that the Dutch in the time of the Puritans and the Pilgrim fathers, they were unsurpassed in their commercial and industrial enterprise.<sup>38</sup> People seem also to have forgotten that the colony was created at the same time as the first Pilgrims were settling in New England. This paper should add a bit of knowledge and make it available to the contemporary reader.

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<sup>38</sup> Hyma. A (1953) "*A history of the Dutch in the far east*" p.1.

## 2 A troublesome beginning

This part of the paper will focus on the years before the inauguration of the patroonship plan. It treats the historical background that led to the creation of the patroonship system. It is important because it will enable us to get a good overview of why such a plan for patroons was formulated. This section will concentrate on the time period of the 1620s, as the crucial years of the colony's founding, that set the context for the inauguration of the patroon system.

By the early 1620's, the Truce of 1612 which had opened up the New World for Dutch merchants without the risk of being attacked by their Spanish enemies had come to an end. With the cessation of the treaty, the Dutch Republic was once again in open war with the Spanish, and the Dutch would soon have the need of a new weapon at sea.

On July 3, 1621, such a weapon emerged with the establishment of the West India Company (*de Geocroyeerde West Indische Compagnie*: abbreviated as WIC). This company's role was to continue the war and at the same time to conduct lucrative trade in the northeast region of the Western Hemisphere. This meant that the WIC set out with its principal objective to inflict damage on the colonial resources of their Spanish and Portuguese enemies.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the main idea, the founding of this Dutch "weapon," was to combine military and economic power in one company. It is said that when the truce ended, Prince Maurits<sup>40</sup> made several changes in the city governments so that the war party became dominant; the intention of the Dutch leadership was now to wage war overseas with the idea of strengthening Dutch power and to deprive the Spaniards of their gold and silver.<sup>41</sup>

The first directors of the WIC faced a problem of exceptional breadth and complexity. The legal and geographical limits of the charter included a very large number of possibilities. These possibilities, together with a hostile Spanish-Portuguese colonial empire sprawling across nearly the entire area given in the charter of privileges, left the directors with three basic alternatives: (1) Tap the economic arteries of that empire through privateering; (2) trade or colonize in areas unoccupied by the Iberians; or (3) conquer some part of the economic

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<sup>39</sup> Jacobs (2009) p 20.

<sup>40</sup> Prince Maurits van Nassau was the son of Willem van Orange and his second wife Anna van Saksen and was crowned prince in 1618.

<sup>41</sup> Venema, J «Kiliaen van Rensselaer» (2010) p. 167.

heartland of the empire.<sup>42</sup> **Van Cleef Bachman** argues in his book, “*Peltries or Plantation*” that these alternatives must be addressed if one is to understand the Dutch decision to colonize the Western Hemisphere.

Moreover, and the fact that is interesting here is that the Dutch Republic’s government, the States-General, encouraged the creation of the West India company as an instrument of war, it was not founded solely on the principle of trade as the logic of the tale depicts it.<sup>43</sup> This meant that the Dutch encouraged commercial interests to use profit from war to build and expand their Atlantic trade. The Dutch had learned that less glamorous, but still lucrative results, might be obtained from plundering the trade between Spain’s satellite, Portugal and Brazil.<sup>44</sup> With this, privateering and the capturing of treasure fleet’s became of high import, damaging the enemy trade and steal their treasure would enable the Dutch to expand their own trading network in the region.

When speaking about the origin of the patroon system, historians have often referred to a struggle between two distinct groups of opinions within the Amsterdam chamber, differing opinions regarding the structure of the patroonship system and the future development of New Netherlands. This resulted in a split among the Directors of the WIC, whom I will present as two factions. These factions came to represent a dispute over which direction the company would move in order to preserve the colony’s best interests. One faction favored of colonization and the other was in favor of monopoly of the fur trade and of spoils and privateering, for which the company was originally organized.<sup>45</sup>

Professor **John Romeyn Brodhead** and Dr. **Edmund B. O’Callaghan** concluded in the second half of the nineteenth century that this struggle between the WIC and a group of wealthy investors seeking ducal grants in North America can be traced back to an age-old conflict between those who fought for individual freedom, and those in favor of personal aggrandizement.<sup>46</sup> With this in mind, the Dutch dispute of the seventeenth century may be even older than what is first believed and can be traced back to the Dutch Revolt.

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<sup>42</sup> Bachman. V.C. “*Peltries or Plantations*” (1963) p.44.

<sup>43</sup> The logic of the tale is her understood as the WIC was primarily focused on trade in the Western Hemisphere.

<sup>44</sup> Bachman p.45,46.

<sup>45</sup> Van Laer (1909) “The patroon system and the colony of Rensselaerwyck” p.223

<sup>46</sup> Rink (1978) p.1.

This struggle, as I see it, among the Directors back in the Netherlands, may be seen as a struggle between those who opposed further monopoly privileges for the West India Company and those in favor for a continuation of the monopoly privileges of the WIC, and thus, against private involvement.

This reveals the important question of whether the Board of Directors within the WIC should permit free trade or continue the Company monopoly. This question depended heavily on the company's economic situation and whether its economic policies would allow it. What follows will aim to look at this struggle which developed in late 1620's, together with a number of other problems within the colonial enterprise which had emerged during this time. In understanding the context in which these factions functioned, it is important to mention that these factions were alternately in control according as changes occurred in the board of directors throughout the seventeenth century.

I contend that these two factions paved the way for the later creation of what we know as the patroon system. The intention that underlies the elaboration of this struggle is to give the reader a historical background that will provide a meaningful description of the crucial years during which political and economic problems that lead up to the patroonship scheme had been festering. By doing this, we get a closer look at the main ideas behind this institution and why it developed to meet the challenges of the colony. The factions and the particulars of their dispute will be discussed in depth later in this thesis.

## **2.1 The Dutch as an empire of commerce**

*"[...] The Company [red. WIC] was "empowered to do everything that the service of this country and the profit and the increase of the trade shall require," from the pacific colonization of fertile and uninhabited places to open warfare if a powerful and continued obstruction of the Company's trade and navigation so required."*<sup>47</sup>

Netherlands in the seventeenth century experienced a rapid growth of wealth, an urbanization of life, and an explosion of mercantile activity unprecedented in a history rich with

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<sup>47</sup> Bachman (1963) p.25. This was within the strict rule of the company's charter.

achievement.<sup>48</sup> This opened up for possibilities that resulted in the Dutch claims on several colonies, in the Eastern and the Western Hemispheres, in the name of trade. During the seventeenth century, the Republic of the Netherlands became, in many regards, a worldwide trading network that we today know as “The Dutch Golden Age.”

The intention here will be to put the Dutch overseas empire of the 1600s in an international perspective. This will help the reader understand the vastness of the Dutch empire compared to the holding of its rivals. The samples and reports brought back from Henry Hudson and the widened knowledge of the source of supply that the subsequent voyages of the “divers merchants” had revealed, can be said to have stimulated an age-old desire for “quick returns of profit” among the Dutch merchants back in the motherland.<sup>49</sup>

By 1609, the time of Henry Hudson’s first voyage, which established Dutch contact with the New World, Netherlands was already a major sea power in the Far East. To put this into perspective, of the total of 1222 ships sailing through the sound into the Baltic Sea, 764 of these sailed under the Dutch flag. Moreover, during the 1590s the Republic had reinforced its position of being the leading nation in the trade in wood and grain, from respectively Norway and the Baltic, in return for spices that were obtained in a number of Asian locations. Over eight hundred ships sailed from the capital of Amsterdam to the Iberian Peninsula between 1591 and 1602.<sup>50</sup>

This is a clear indication of the supremacy the Dutch Republic experienced at a time where there was no English presence in the Far East and the Portuguese had barely started their operations in the region.<sup>51</sup>

Ultimately, it was the Dutch merchant’s greed for gold, coupled with their phenomenal ability and success in deriving schemes for profit that turned the Dutch Republic of the

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<sup>48</sup> The explanation of the growth in the Dutch Republic must be seen in relation to the previous Dutch Revolt with the Spanish Catholicism, which began in 1566 with the iconoclastic fury. The Dutch Revolt against their Spanish ruler was more or less a battle between Protestantism and Catholicism. Religious prosecution gave away to the influx of wealthy merchants into Northern Netherlands, especially the province of Holland. This influx of wealthy people into its northern part turned Holland into the economical center of the nation, which had previously been Antwerp. See Maarten Prak (2005) p. 7-24.

<sup>49</sup> Adams (1996) p.6-12.

<sup>50</sup> Venema J [2010]. «*Kiliaen van Rensselaer*» p. 81.

<sup>51</sup> Hyma, A. (1953) p. 55.

seventeenth century into an empire of commerce, making the era worthy of its fame as “Golden Age”.

**Oliver A. Rink** argues in the introduction to his book “*Holland on the Hudson*” that the Golden century in Dutch history was not of gold, but of ships and sea, tar, and masts, glory and god, and above all greed for hard currency, which eventually paved way to the age of the misnomer of gold.<sup>52</sup> With this, the Dutch empire never developed the territorial commitment usually associated with their rivals for imperial splendor.

However, the Dutch commercial expansion had both an Eastern and a Western component, and it is valid to claim that they developed a form of commercial imperialism, but somewhat different than its chief rivals. With this in mind, and the fact that private funded voyages going to their American colonies, the Dutch empire in the seventeenth century differed from its competitors in three distinct ways:

(1.) The Dutch success in the seventeenth century owed more to the relaxed conditions of a Dutch imperialism than to the principles of mercantilism;<sup>53</sup> (2.) They allowed or even concentrated on operations of private merchants, rather than rely solely on government sponsorship and (3.) The Dutch first emphasized trading posts and did not encourage the large-scale movement of their population to foreign sites, meaning that only small traders were willing to seek out their fortunes along the North American shore. That only small traders sought out the colony of New Netherlands in the earliest stages indicates that their settlement in North America was given less attention compared to its other colonies who could promise more wealth.

What we can read from this is that the Dutch concentrated more on trade and profit rather than agriculture in the search for formidable wealth. We see also that the Dutch presence in the Western Hemisphere, in the earliest stages, may have applied a mix of private entrepreneurs and a chartered company with monopoly privileges to establish a prosperous trading empire. This may explain the main characteristics of Dutch imperialism. However, **Oliver A Rink** contends that such a mix may have been more adopted in their operations in the Americas than in the lucrative east.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless even though the Dutch trading companies enjoyed monopoly privileges, the Dutch empire in the west remained a trade

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<sup>52</sup> Rink (1986) p. 17-21.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 18-19.

network in which private merchants from the fatherland could exercise decisive control over the movement of goods and people.<sup>55</sup>

In favor of this suggestion, then this view points out, that the Dutch preferred to “*navigate the land*” rather than “*occupying the land*”. With this in mind, the Dutch can be understood to have valued land more in terms of trade localities than a potential crop yield. To support this trading post approach, **Oliver A Rink** argues that in the earliest stages of its brief history, the fortune of the New Netherland colony came from private merchants and that the Dutch gave opportunities to private investors. What this initially means, is that the Dutch expansion of wealth during the period mainly rested on the idea and expectation that private merchants would manage to strike the best deals, and thus could bring back the most lucrative goods to Amsterdam. As time passed, some of these private investors saw merit in agricultural production and this turned out to have reasonable possibilities for large profits. This interpretation contradicts the idea that, in the earliest period, there was a trading monopoly enjoyed only by the WIC.<sup>56</sup>

*“The Dutch empire thrived largely because Dutch merchant marine could harvest colonial products more efficiently and at a lower cost than its English, French and Iberian competitors.”<sup>57</sup>*

The Dutch commercial expansion in the Western Hemisphere relied on private investment and the skill of merchants to open up investment, exploration and trade opportunities in this vast region. In the earliest stages, trade opportunities were sought and there were little interests in establishing agriculture-oriented settlements or large population colonies. In addition, we see that Dutch commercial expansion into the Western Hemisphere was not confined to North America. In fact, the Dutch trade in the sugar colony of Brazil represents the most successful hemispherical venture during the first half of the seventeenth century. The colony of Brazil must have been well-known to Dutch merchants as Dutch ships had been participating in the trade with Brazil since the late 1580`s. In the early seventeenth century, this trade expanded dramatically. During the Dutch-Spanish Truce, **Bachman**

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<sup>55</sup> Rink (1986) p.118.

<sup>56</sup> Rink (1986) p.17-21.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid p.21.



contends that this trade had grown to such an extent that in 1622 Amsterdam possessed a thriving sugar refining industry, and it is estimated that around a half or two-thirds of all the Brazilian trade was under Dutch control. The wealth that was obtained in Brazil's conquest was seen as simply fabulous, and Bachman tells of a particular contemporary writer who estimated that the Dutch would derive about f.7,700,000 yearly from its conquest.<sup>58</sup> In other words, the Dutch success in their Brazilian trade may reflect a Dutch enthusiasm to invest in the commercial trade during the 1620s.

To assure that the Dutch expansion of wealth during the period mainly rested on the idea and expectation that private merchants would manage to strike the best deals and thus could bring back the most lucrative goods to the fatherland,<sup>59</sup> agricultural interests may have been subsidized to meet these goals. In this context of Dutch expectations, many people viewed Brazil as a more lucrative place for trade, even as they began colonial ventures in North America. **Janny Venema** tells that,

*“[...] While large-scale expeditions were sent to Brazil, the company [read. the WIC] spent around f.100, 000 on colonization of New Netherlands, which was not covered by the proceeds of the fur trade”<sup>60</sup>*

This reveals that the colony of New Netherlands was by many considered less valuable in the period 1624 and 1625.<sup>61</sup> The expectations for profit must have been higher in Brazil and South America with its Sugar plantations, but it can be argued that the fortunes that could be made in North America was more assuring. Looking at the WIC's hemispherical opportunities, **Van Cleef Bachman** argues that the colony of New Netherlands was the only territory within the limits of the Charter clearly outside the Spanish sphere of influence.<sup>62</sup>

I argue that even though the Dutch trade with Brazil could offer vastly more prospect for gaining profit, the trading-routes to North America and the colony of New Netherlands would be of a safer choice compared to the risky ventures to the South America, where the influence of the Spanish crown was larger. If this is, in fact, a correct notion, then it can be claimed that

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<sup>58</sup> Bachman (1969) p.50,51.

<sup>59</sup> Rink (1986) p.17-24.

<sup>60</sup> Venema (2010) p.216.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid: p.216,217.

<sup>62</sup> Bachman (1969) p.53-55.

the Dutch differed from its competitors regarding the essence of establishing a foothold in North America and we can add a fourth distinctiveness of the Dutch in the seventeenth century. This may tell us that the colony of New Netherlands assumed a more significant position in the fur-trade business than what has previously been thought to be the case, even though it was not as profitable as the South American trade.

At this point, we know that Hudson`s voyages and his reports back to the Netherlands laid the foundation of what would become the first Dutch settlement in North America. **Jaap Jacobs** states that soon after the reports had been read, Dutch merchants from Amsterdam and Hoorn sent out ships to follow up on the trading prospects reported by Hudson.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the late Professor **Clinton A. Weslager** argued that from 1609 until 1638, the Dutch went to enjoy the Indian trade along the river practically to themselves.<sup>64</sup>

In 2009, which marked the four-hundredth anniversary of Dutch-American relations in commemorating Hudson, Dutch Professor **Jaap Jacobs** shares the belief that this “discovery” provided the impetus for Dutch merchants to equip fur-trading expeditions into the area, and these later resulted in the eventual colonization of a Dutch North America.<sup>65</sup>

As we have mentioned, in the year 1612, the Dutch Republic entered a twelve-year truce with Spain, which opened up access for private funded ships to sail for North America without the threat of war. In the period of the Twelve-Year Truce, Dutch merchants could buy enormous quantities of furs from the Native Americans, and these could be sold again in Europe for a handsome profit.

In addition to Hudson`s journal, **Arthur G. Adams** states in his book “*The Hudson through the years*”, that it is plausible that Dutch captains may have visited New York Bay before Hudson`s famous voyage,<sup>66</sup> but this claim bears no valid documentation. What is more certain is that several voyages under Dutch auspices sailed to North America in the period 1610-1614 (after Hudson`s first voyage). These most likely were carried out by a diverse set of merchants.<sup>67</sup> We cannot claim with certainty when the first voyage after Hudson was

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<sup>63</sup> Jacobs (2007) p.302.

<sup>64</sup> Weslager C.A. (1972) “*The Delaware Indians: A history*” p.113.

<sup>65</sup> Jacobs J, 2009 “*The Colony of the New Netherlands*” p. ix.

<sup>66</sup> Adams A.G (1996) “*The Hudson through the Years*” p.5.

<sup>67</sup> Morris R. B & Morris J.B (1997) “*Encyclopedia of American History*” p.46.

undertaken, but **Jaap Jacobs** contends that there is a possibility that a ship under command by Hendrick Christiaensz entered the North River as early as 1610.<sup>68</sup>

As previously mentioned, the establishment of the West India Company took place in 1621 and with it the Twelve-year old truce with their Spanish enemies had ended and therefore hostilities were resumed.<sup>69</sup> As we will see, the purpose of the WIC was not only on trade.

## 2.2 The West India Trading Company as a Military Unit

We have seen above that the Dutch supported the WIC both as an instrument of warfare and as a profitable commercial enterprise. I now introduce a discussion of the trade privileges in the Western Hemisphere given to the West India Company (WIC).<sup>70</sup> That is, beyond acknowledging that the company was formed by a large group of private investors, the WIC was to be granted economic privileges by the Dutch government. This is usually described as a governmental grant of military and financial support of the WIC to conduct trade with the America, Africa and the Atlantic regions between them. Such a grant encompassed a form of trade monopoly within a particular geographical region.

This grant (or charter), given on July 3, 1621, meant that the Dutch WIC were given the sole right to conduct trade in the colony of New Netherlands, which included the area of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and the western half of Connecticut. Its first act, as we have seen, was to take over the trade connections established by its predecessor. The Organization of WIC was frankly for the purpose of extension and promotion of commerce and trade of the Netherlands, but the company clearly also served a military purpose as well. Furthermore, **Maarten Prak** mentions in his book *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* that the creation of the WIC was caused by reluctance to antagonize the Spanish.<sup>71</sup> This indicates that the creation of the WIC been in the Dutch plans before the Truce was signed, but because of it, the establishment of WIC seem to have been postponed. However,

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<sup>68</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.22.

<sup>69</sup> Jacobs, J (2007) p.302.

<sup>70</sup> It is here referred to the Charter of 1621, which granted the newly founded West India company a monopoly of all trade in the western hemisphere. See: Marten Prak "The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century" page 111 & Jaap Jacobs "Dutch proprietary Manors in America" p. 302.

<sup>71</sup> Prak (2005) p.28.

if what Prak says is a correct notion, then the WIC charter was delayed out of fear of the Spanish, and not alone because of the Truce.

As previously mentioned, within the period of the Twelve-Year Truce, the Dutch could sail back and forth without threat from its Iberian enemies, but now they suddenly found themselves in need of a weapon. In this context, the Dutch interests in the area became more important and support for exploration and trade were revived. A base across the Atlantic was therefore required for wartime operations. Since the East India Company was preoccupied, a new corporation was formed to establish a base and exploit the area's commercial opportunities<sup>72</sup> and protect the nation's defense interests.

Let us recall: the Dutch Republic had enjoyed a cultural and economic boost during its "*Golden Age*" being in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the founding of WIC heralded a new age in Dutch activities in the whole of Atlantic, and not just in New Netherlands. This expansion encompassed not only a commercial venture, but also a military strategy as well.

**Jaap Jacobs** argues that the initial aim of the company was in a significant way, partly of a military nature. This means that the purpose was to inflict damage on the Iberian empire. By cutting off sources of income for its imperial rival, these monies would enable the Dutch to finance the war in the Western Hemisphere, as well as closer to home in the Netherlands.<sup>73</sup> An example here can be found in 1599, when Prince Maurits and the States General gave special permission for an expedition to sail for the South American coast in order to plunder and to do some privateering of enemy shipping. Scholars on the topic tells us that this "Magellan expedition" (as it was called), was to sail for China via South America and the Pacific but unfortunately its vessels were captured by enemy ships.<sup>74</sup> Even though this expedition ended in failure, this tells us that the Dutch hatred for the Iberian powers may have been so intense the Dutch developed, if you will, "a thirst" for depriving their enemies of wealth. This strategy can be seen as of such a high purpose it shaped the military aspect, with which the WIC was later created.

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<sup>72</sup> Middleton, Richard: "Colonial America" p.82.

<sup>73</sup> Jacobs, J (2007) p.303.

<sup>74</sup> Venema, J (2010) p.168.

This military aspect can also reflect what was initially envisioned by Willem Usselinx, who had been the first to conceive the idea for a West India Company. In his eyes, a West India Company could provide a valuable contribution in the continuing war against Spain,<sup>75</sup> and he kept promoting that colonies in America would serve as excellent bases from which to attack their Iberian enemies in America.<sup>76</sup> According to **Janny Venema**,

*“[···] With the VOC directors, the States General held serious negotiations about the possibility of harming the Spaniards at the Source. The reasoning was that if the Dutch obtained a firm footing at the place where the Spaniards obtained the silver, Spain would be unable to finance the war”<sup>77</sup>*

**Venema** indicates that the directors of the VOC showed a willingness to harm their Spanish rival, which makes it plausible to assume that the directors of the VOC were cooperating with the WIC to counteract the Spanish threat. Moreover, a Dutch scheme for capturing the Spanish Silver fleet existed before the establishment of the WIC.

In addition, this governmental support of the company's military agenda can be seen as a tactical purpose of carrying economic warfare against Spain and Portugal, by striking their colonies and stealing their products. Within such a framework, the WIC fleet and their crews must be seen more as a military company fleet than as a mere trading company. Despite this discussion about the significance of the military strategy, **Janny Venema** argues that the primary duty of the WIC was to protect and strengthen the existing commercial trading activities in the Atlantic area.<sup>78</sup>

As we have seen, **Janny Venema** acknowledges that the company served as a military instrument and in a way, at least to a certain degree, to conduct war operations as a part of the company activities, at least on the paper. This treatment by **Venema**, however, may seem to contradict that of **Jaap Jacobs**, who stated that a large part of the WIC's agenda was to inflict damage upon the enemies through its economic activities, rather than means that can be described as “military”. **Jacobs** do not mention the military aspect of the company, when pointing the primary role of the WIC. This might possibly indicate that **Venema** might only

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<sup>75</sup> Jacobs, J (2009) p.28.

<sup>76</sup> Venema. (2010) p.170.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.170.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p.174.

regard the military aspect of the WIC a secondary goal that was subordinated (even if necessary) in order to achieve success in their primary duty of the achieving financial success. This means the military aspect of the company is to be seen as a secondary goal, and this is a plausible interpretation, because in trade the Netherlands had developed a reputation of being highly efficient.

There is however, another feature of this interesting discussion. The company`s biggest military achievement came under the leadership of the famous Dutch legend Piet Heyn, who in 1628 managed to capture the Spanish silver fleet.<sup>79</sup> **Timothy R Walton** explains in his book about the Spanish silver fleet that in 1628, the WIC sent a fleet of more than 30 ships, consisting of 4,000 men and 689 cannons to the Caribbean where the Spanish fleet had been gathering. Under Piet Heyn`s leadership, the goal was to capture one of the treasure fleets.<sup>80</sup> During this period, the Spanish Silver fleet had sent several smaller treasure fleets from Mexico and Panama, and these were gathered yearly into one mighty convoy. This tactic made the perfect opportunity for the Dutch to finalize their scheme of dealing a massive blow to the Spaniards. Loaded with silver from their American colonies, the Spanish Silver Fleet became the dream of every privateer and pirate of Northern Europe as it had never been captured.<sup>81</sup>

*“[...] the most striking sign of the decay of the Spanish maritime system was a crippling series of Dutch naval victories in the Caribbean and in Europe”.*<sup>82</sup>

According to reports made by the Nicolaes van Wessenar, Spain`s dependence on this Silver fleet was emphasized to the Dutch in early 1623, when reports claimed that its loss

*...is causing there [in Spain] great dearth and bad trade. All payment has been postponed six months by the king. The workers are utterly idle...This [the Fleet] is his [the King`s] great artery; if it is once stuck, most of his life is taken from him.*<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Prak (2005) p.111.

<sup>80</sup> Walton (1994) p.118-120. & Venema (2010) p.213.

<sup>81</sup> Van Cleef. (1969) p.45.

<sup>82</sup> Walton T (1994) p.120.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

This tells us that by capturing the Silver Fleet, the Dutch caused a devastating blow to their Iberian enemies. This is the only instance in history when all of the treasure galleons of a fleet were captured and the entire shipment of precious metals was lost. **Timothy R Walton** mentions that the Dutch booty from this act was 90 tons of gold and silver worth about 3 million pesos.<sup>84</sup> This windfall of piracy and warfare enabled the Dutch to establish and support a viable colony in the South American region, where the WIC had previously been unable to get a foothold. According to Professor **Maarten Praak**, however, it was luck that allowed the Dutch to succeed.

*“[···] Thanks to an unexpected struck of luck, however-the WIC`s commander, Piet Heyn, had captured the Spanish silver fleet in 1628-the Company could now afford to launch a large-scale attack on the Brazilian mainland”.*<sup>85</sup>

**Timothy Walton** agrees with **Jacobs** when he explains that this victory came through a stroke of luck, **Walton** argues that when part of Heyn`s fleet had returned to Europe, Spanish authorities mistook this even, believed that the entire Dutch fleet had returned from the Western waters. Ignorant of the danger posed by the remainder of Heyn`s fleet the Spanish fleet made up of 11 merchantmen and 4 galleons was allowed to sail. In more detail about the Dutch victory, **Walton** argues that Spanish patrols had spotted Heyn`s fleet, but the warning had come too late to save the treasure-laden fleet.<sup>86</sup> In view of this extended discussion, we can state that the West India trading Company served two main functions, one aspect that was to secure trade and another to inflict damage on the Spaniards and their colonial rivals.

*“[···] It is obvious then that if one want to get money, something has to be proposed to the people which will move them to invest. To this end the glory of God will help with some, harm to Spain with others, with some of the welfare of the Fatherland; but the principal and most powerful inducement will be the profit that each can make for himself, which profit is perceived by few people ··· yes, they are so far from having great desire for this that I [red. Usselinx] can say in truth, that I···have found no one who has not disagreed with me in the matter of profits. That harm can be done to the*

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<sup>84</sup> Walton (1994) p.121.

<sup>85</sup> Praak (2005) p.111.

<sup>86</sup> Walton (1994) p.120.

*King of Spain they admit readily, but there is all too much difference between harming another and making one`s own profit.”<sup>87</sup>*

As the previous quotation indicates, however, the supporters for the company may have been hesitant about the dual-military and commercial- function of their investment group. With this quotation, Willem Usselinx, shows this uncertainty among investors, and this assessment suggests that the Company`s prospect for profit was tinged by a fear that the WIC might end up solely as a vehicle for the government`s military designs.<sup>88</sup>

## 2.3 Commerce or agriculture

Another issue with which the Dutch had to deal was the issue of supporting a commercial enterprise or a plantation economy in its New World colony. By this, I mean descriptions of Dutch activities emphasize their focus on the fur-trade and tend to discuss its role in the settlement in the context that it was great for commercial profit. Yet, as we will see in the account of the *Ruijter`s* voyage, from the colony`s beginnings, agriculture also played a role in the colony`s growth. This can be shown in the light of **Oliver A. Rink**, who argues that the “*Ruijter*,” a privately funded ship that sailed for New Netherlands loaded with a cargo of “*agricultural equipment*”.<sup>89</sup> When “*De Ruijter*” undertook this voyage seems to be unclear, but scholars have often been discussing this particular voyage in the timeframe of 1623-1624.

In carrying agricultural equipment and animals to the colony, the *Ruijter* and subsequent voyages also represent a change within the colony regarding its financial structure and possibly its approach to colonization. In addition to the *Ruijter`s* voyage, in the year 1625, over a hundred additional colonists arrived in New Netherlands plus livestock (103 head in all) and supplies.<sup>90</sup> These events serve as indicators that the Dutch may have had further plans than small trading posts with fur-trade as their main objective. The colony`s growth would undoubtedly increase if the settlement became self-sufficient, rather than be dependent on a

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<sup>87</sup> Willem Usselinx`s report to the general sentiment a year before the charter was promulgated. See Bachman (1969) p.31-32.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Rink (1986) p.82.

<sup>90</sup> Rink (1986) p.81. & Burrows and Wallace (1999) p.21.



successful trade and from the mid-1620s onward, the colony's development seem to have relied on a combination of plantation and several trading outposts.

**Van Cleef Bachman**, claims that once the policy to establish an agricultural colonization in North America had been adopted, the WIC may have faced several technical problems, concerning settlement during the period from 1624-1626. First, they needed to address issues of labor, such as selecting people for emigration, inducing them to settle in a heathen wilderness and providing transportation, and even convincing some to risk their wives and families back in the Netherlands.<sup>91</sup> To meet the issue of settlement, the WIC laid down, on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1624, an "*order of provision* in which conditions from the new settlers were agreed upon. In this *provisionele ordere*, the people who were willing to abandon their life in the home-country, would receive free cost of transportation and the right of internal trade which included the fur trade with Indians, but "[...] *on express conditions that they sell their purchased and gathered wares to no one other than those of the Company*". Place of land according to the size of the respective families in which to produce were also given to the first settlers. These lands were to be held in some form of ownership, meaning that the produce of these lands was to remain the property of the colonists and not of the company.<sup>92</sup>

*"[...] If the families of the colonists have in stock any grain, hay, flax, hemp, or any other good which is in serviceable to the Company and which the Company needs, that such be bought from them at a proper price and put on their account."*<sup>93</sup>

It is not certain what Bachman means when using "agricultural colony" to speak about the early settlement of New Netherlands, as this contradicts the creation of small trading posts for the trading of fur. It may be that part of the initial plan with the colony had been to establish agricultural activity in the region, as a supplement to the fur-trade business, but for unknown reasons the policy for developing a more centralized agricultural society in North America was postponed. I claim that during the mid-1620s and especially in the Western Hemisphere, the Dutch changed their attitude and policy towards an agricultural colony.

With retaining an emphasis on trade, the Dutch did expand in agricultural products so that

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<sup>91</sup> Bachman (1969) p.70-75.

<sup>92</sup> Bachman (1969) p.77,78.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p.78.

their western colonies could feed themselves and not have to rely on the importation of food supplies.

Supplementing the discussion by Bachman, **Jaap Jacobs** states that from the first voyage in 1623 and during the following three years, WIC gradually strengthened their American colony by sending over more colonists, cattle, provisions, and equipment with the aim of making the colony more self-sufficient.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, **Janny Venema** argues that in 1624, the decision to reinforce the colonists with more cattle and agricultural equipment were made and during the following years the

*[...] company chartered five ships to bring colonists over the Atlantic along with livestock, tools, farm implements, flour, firearms, liquor, seeds, live plants, cloth and cheap goods for the fur trade.*<sup>95</sup>

This contributes to the argument that the Dutch had initially settled in North America with other intentions than only to trade with Indians for fur. This indicates that while animal pelts may have made up the major products coming from New Netherlands, other trade items were also present, including “*Sheep, hogs, wagons, ploughs, and other implements of husbandry,*” all apparently shipped and destined to be sold to the colonists in exchange for furs.<sup>96</sup>

**Oliver A Rink** and **Jaap Jacobs**, both mention that despite the focus on trade, agricultural equipment was shipped to the colony between 1621 and 1626, but whether these voyages were made in the service of the WIC or just private voyages seems unclear.

Considering this development, **Jaap Jacobs** argues that these measures were taken despite the conflict between the two factions among the *bewindhebbers* [directors] in the Amsterdam chamber. As previously mentioned, the conflict here might be even older than first thought and it might have re-surfaced shortly after the establishment of the WIC. However, the original idea for the West India company itself had come from Willem Usselinx, a Antwerp merchant, who believed that its primary objective should be a settlement and not the

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<sup>94</sup> Jacobs (2007) p.303.

<sup>95</sup> Venema (2010) p.216.

<sup>96</sup> Rink (1986). p.83.

establishment of trading posts and who remained its indefatigable propagandist.<sup>97</sup> To proclaim his grand idea and to get people to invest, he would maintain that the surest way to break Spain`s grip on the New World and its many resources was to establish extensive colonies where free European farmers and converted Indians could produce agricultural commodities for the European market.<sup>98</sup>

It is now clear that the Dutch were willing to establish an agricultural community within the colony, but only as a supplement to the fur-trade, as the idea of controlling the North American fur trade had been the most promising basis of Dutch interest in which to settle North America.

Be that as it may, the Dutch WIC received monopoly privileges on all trade in the Western Hemisphere, but as **Oliver A. Rink** has contributed to show, their existed private funded ship who most likely took another route as to hide from the eyes of the Company. However, taking this into account, the colony of New Netherlands may (finally) be considered a successful experiment in private colonialism under the auspices of a chartered monopoly.<sup>99</sup> Yet in the earliest stages of the colonization, the monopoly was not absolute; as it was shown in the previous section, private ventures had preceded the WIC monopoly, and it is likely that some private ventures continues even after the Company gained its privileges.

In the wake of the creation of the WIC in 1621 and the granting of the trade privileges, sources have advanced two different assessments to the scope of trade and colonization. According to the sources, one faction favored trade alone, while another view shows that a permanent settlement and colonization of the area, incorporating the small trading posts and eventually transforming them into a grand colony, would be a better solution.

It is here that Willem Usselinx plays an important role, Usselinx, a Flemish-Calvinist investor and merchant from Antwerp, may have been the one responsible for drawing the Dutch Republic`s attention towards the New World. According to **Janny Venema** at the New Netherland Institute, Usselinx had expressed his vision of an Atlantic company since the

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<sup>97</sup> Burrows E. G & Wallace M (1999) "A History of New York City to 1898" p.21.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid p.21.

<sup>99</sup> Rink (1986) p.23.

1590s.<sup>100</sup> In this context historians on the topic think him to have represented one of the lead figures behind the creation of the WIC, and he certainly was representative of the colonization faction within the chamber of Amsterdam. He found a fellow supporter in *Dominee* Petrus Plancius,<sup>101</sup> who favored the founding of a West India company in the struggle against the archenemy, Spain. Again, the focus on the war against the Spanish hegemony seems to have been a vital part in the promotion of the WIC. Moreover, during the Truce negotiations, it had been agreed that the Dutch were allowed to settle in areas not under Spanish or Portuguese control. Usselinx would use this agreement within the truce to promote his idea for the establishment of colonies in the New World as he argued that:

*“[...] colonies would be good for economy, while in wartime they would provide excellent bases from which to attack Spanish and Portuguese power in America”*<sup>102</sup>

From this, we can read that Usselinx saw it vital that the Dutch would settle the area peacefully while they had the chance, instead of fighting to occupy the new lands. He may have wanted to avoid an unnecessary conflict. He may also have seen what was likely to happen when the truce ended, and he wished to strengthen the Dutch situation, to take precautions toward what will come. Furthermore, he also managed to gain the support of Prince Maurits, who represented the States General in Holland and with this support, Usselinx gained the interests of several towns throughout Holland and Zeeland for his ideas about an Atlantic trading company

For Usselinx, colonization of overseas lands and the spread of the Reformed religion were of utmost importance. His idea was to establish agricultural colonies in the Americas, and he believed that more focus on agriculture would provide the homeland with a variety of products and at the same time, make markets for manufactured goods from the Dutch Republic in the New World.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Venema J (2010) p.87.

<sup>101</sup> *Dominee* Petrus Plancius was a Dutch clergyman, cartographer and astronomer which at the age of 24 became a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He is known as one of the founders of the East India company. That he was a well-known clergyman of his time, depicts him as a man of influence and therefore his support of Usselinx is here seen as vital in the creation of WIC.

<sup>102</sup> Venema (2010) p.170.

<sup>103</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.28,29.

Furthermore, and interesting here is that the newborn company would be considerably different from the one Usselinx had foreseen and colonization scarcely played a role in the patent. Its focus lay more on privateering and trade, which in the eyes of the merchants offered better opportunities for profit than the production of agricultural staples for sale.<sup>104</sup> A draft of the charter was made already in 1606 that would give the company a monopoly of trade with Africa from the Tropic of Cancer to the Cape of Good Hope and with America from Newfoundland to the Straits of Magellan. The company received similar advantages to that of the VOC, which included the right to build up fortresses, alliances, and enter into treaties.

**Janny Venema** argues that instead of establishing agricultural colonies the emphasis of the draft was on navigation and trade in the Atlantic area.<sup>105</sup> It is as Usselinx's expressed it in a pamphlet in 1620, only a year before the creation of the Company, that the new company would fall into the hand of "[...] merchants who only had in mind profit as their north-star and greed as their compass."

This large-scale colonization proclaimed by Usselinx required a considerable emigration, and it remained to be seen whether merchants would be eager to undertake the risks inherent to such ventures.<sup>106</sup> However, the States-General and the *Heren XIX* remained unconvinced by the economical aspect of Usselinx's plan and it had no place in the "*Grand Design*" (*Groot Desseyn*), which was drawn up by the Lord Nineteen in October 1623.<sup>107</sup> The first voyages made by WIC in 1623 were therefore intended to defend Dutch claims to New Netherland against its English counterpart and clearly not yet designed to support a large-scale settlement.<sup>108</sup> This ambitious *Grand Design* of the WIC can be seen together with the great ambitions of the company and was devised to seize and destroy the Spanish and Portuguese hegemony in the Atlantic.<sup>109</sup> To this extent the Grand Design (*Groot Desseyn*) was aimed to weaken the enemy nation's as much as possible. On this account, WIC directors would discuss attack on its Iberian rivals while seemingly equipping their ships for commercial journey's across the Atlantic.

However, despite its good fortune in the capturing of the Spanish Silver fleet which enabled them to take control of the Brazilian sugar plantations, the Dutch didn't experience any other

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Venema J (2010) p.88,89.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Jacobs (2007) p.303.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Barreveld D.J "From New Amsterdam to New York" (2001) p.157.

major military victories against their rivals and therefore the Grand Design must be seen as a failure.

Another of these influential shareholders of the company who advanced the idea that a colonization plan in North America represented the best option was the famous Kiliaen van Rensselaer, a diamond and pearl merchant who would later become the strongest advocate for free trade and private enterprise as a remedy to cure the colony's many ills that would emerge in the mid-1620s. It is believed that Kiliaen played an active role to help fight the enemy, but he offered many contributions beyond this, as well.<sup>110</sup> It is plausible to assume, moreover, that these two persons (Usselinx and Van Rensselaer) may have invested in agricultural voyages going to North America, even as the WIC began development of its fur trade in the region.

During the first years after the Dutch Settled in North America 1624, as we have pointed out, that even though the WIC had a chartered monopoly of all trade in the Western Hemisphere, several private Dutch merchants prompted by the idea of possible economic gain, managed to conduct trade in North America as private enterprises-apart from the WIC. However, the financiers back in the Dutch Republic were not very enthusiastic towards the WIC, as they perceived the company to be a privately financed weapon against Spain, to a far more extent than the VOC in the East.<sup>111</sup> That the WIC was seen as a privately funded company by its own financiers contradicts what has earlier been believed, that the WIC was a state funded company in its easiest years.

This grant of a "so-called monopoly" has been examined by historians, but many questions have arisen about the extent to which the company's monopoly can be called a success. This I find important since the role of WIC in the growth of the Dutch colony of New Netherland is typically been emphasized in terms of the grand monopoly it supposedly had in the region. Such a discussion on the company's rule in the colony must acknowledge that there were numerous private merchants emerging, and this creates problems regarding the validity of the term monopoly given.

Moreover, the monopoly of the WIC became a topic of discussion in describing the writings

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<sup>110</sup> Veneme (2010) p.187.

<sup>111</sup> Jacobs (2007) p.303.

of the charter of Freedom and Exemption from 1629; therefore it will be important to have a section regarding the monopoly.

## 2.4 The Grand Monopoly and the issue with it

The Dutch West India Company was one of the great international trading companies during the early modern times, but even so, it lived more or less in the shadows of its sister company in the East. Again, its historical profile in world history has been limited and overshadowed by the ultimate failure to build a large Dutch Empire in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>112</sup>

The arrival in 1624 of 30 Dutch families, mostly Walloons, in North America marked the beginning of New Netherlands as a Dutch colony, but it may be argued that 1625 is a better date to call the beginning of the colony, since this represents the year when Manhattan may first have been settled.<sup>113</sup> However, there exists a third view; that the Dutch may have been settling as in the region as early as 1622. According to **Burrows & Wallace** agents of the WIC appeared along

*“[...] the river Manahata and made plantation there, fortifying themselves in two different places where they did persist to plant and trade”.*<sup>114</sup>

According to Burrows & Wallace, this quotation came from an English account and must be seen as very questionable, since no other scholars seems to mention Dutch colonization as early as 1622.

Whether 1624 or 1625 can be argued to be labeled as the beginning of Dutch colonization, it was not until *the Purchase of Manhattan* in 1626 that we can start talking about a somewhat stable colony. During the first years after the Dutch settlements in 1624, it has been pointed out, that even though the WIC supposedly had a chartered monopoly of all trade in the Western Hemisphere, several private Dutch merchants, intrigued by the idea of possible

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<sup>112</sup> Knoot G. (2015) p.1.

<sup>113</sup> There exists, even today, an uncertainty about when Dutch colonists first came to settle in the New World. People may argue that an unsuccessful voyage, made by an English mariner, seems unlikely to mark the starting point of the New Netherlands history, though nationality had a different meaning in the seventeenth century. Better alternatives such as 1624 (supposedly when the first settlement was made), and 1625 has therefore served as a starting point for most Dutch colonial historians. 1623 has also been mentioned as the year of the first settlers. See Jaap Jacobs *“The Colony of New Netherland”* and Arthur G Adams *“The Hudson through the years”*. The first Dutch colonists may have settled on Burlington island on the Delaware. See Werlager C.A *“The Delaware Indians: A history.”*

<sup>114</sup> Burrow & Wallace (1998) p. 20.

economic gain, managed to find and conduct trade in North America for private gain. It can be said, at the minimum, that it was among in these momentous events and their corresponding dates that the colony of New Netherlands was first colonized. However, it may seem that from the very beginning, the colony of New Netherland`s status have been consequently anomalous, when compared to other Dutch colonies in both the West and in the East.

Furthermore, later historians have often referred to this arrangement with the WIC as a “trade Monopoly.” Such a description is not completely accurate-at least for the current period. WIC did enjoy trade privileges but others were aware of the commercial opportunities and conducted trade with their own private fundings. Moreover, in this context it is evident that during the time immediate after Hudson`s voyage, his reports had sparked interests among Dutch merchants and made them aware of commercial opportunities in the New World, thus starting the first Dutch involvement with the North American continent.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, we acknowledge that a number of these ventures took place prior to the creation of the WIC.

It can be argued that during the first years after Dutch settlement, a number of private Dutch merchants conducted trade in North America for private gain. Intrigued by the idea of possible economic gain, **Oliver A Rink** argues, the role of private merchants of Amsterdam played a crucial part in the colony`s financial history and they, at first, controlled the transoceanic exchange of goods and influenced the colony`s history.<sup>116</sup> It is likely some of these merchant that Usselinx had in mind when he expressed his fear that the company would fall into the hand of greedy merchants.

Moreover, as **Maarten Praak** mentions, during the Truce with Spain, which postponed the creation of the WIC by 15 years.

*“[···] private investors jumped the gun and established their own companies in the western hemisphere. After all, the voyages to the west was much shorter and less dangerous compared to the ones going to the East-an inducement to groups of merchants to trade in the West on their own terms.”<sup>117</sup>*

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<sup>115</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.19,20.

<sup>116</sup> Rink (1986) p.18-20.

<sup>117</sup> Prak. (2005) p.116,117.



Here, we can see that the postponing of the WIC may have created a “golden opportunity” for the private merchant and investors. A opportunity to establish a profitable trade base in Northern America which supports the view of Willem Usselinx.

Such acknowledgment that there were private voyages, during the time of WIC`s supposed monopoly (its grant of trading privileges) can be seen in **Oliver A. Rink`s** book, “*Holland on hudson*”, who contends that the voyage of the 260-ton transporter ship “*Ruijter*,” chartered by influential members of the Amsterdam chamber as a private trader, is important because it represented the first violation of the lucrative monopoly gained by the WIC. The ship was loaded with a cargo that included “*sheep, hogs, wagons, ploughs and other implements of husbandry*” which was destined to be sold and traded to the colonists for furs.<sup>118</sup> Whether it was sold for furs or not, it represented a clear sign that the colony of New Netherlands was going through a change in its financial strategy, that is, there seems to have been a period when trade privileges were granted but private ventures were also taken place. This puts the grand monopoly privileged of WIC into question whether it can be regarded as a success for the Dutch Republic.

There exists however, another view regarding this debate: Jacobs argues that the formation of the WIC caused a considerable impact on the enterprises of the private merchant, but as the Company was unable to develop activities until 1623, private funded ships were permitted to sail for their North American settlement but only on condition that they needed to return before July 1 1622. When this did not happen, it seems that the private voyages may have undermined the idea of a WIC monopoly. Professor. **Jaap Jacobs**, a Dutch historian who specializes in history of the Dutch republic and its colonial enterprises, contends that in September 1623, private funded ships were sold to the WIC.<sup>119</sup> If this is the case, it may be plausible to claim that the transport ship already mentioned sailed to the North American colony sometime in the period between 1621 and 1623. Whether Jacobs includes the *Ruijter* in his statement that private voyages was sold to WIC is unclear and his`s view has been disputed.

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<sup>118</sup> Rink (1986) p.82-83.

<sup>119</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.26-29.

**Oliver A Rink** states that this was at the time of the company`s monopoly and that it represented a violation of the granted monopoly. It can be argued, therefore, that it may have sailed for New Netherlands after 1623 and found a way to avoid the eyes of the company. A more likely scenario than this, however, would be that it sailed during 1625 because this was the year in which the Dutch settled on Manhattan. On the other hand, if it had set sail after 1623, it supports Jacobs`s view and gives us fuel to claim that it did not violate the monopoly since the *Ruijter* was, in fact, in some manner was under the company`s control at the time (though the first scenario is more believable). Here it seems like the question of violation of the monopoly is still discussed in present time among scholars in the field and this is clearly a topic which has been frequently discussed, a debate that has not yet ended.

**Jaap Jacobs**, however, presents another account-not addressed by Rink`s argument-in his book "*The colony of New Netherland*" **Jacobs** states that in September 1621, the earlier company working in the Western Hemisphere (the New Netherland Company) had received permission to send out two ships to the colony: This was done, as **Jacobs** argues, due to the fact that the WIC was unable to develop activities in the immediate time after its charter was given.<sup>120</sup> By the time, it received the permission, the earlier company had been disbanded (recall that its request to extend a monopoly had been denied) but the literature on the topic tells us that private merchants who previously had enjoyed the privileges "the New Netherland company" now dispatched ships by their own initiative. It seems plausible to claim that the directors behind the WIC may have contradicted their own monopoly by giving permission to private funded vessels to embark (since their own effort could not come until a later date).

Even though the history tells us that the *Ruijter* was later lost due to pirate attack, it demonstrated how easily it was for well-placed shareholders to take advantage of their opportunities and trade within New Netherland outside of the strict boundaries of the WIC`s "monopoly". This makes it even more plausible to claim that the *Ruijter* was not the only violation during the time of the Dutch colony. By the logic of these accounts: their varying interpretations "it seems plausible" that between 1618 until the WIC undertook its first voyages of exploration to the region in 1623, free trade dominated in the New Netherlands. In

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<sup>120</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.20.

addition, despite its lack of a charter, the now disbanded New Netherland Company seem to have remained the principal firm engaging in New Netherland trade during the time.<sup>121</sup>

In addition the literature available tells us that it was not until the middle of 1623 that the WIC had managed to gather enough money to begin their operations and that the deadline to buy shares in the company was in August that year.<sup>122</sup> With this in mind, it is valid to claim that the “violation of the monopoly” that we have just discussed would most likely have happened between 1621 and 1623, though the acknowledgment of private voyages sailing for the Americas after 1623 also seems to be accurate, as well.

## **2.5 The problem of legitimacy and centralization: A problem of leadership**

The monopoly issue was not the only problem occurring in setting up the colony. Containing control of the colony based on the “legitimacy” of the Dutch taking possession of lands played an important part in the Dutch colonization in North America. Elaborating on this concept implied a good relationship with the Native Indians.<sup>123</sup>

### **2.5.1 Willem Verhulst and the Dutch relation with the Indians**

As previously mentioned, the Dutch centralization plan of New Netherlands can be described to have taken place in the first half of 1625, as they settled Manhattan. This grand centralization plan, however, may have started in 1624 with the inauguration of Willem Verhulst as the second director of the New Netherlands (the first director was Cornelius Jacobsen Mey).<sup>124</sup>

A hundred additional colonists plus livestock (103 head in all) and supplies came with Verhulst.<sup>125</sup> Verhulst had received specific instructions from the directors of the WIC in Amsterdam, he was directed to concentrate the colonists into a single settlement. Together

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<sup>121</sup> Van Cleef “*Peltries or plantations*” (1969) p.13.

<sup>122</sup> Venema J (2010) p.176.

<sup>123</sup> The Native Americans or Indians became known to the seventeenth Dutch Colonists as “*Wilden*”

<sup>124</sup> Willem Verhulst served as director of New Netherlands from 1624 to 1626.

<sup>125</sup> Rink (1986) p.81. & Burrows and Wallace (1999) p.21.

with Krijn Fredericksz, an engineer working for the company, they decided that Manhattan's southern tip would be the perfect location for a new massive fortification which would anchor WIC's operation throughout New Netherlands. Verhulst was sent with the instructions not only to relocate the settlers but also to establish a legitimate Dutch claim to the lands for the colonial ventures. Such an act could be of value, as the establishment of a legitimate process would serve as a legal buffer for anyone who wished to claim that the Dutch had seized the lands or occupied the territory in an inappropriate way. The act of legitimacy would also be able to safeguard other colonial activities as well as the settlers. The instructions to Verhulst were to make the settlers' occupation a legitimate act by the means of purchasing the island of Manhattan from the Indians.<sup>126</sup>

The instructions that were given to Verhulst also included a specific directive not to drive or force the Indians to give up their land, but to convince them to sell it, and to negotiate a written contract to cover the purchase. Likely, that the Dutch would also pay the Indians in whatever form of payment that would satisfy them.<sup>127</sup>

*“In case any Indians should be living on the aforesaid island or make any claim upon it, or upon any other places that are of use to us, they must not be driven away by force or threats, but by good words be persuaded to leave, or be given something therefor to their satisfaction, or else be allowed to live among us, a contract being made thereof and signed by them in their manner, since such contracts upon other occasions may be very useful to the Company.”<sup>128</sup>*

Furthermore, and in support of the Dutch effort to establish a Dutch legitimate ownership, it can be asserted by **Jaap Jacobs**, who claims *“only a claim supported by actual taking possession of an area by populating it with at least fifty colonists was seen by the Company as valid.”<sup>129</sup>* Whether Jacobs in the statement above refers to the “purchase” when he talks about “actual possession” or implies that actual possession means that the Dutch were the

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<sup>126</sup> [http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch\\_americans/willem-verhulst/](http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch_americans/willem-verhulst/).

<sup>127</sup> [http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch\\_americans/willem-verhulst/](http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch_americans/willem-verhulst/) & Weslager C. A. (1972). p.113.

<sup>128</sup> *“Instructions for Willem Verhulst Director of New Netherland”* (January, 1625). Collected from a series of Historical Documents regarding New Netherlands, 1624-1625, trans.1924 by A.J.F Van Laer, Uploaded from: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nycoloni/huntdocc.html> (13/11/2015).

<sup>129</sup> Jacobs (2005) p.42.

first to settle fifty colonists on this spot is a difficult question, though the former seems more likely since the Dutch wanted to legitimize their claim to Manhattan.

However, it is evident that the Dutch saw it as vital to establish a good relationship with the Indians in order to get access to the fur-trade and to safeguard Dutch colonial activities and settlers from conflicts with Indians. Instead of seizing Indian lands, exploiting their silver mines or to force such fiscal abuses as low wages, high taxes and burdensome tolls, the Dutch would rather propose free labor, economic liberty, and commercial opportunity.<sup>130</sup>

*“He[Verhulst] shall also see that no one does the Indians any harm or violence, deceive, mock, or contemn them in any way, but that in addition to good treatment they be shown honesty, faithfulness, and sincerity in all contracts, dealings, and intercourse, without being deceived by shortage of measure, weight, or number, and that throughout friendly relations with them be maintained.”<sup>131</sup>*

The late Dr. **Clinton A. Weslager**, who has written much on the early history of the Delaware Valley contends that relations among the Dutch merchant and the Delaware Indians were good and the trade was satisfactory.<sup>132</sup> However, Weslager’s focus lies on the Delaware Valley and therefore on the affairs of the Indians in that area, leaving out relations regarding other Indian tribes in the larger region. At the time, three groups of Manhattan Indians inhabited Manhattan: the Menohanet, the Werpoes group who occupied the lower Manhattan and the Rechewanis group that resided in the middle east side of the Island.<sup>133</sup> It is more likely at the time that the Dutch had a closer relation with the Menohat Indians than the others because the first Dutch settlements on the island were made on the lower Manhattan.

Here we can see that the Dutch thought a good relationship with the Native Indians had to be obtained and by establishing a friendly relationship with the locals, that this would increase their chance of becoming legitimate owners of Manhattan; might also reduce the possibilities of conflicts. Furthermore, they would gain access to the lucrative fur-trade. Given this

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<sup>130</sup> Venema (2010) p.211.

<sup>131</sup> “Instructions for Willem Verhulst Director of New Netherland” (January, 1625).

<sup>132</sup> Weslager C.A (1972) p.113.

<sup>133</sup> Adams (1996) p.3.

reasoning, together with the Dutch impetus of making the establishment legitimate, it is not surprising that the Dutch took care to establish their “*Rightful*” claim to the land. This process seems to have been a slow one, and this makes it valid to argue that the concern for legitimacy and the creation of the first settlement was indeed time-consuming, which let the colony of New Netherland to a slow start.

Here it is of importance to mention that Willem Verhulst only got one year as a director of the colony, due to complaints about his style of leadership. He was banished from his post and from the New Netherland for reprehensible conduct in the affairs of the colony<sup>134</sup>.

Willem Verhulst and his wife left for Amsterdam in September 1626. Some historians including **Edwin G. Burrows**, **Mike Wallace**, **Oliver A. Rink** and **Clinton A. Weslager** seem to agree that Verhulst had to leave in disgrace because that by acting in an authoritarian manner he had angered many settlers by abusing the power that was bestowed upon him. Furthermore, **Oliver A. Rink**, contends that nobody in the colony really liked Verhulst and claims that he bullied the colonists, doctored some of the company`s invoices for his own benefit, and managed to lose track of vast quantities of trade good. He also used his overzealous exercise of his power to inflict punishment on recalcitrant colonists.<sup>135</sup>

Be that as it may, whether the colonists disliked him from the start of his directorship or his support declined over time is hard to say, even though the latter is more believable. There is little evidence on how the general feeling among the colonists developed and may have changed in this early period. Reports to the council in Amsterdam contend, “*Some directors and heads, by bad management, have rather kept back than helped the people and the country.*”<sup>136</sup> Though the reports do not state names, it is likely that in the light of this context to assume that Verhulst`s leadership and negative comments on it, are included in the reports. Moreover, reports made by Verhulst`s secretary, Isaac de Rasiere, states that complains were made regarding the leadership of Verhulst “owing to bad government hitherto prevailing, it is necessary to administer some punishment with kindness as they (the settlers) have heretofore been very harshly ruled by Verhulst.”<sup>137</sup> However, in the long run, Verhulst was really the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid: p.114.

<sup>135</sup> Rink (1986) p.84.

<sup>136</sup> Rink (1986) p.84.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid p.84,85.

least of New Netherland`s problems. Far graver was the sharp division of opinion within the WIC, about the expectation for New Netherlands.

## 2.6 The Purchase

As we have just described, the Dutch colonization of New Netherlands went rather slowly. This may be explained as a consequence of an Indian war,<sup>138</sup> which threatened the settlement at Fort Orange. This threat of war may help in explaining the centralization of the colony`s authority that eventually led to the purchase of Manhattan in 1626. The Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam took place in 1625, but Dutch presence in the area is dated since Henry Hudson made his famous trip in 1609, even though we cannot talk about a stable Dutch colony before 1626.<sup>139</sup>

We have previously seen that the plan for such a large fort and a centralization of power came to the colony with Verhulst, but it seems likely that this plan did not succeed under his rule. Therefore, Peter Minuit became the third director during the finalization of what would become the settlement of New Amsterdam.

### 2.6.1 Peter Minuit

Today, Peter Minuit is famously known for being the one who struck the final details in the purchase that is the establishment of a legit settlement on the island of Manhattan, yet it is best argued that the idea of establishing a legitimate claim through purchase and settlement should be credited to his predecessor, Willem Verhulst, even though the narrative of the tale indicates that he was not able to complete the process.<sup>140</sup>

With his predecessor`s failure to finalize the consolidation and centralization of the colony`s authority, it is likely that Peter Minuit immediately took charge of the colony, in such a way that it might be of value to claim that he was forced to place major attention on the most

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<sup>138</sup> Rink (1986) p.83.

<sup>139</sup> The “*purchase of Manhattan*” which took place in 1626. It exists a common understanding among historians today which gives the credit to peter Minuit for negotiating this purchase.

<sup>140</sup> [http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch\\_americans/willem-verhulst/](http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch_americans/willem-verhulst/).

immediate problem of consolidating settlement on Manhattan. Ironically here is that his successor, Peter Minuit was on board the “*Wapen van Amsterdam*”, the ship which deported Willem back to the fatherland, this makes it likely that the council had a replacement in the colony even before Verhulst had been taken back to Amsterdam.

Peter Minuit who arrived in New Netherlands on May 4, 1626, with the intention of assisting Verhulst in surveying the Colony`s rivers for possible new settlements.<sup>141</sup> Upon his arrival, his predecessor had been placed under house arrest by the council back in Amsterdam, and the colonists were scattered throughout New Netherland with many living in horrifying and unbearable conditions.<sup>142</sup> Knowing that Verhulst was under arrest and what seems to be broken colony only strengthens the argument that Minuit was forced to address the immediate problem of consolidating the colony on the island of Manhattan when he declared himself the commander in the spring of 1626. This clearly states that the process of legitimizing the Dutch claim on Manhattan became more urgent than it previously had been.

Rink argues that Minuit saved the colony by forcefully grasping authority in the wake of Verhulst`s dismissal by the council<sup>143</sup>. By forcefully grasping the power and declaring himself as chief commander, it is believable that Rink talks about a coup of power and that he seized power even before he was installed as director by the council. This makes it unclear when Minuit`s inauguration actually took place.

Another main problem with which Minuit had to deal has to do with the increasing threat of an Indian attack on Fort Orange during the time in which indicates that Dutch policy of a good relationship with the Indians had been severed. Moreover, this tells us that the Dutch needed to speed up the process of legitimizing their claim on Manhattan where the company tended to build a larger fortification.

It is well known among contemporary historians, that the bargain was finalized by Minuit shortly after his inauguration as director, and it is plausible that the purchase was conducted in May or June 1626, as the deal is mentioned in a letter from Peter Schaghen, (who was in

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<sup>141</sup> Rink (1986) p.85.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p.85.

<sup>143</sup> Rink (1978) p.80-84.



charge of the supervision of WIC's affairs), written on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1626.<sup>144</sup> Shaghen states that the grain was sowed in the middle of May and reaped in middle of August, which may serve as an indicator that the "purchase" of the Island was conducted in the summer of 1626, during the time of Peter Minuit.

In support of this, **Mike Wallace** and **Edwin G. Burrows** claim that this plan of purchasing the land was part of a new policy implemented by Minuit shortly after he gained control of the colony<sup>145</sup>. Even though we cannot know with certainty when the actual "purchase" was finalized, sources tell us that this policy of "Purchasing" Manhattan from the Lenape Indians involved 60 guilders worth of trade goods.<sup>146</sup>

Another arising problem with which Minuit had to deal was the increasing threat of an Indian attack on Fort Orange that indicates that Dutch policy of a good relationship with the Indians had more or less been severed. (If his predecessor (Verhulst) had been instructed to make the settling occupation a legitimate act by purchase the island as a part of its grand centralization plan, Burrows and Wallace's claim that Minuit implied a "New policy" when talking about the Dutch bargain of 1626, loses its logical sense.)

Here **Edwin G. Burrows** and **Mike Wallace** do state that the policy of purchasing Manhattan appeared only after Minuit replaced Verhulst. **Charles T. Gehring** does not seem to support this view at the New Netherland Institute in New York, who claims that the idea of "purchasing" the island was given to Verhulst to legitimize the act of settlement. Here we can see what clearly shows a debate around the topic of Purchase. A debate which even today show some different of opinion about this policy of purchase.

Moreover, **Oliver A. Rink** contends in his book that

*"Logic rather than evidence suggests that Verhulst had failed to buy Manhattan Island as per company instructions and policy"*<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/additional-resources/dutch-treats/peter-schagen-letter/>. Peter Schaghen's letter is the earliest reference we have to the purchase of the island of Manhattan. He held the position as the representative of the State in the assembly of directors within the WIC. The Original document is held by the *Rijksarchief* in The Hague.

<sup>145</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1999) p.24.

<sup>146</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1999) p.24. 60 Guilders is estimated to be equivalent to \$24/25 in 1626 dollars and estimated to have been around \$500 in today's dollars. See [http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch\\_americans/peter-minuit/](http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch_americans/peter-minuit/).

<sup>147</sup> Rink (1986) p. 86.

By stating that Verhulst had failed to buy the Island it seems that Rink believes that the policy of purchase was indeed given to Minuit's predecessor, so it couldn't be a "*new policy*" that Minuit implemented. However, Rink does implicitly state in the same sentence that it's little if no evidence that this instruction were given to Verhulst and the only suggestion is the "*Logic of the tale*". Rink wrote his book in 1986 and shows that the scholars of his time were divided over the question of who purchased Manhattan and when.

The New Netherland Institute in New York contribute to strengthen the claims that he executed the trade in either May or July 1626. Furthermore, he would struck the deal with the Indians soon after he set foot in the colony due to pressing need to re-settle the scattered colonists in fear of a possible war with the Mohawk Indians. Furthermore, even though the matter of Purchasing the island seemed urgent, it is clear that this was not the first thing he did upon arrival in the colony. Together with Krijn Fredericksz, Minuit started the construction of a Fort on the tip of Manhattan to deal with the housing shortage.

## 2.7 A slow start

The intention of the preceding discussion is to contextualize the time before the inauguration of the patroonship. This will be significant in making it easier to understand why a new pattern of settlement was needed.

The Dutch started building a fortification at the newly legitimate claim of Manhattan, which they called “New Amsterdam”.<sup>148</sup> Under Minuit’s rule, the establishment of legitimacy paved way for an increase in the number of settlers into the island, and by the end of the year 200 Dutch settlers was now calling Manhattan their home.<sup>149</sup> Such an act of legitimacy may also have reduced the threat among the settlers for a possible Indian threat. Reduction of the threat from the outside together with more settlers arriving in the new settlement must have caused optimism among the Dutch in the immediate time after the “purchase.”

Moreover, Professor **Tim McNeese**, tells us that even though there exist documents regarding the “purchase” (written by Peter Shcaghen), we must ask ourselves whether such a purchase actually took place as far as the Native Americans themselves were concerned. **McNeese** claims that in the thinking of modern-day descendants of the Indians living in Manhattan, a purchase of the island would not have taken place and that the Indians of 1600 were more likely to accept the Dutch offer as an exchange which allowed the settlers to use the land. These modern Indian spokesmen claim they would not have considered the land as something Indians had the right to sell.<sup>150</sup> If this is a correct notion, the Indians sold only specific rights such as fishing, hunting, planting, housebuilding and so forth.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, it is clearly that the legitimization of Manhattan as Dutch soil brought the optimism back into the colony, yet there seem to have been other problems that emerged.

Despite the optimism of the founding, the future of the colony was clouded. The cost of the colonizing expeditions of 1624-1625 had been too high, and the investments in North America after 1626 were hindered by the rising costs of maintaining the fur trade in New

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<sup>148</sup> Ref. “*The Purchase of Manhattan.*”

<sup>149</sup> McNeese T. (2007) p.68.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p.68.

<sup>151</sup> Adams (1996) p.8.

Netherlands. After all, the WIC founded New Netherland not as a colony for the growth of settlements but as a way to exploit the "soft gold" (the furs) of the region.

Even though the fur trade may have been prosperous in the years 1626 to-1632, during which the Dutch managed to ship back a total of 52,584 pelts,<sup>152</sup> settlement was undertaken primarily in the interest of a great commercial corporation, and only secondarily in the interests of the settlers themselves. Be that as it may, commercial profit from the fur trade in New Netherlands must not have lived up to the more optimistic expectations of the WIC.

*"[...] The WIC derived income from privateering and made profits from the Gold Coast, but the heavy losses in Brazil caused decline in the value of the company. In 1627 none of the four ships trading with New Netherland came back with a full cargo."*<sup>153</sup>

The company and other merchants faced addition problems in this era. It must be said that the Spanish king, in the early 1590s, had forbidden Dutch participation in the Brazilian sugar trade, which represented much of the background for the financial losses in the area.<sup>154</sup> The financial losses in Brazil in the next years represent another aspect that led to pessimism among Dutch merchants, speculators and the government, and it is said to have pushed the Company to the brink of bankruptcy. In addition, reports from the New Netherland colony show that a number of colonists returned to the fatherland, and many of these sued the WIC for personal possess.<sup>155</sup> Reports from *Dominee* Michaëlius, who represented the Church in New Netherlands, tells that many a Walloon went back to Europe.<sup>156</sup> A clear sign that the colony had not been as profitable as first believed and that something had to be done if the Dutch North American colony would survive.

The attempt, however, to establish a stable trading connection in the West must be seen as a failure, as much of the income from the fur trade had not lived up to expectations. By 1629, the WIC directors had come to realize that the costs of underwriting the lives and labors of

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<sup>152</sup> <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/digital-exhibitions/a-tour-of-new-netherland/hudson-river/fur-trade/>

<sup>153</sup> Venema (2010) p.217.

<sup>154</sup> Bachman (1969) p.50.

<sup>155</sup> Rink p.90 -92.

<sup>156</sup> Veneme (2010) p.217.

the dwindling number of settlers in the wild interior of New Netherlands were outstripping any profits that may have been gained.<sup>157</sup> Failure breeds criticism as success escapes it and despite its natural beauty, fertile soil and rich trade, New Netherland, in the late 1620`s, was thought to be approaching a financial doom by its Dutch developers.<sup>158</sup> Here, historians disagree on this assessment regarding how to meet this financial problem. Major problems did exist, to be sure and the year of 1628 marks a reappraisal of the Company`s economic policy in New Netherlands. Going through the economical accounts regarding the colony, the directors showed a general dissatisfaction with the situation. This unpromising situation may have stipulated the introduction of the Patroon system.<sup>159</sup>

This shows that the Dutch effort to meet these problems were of significant, the supporters of the colony would not give up and back in Amsterdam, the chamber would not abandon the experiment so soon. They were convinced that a new plan for settling even more colonists could turn things around.<sup>160</sup> Not all historians agree in their interpretation of the crisis and whether there was adequate support to persist in the company efforts. **Burrows** and **Wallace**, for example seem not to agree with **Rink** on the matter. These two historians contend that the investors and directors of the company were ready to abandon Manhattan but it was only due to Admiral Piet Heyn`s success in capturing the Spanish silver fleet that gave the directors new courage for another attempt at Brazil and the future of New Amsterdam turned brighter.<sup>161</sup>

### 3 The patroonship plan as a fresh start

By the end of 1626, New Amsterdam consisted of thirty houses and two hundred inhabitants, but the colony increased only to two hundred and seventy, two years later. To foster further settlement, as well as trade, the authorities in Netherlands, worried about the sparse settlement of New Netherlands, took measures into their own hands and declared that more colonists had to be sent over the Atlantic. The Dutch colony of New Netherland needed more

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<sup>157</sup> Bush C (2011) *“Episodes from Hudson town”* p.18.

<sup>158</sup> Rink (1978) p.7.

<sup>159</sup> Bachman (1969) p.89

<sup>160</sup> Rink (1986) pages. 90-94.

<sup>161</sup> In 1628, the WIC commander Piet Heyn captured the entire Spanish silver fleet in the bay of Matanzas in Cuba. The estimated booty of the captured is believed to be 11.5 million guilders, approximately two-thirds of the Republic`s annual war budget. See Maarten Praak *the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century*, page 39, 111. Burrows, Wallace (1999) *“Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898”* p.28.

people to protect the small and scattered villages and communities against Indian attacks, and to offset the possibility of English claims and occupation in the region.

As we have seen, the fate of the colony of New Netherlands could have been very different, was it not for some wealthy directors back in Amsterdam, who would not abandon the experiment so soon. They were convinced that a new plan for settling was needed and that even more colonists could help turn things around. It is well known to contemporary historians on the field that the colony of Rensselaerswyck was established under the provisions of the first charter of Freedom and Exemptions, issued by the Dutch WIC in 1629, and that this charter laid the foundation for a system of colonization that is known as the patroon system.<sup>162</sup> In his article “THE PATROON SYSTEM AND THE COLONY OF RENSSELAERWYK” from 1909, **Arnold John Ferdinand van Lear**<sup>163</sup> focuses entirely on the revised charter of 1629 and gives the impression that this version were the first to be issued, but as we will see the 1629 charter was just a revised version of an earlier version.

According to **van Cleef Bachman**, the directors considered the shipment of men, animals and tools in 1624-25 to have been sufficient for the establishment of an agricultural community capable of both supporting itself and producing a surplus for the support of the Company’s non-agricultural personnel in New Netherlands.<sup>164</sup> According to **van Lear** the terms in which is stated in the charter of liberties from 1629, shows a far reaching and deep significance.

*“[...] By them the company provided for the creation of enormous estates, easily reaching 100,000 acres each, which were to be the centers of local government, who were appointed by the patroons and in no sense subordinate to the officers of the company.”<sup>165</sup>*

It is still unknown how effective this agricultural community was regarding the provisioning of the entire population of the colony, but reports claim the colony was still dependent on European grain.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Van Lear (1909) “The patroon system and the colony of Rensselaerwyck” p.222.

<sup>163</sup> Arnold John Ferdinand van Lear was a librarian and an archivist in the New York State Library and became famous for translating and editing Dutch-language documents from New Netherland.

<sup>164</sup> Bacman (1969) p.89

<sup>165</sup> Van Lear (1909) p.223

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p 90.

Furthermore, from the mother country, came demands that more focus be placed on developing agriculture and less emphasis given to the fur-trade. This criticism supports the idea that the earliest Dutch efforts had only been devoted to the fur-trade. It is here established that in the period of 1628 and early 1629, the authorities took necessary steps to increase the population in New Netherland and to develop the agriculture. It was in this context that the WIC came up with a form of manorial system, which later became known as the Patroon System. The thought was that a patroonship plan would turn things around for the colony.

The WIC's patroonship plan was a way to strengthen the then declining reputation of the colony as well as to attract more settlers without increasing company expenses. The *Annals of New Netherland*, by **Edmund B. O'Callaghan**, indicates that a new charter was granted in 1629.<sup>167</sup>

This grand plan of renewal would grant directors of the West India Company, within four years from the date of their application to the company, with the right to entitle themselves as patroons. As **Jaap Jacobs** earlier mentioned, in turn the Patroons agreed to plant colonies in New Netherland, settling fifty persons upwards of fifteen years of age by their own expense into the North American setting. This meant that the new system would open up the colony for private investors among the "*Heren XIX*." <sup>168</sup>

*"[...] On February 8, 1652, Johannes Dijckman, a Dutch West India Company official, marched out of Fort Orange, a small Dutch Outpost on the Hudson River. He was accompanied by "three soldiers, who were fully armed." <sup>169</sup>*

With this quotation, **Jaap Jacobs** describes what can be seen as a clear conflict between the WIC and the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck. However, this tension did not develop in North America. (This conflict described was not with native Indians or other colonial powers, but what makes this armed conflict interesting is that it represented an internal struggle in the colony, in which we can see traces of the patroonship dispute).

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<sup>167</sup> O'Callaghan E. B (1865) "*The Register of New Netherland 1626 to 1674*"<sup>29</sup> Burrows, Wallace (1999) p.28.

<sup>168</sup> Van Laer A, J, F (1909) p.222. Heren Negentien refers to the Directors of the West India Company.

<sup>169</sup> Jacobs (2007) P.301. All though the year of the conflict will surpass the timeframe chosen, the quotation is taken into account to show that the struggle didn't necessarily stop with the creation of the patroon system, but rather continued for many years. Perhaps even until the end of the colony's existents.

As previously mentioned, the origin of this Patroon System dates back to a conflict that can be traced back twenty-five years earlier within the Dutch West India Company back in Amsterdam, and what appears to be a dispute over what to do with the colony of New Netherlands and the creation of the Patroonship system itself. In fact, the directors split very sharply over the matter and one feature of this struggle is seen in the rivalry among the directors, between the WIC and the supporters of the new patroon system. What follows is an attempt to get at the root of this conflict that developed in the late 1620s.

A section about the struggle to establish the patroon system is valuable to this study since it will provide a better understanding of why this patroonship plan was considered. This section will revolve around the period of the late 1620s; the years of 1628 and 1629 will be of special interests. In order, however, to illuminate aspects of the creation of the patroon system, it is necessary to extend the timeframe of our discussion to the crucial years just prior to the inauguration of the patroon system.

This struggle may have started already in early 1622, when the British ambassador in Netherlands, Sir Dudley Carleton, protested about Dutch activities in a region that he asserted to be an English claim in North America. This seems to have prompted even great Dutch activity in the region, in fact, it was not until this British protest that the Dutch deemed it vital to start sending settlers to the colony. The Dutch interests were advanced through a policy of honoring individual investors' claims whenever they occupied this newly discovered territory with at least fifty colonists under their supervision.

Such a contingent was needed in order for the investor's claim to be considered valid by the Company and the Dutch Republic. This meant that the simple fact of discovery would not grant the right of ownership, but that a continued occupation and effective use of disputed territory was necessary.<sup>170</sup> In effect, the Dutch would be countering the English claim with "more bodies on the ground," an increase in activity in the New World.

What we can read from this, is that by British threat of taking the land, the Dutch actually started to consider colonizing New Netherlands. Moreover, there might be valid to claim that

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<sup>170</sup> Venema (2010) p.215.



the Dutch attempted on colonizing the area before the decision of colonization was made among the directors, as the Van Tweenhuysen Company had requested the protection of two warships in order to transport four hundred families over to New Netherland in 1620.<sup>171</sup>

Even though the previous Dutch attempt to colonize failed, however, the directors of the West India Company decided in 1623 that a small trading post was needed to strengthen the Dutch claim on the territory, this post would support the fur trade business, but it did not yet represent a policy of establishing a full-blown colony.<sup>172</sup> This decision enables us to see the early first stages of New Netherlands as a colony consisting of smaller trading posts, which had been founded on the principle of a strict monopoly of the lucrative fur trade. Furthermore, this also reveals that no grand colonization plan was an aspect of the original intentions regarding the founding of New Netherlands prior to the British claim.

Now, as this approach was taken, it was revealed that some Dutch supporters of the New World ventures envisioned a larger, more stable colony than just several small trading outposts. A settlement in which more colonists were needed and economic activity would stretch beyond the trading of furs.<sup>173</sup> At this point, this enable us to see that agricultural development was considered as to provide the Dutch with an export staple other than furs. However, **van Cleef Bachman** mentions that the economic worth of an agricultural colony would depend on its ability to provision the Company`s fur-trading establishment or develop other export goods. Here, **Bachman** argues that from the eve of New Netherland`s colonization, the directors in the *Heren XIX* favoring colonization contemplated a large variety of products as potential export staples beside furs. Along with grain and timber, the Dutch considered the production of grapes and wine as likely commodities that would prove exportable.<sup>174</sup> As this eventually became more of a crucial task throughout the 1620s, the Company promoted the colonization of “*fertile and uninhabited quarters*” via its charter.<sup>175</sup> This in turn, raises the question of whether we can talk about Manhattan as uninhabited land when the Island was purchased in 1626. Manhattan was as we have seen inhabited by several

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<sup>171</sup> The Van Tweenhuysen Company was one of the so called *Voorcompagnien*, which merged into the New Netherlands Company in 1614.

<sup>172</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.30.

<sup>173</sup> Venema (2010) p.215.

<sup>174</sup> Bacman (1969) p.56-60.

<sup>175</sup> Venema (2010) p.215.

Indian tribes, in which the Dutch established trading connections, and therefore, it seems more likely that Manhattan was perceived as “*uninhabited land*”, because no Europeans had settled in the area. Nevertheless, the colonists who had traveled over in 1623 and 1624 were now more prepared to establish stable settlements for the company and they received free passage, free land and a livestock at a “*reasonable price*.”<sup>176</sup>

However, in addition to place colonization of importance to the Dutch, the British protest also started a discussion within the *Heren XIX*<sup>177</sup>, in which two differences of opinion was revealed. Professor at California state university Bakersfield, **Oliver A. Rink** contends that the controversy concerning the nature of the struggle over the patroonship plan for New Netherland is now over a century old<sup>178</sup>. Furthermore, while the discussion centered on the choices of emphasizing fur-trade or an agricultural-centered colonial effort, its dimensions may well have been more complex and deeply rooted in prior debates within the Dutch society. **Edmund B O`Callaghan** and **John Romeyn Brodhead** emphasize that such a clash between the West India Company on one hand, and a group of wealthy merchants and investors on the other hand (some whom may have also been investors within the WIC) found its origin in the age-old conflict between democracy and aristocracy.<sup>179</sup> Be that as it may, the debate in the late 1620s does not seem to bring the struggle of aristocracy and democracy clearly to the surface, but it most certainly revealed two distinct perceptions of New Netherland`s future. Here, one view emphasizing the centrality of a globalized trade based on extraction of resources from colonial locations. The other view, while still trade-oriented, envisioning the movement of larger numbers of migrants to the colony where they would eventually develop an agricultural system that both sustained the daily needs of the settlers as well as producing a staple or staples for export to the home country.

One faction, consisting of distinct and vocal minority on the board of directors of the company, favored the opportunities of an agricultural colony. Among these advocates, we can find Kiliaen van Rensselaer who was later to become the first patroon of the largest landholding within the charter that enabled the patroonship plan. As Usselinx, Van

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p.215.

<sup>177</sup> Heren XIX (Lords Nineteen) served as the Directors of the chartered West India Trading company, and served as its central administration, which was in charge of the general policy.

<sup>178</sup> Rink (1978) p.5-6.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

Rensselaer were among those who fought for years to make something more out of the company's American holdings than just a collection of thinly populated trading posts.<sup>180</sup>

The other faction, however, which by 1627, was to prevail as the majority position among the company leaders preferred the establishment of a small colony sufficient only to protect the Dutch trading interests.<sup>181</sup> This “*trading faction*” supported a policy of retrenchment in New Netherland and to strengthen the company's monopoly and at the same time limit the export costs. This feature would, however, transform the colony of New Netherlands into a provisioning base for the company's fleet. As we can see in our earlier treatment of the colony's struggle, neither view can be said to have prevailed in the earliest stages of colonial development, and the unsettled nature of this dispute can be discerned in the fact that two charters were written, in quick succession, in period of the late 1620s.

As we have seen the fur-trading industry was the most important one, but we acknowledge that the Dutch may have planted a provisioning colony, as a supplement for the furs. However, I argue that in the late 1620s, the WIC's monopoly on the fur-trade in this discussion of a “New way of settlement” brought forth by two different charters as the colony leaders and home country supported tried to work out on how this new system ought to be shape the colony of New Netherlands. One original charter of 1628 and a revised version in 1629 offered two different ways of supporting the fur trade and the expansion of population into a larger and more stable colony. As we have seen, what became the Patroonship plan developed as a consequence of years of disappointment, and it was in this context that we can see the chamber of Amsterdam dividing itself into two factions that strongly disagreed about the policy, regarding New Netherlands.

### **3.1 The scheme of patroonship**

*“Privileges and Exemptions for the patroons, masters, or private individuals who shall settle any colony or bring cattle therein, in New Netherlands, considered for the service of the General West India Company in New Netherlands, and for the advantage of the patroons, masters, and private individuals”*.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Burrow & wallace (1998) p.22.

<sup>181</sup> Jacobs (2009) p.30,31.

<sup>182</sup>Collected from a copy of “the Charter of Liberties” p.370.

Few scholars today have taken the dust off the old documents, which tell the story of New Netherlands, by examining these documents we can see that at the heart of the struggle within the Company lay two distinct visions of New Netherland's future. After four years of delays and setbacks in the late 1620s, some powerful shareholders in the Chamber were threatening to withdraw their support for further company development in the area. Yet at the same time, they were not ready to abandon the colony and admit defeat.

What follows is a description of the two charters written in the late 1620s, and this section will give a detailed treatment of the charters. By doing this we will get a better grasp of the intention behind the charters. We will address several questions, including, who could become a patroon, and were there any qualifications needed to take on such a role? We will also address the issue concerning the powers that were bestowed upon the patroons.

The quotation above is the introduction given in the "*Charter of Liberties*" (and probably also in the original charter from 1628). In their book, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, **Edwin G Burrows** and **Mike Wallace** claim that in the "*Charter of Liberties*," the WIC agreed to give out large chunks of to "*patroons*" "who would in return promise to buy the land from the Indigenous people<sup>183</sup> of the land and to import fifty or more settlers at their own expenses."<sup>184</sup>

**Oliver A Rink** contends that historians interested in the origins of the patroonship system have been dismayed to discover that the all-important first plan, approved by the Amsterdam Chamber on March 10, 1628, disappeared with the rest of the WIC documents in 1813. We acknowledge that **van Lear** has an "earlier version", because he mentions that a draft of a charter was submitted by the board of directors in 1628: Yet we note, because it is likely that knowledge of the original *Freedom and Exemptions of 1628* may have been too meager among van Lear's contemporaries, we can count ourselves fortunate that we now have access to more details which can help shed some important light on van Rensselaer's influence among the Directors.

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<sup>183</sup> It is here referred to the Native Americans or Indians as they also were called. The Dutch also used the Word "*wilden*" when referring to the natives.

<sup>184</sup> Burrows & Wallace (1999) p.28.

Such a document will serve as the obvious starting point of any investigation regarding the origin of the patroon system. Without it, scholars have been forced to confine base their assessments of the creation of the system on the later scheme of June 7, 1629, which is believed to have expanded the privileges given to the patroons.<sup>185</sup> Without knowledge of the other charter, this assessment will be limited. Discussing an original plan can give us evidence to contemporary scholars for an argument that there was an ongoing struggle within the supporters of the New Netherlands colony, a struggle over key policies on how the colony might develop. In this context, the following discussion will give details about the patroon system and what it represented in terms of the policy debate within the WIC Board of Directors.

In an article, “*Company Management or Private Trade: The Two Patroonship Plans for New Netherlands*,” **Rink** reveals that there exists a third or possibly even a fourth copy of the “*Freedom and Exemption of 1628*.” For some unknown reason, the copy has been preserved by a West India Company clerk in a private family archive. This discovery, **Rink** contends, helps to shed considerable light on the controversy concerning the nature of two contrary views among the board of directors, concerning the initiation of the patroonship plan.

It is in this context that we can get a glimpse of the fractures within the Chamber of Amsterdam that the Dutch experienced in the obscure period from January 1628 to June 1629. These two factions are identified by scholars in the field and are often referred to as the *trading faction* and the opposing *colonization faction*. **Rink** says here that these two contrary views held by the factions can be seen as similar to those views expressed in an earlier debate that had taken place prior to the founding of WIC in 1621.<sup>186</sup>

This struggle or dispute within the *Heren XIX*, **Oliver Rink** argues, can only be clearly examined and explained by carefully comparing the two patroonship plans, which focused on the important question of whether the Company’s economic policies should permit free trade or if it should continue its grand monopoly.<sup>187</sup> As we have mentioned, this controversy is reminiscent of a debate in which precedes the founding of the WIC in 1621, but it can be argued that we might also find the roots of these two contrary views by examining the age old

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<sup>185</sup> Rink (1978) p.6.

<sup>186</sup> Rink (1978) p.7-10.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p.6.

conflict over the question of free enterprise versus monopoly control. If this is the case, then we can see that this struggle between these two factions can be traced back to a much earlier period when the idea of a “Patroonship plan” didn’t exist. As **Rink** contends, in this new debate, we can see the same basic issues of a long-ranging debate over business practices that emerged once again over the colony of New Netherlands.<sup>188</sup>

It cannot be now doubted that the declining fortunes faced by the company also influenced the thinking among the *Heren XIX* as the public confidence in the company’s ability to achieve what was initially promised was rapidly decreasing in the late 1620s. Because of this loss of confidence, **Oliver Rink** contends that several stockholders hurried to sell their shares on the stock exchange and several provinces involved in the project delayed paying their subscriptions, which in turn developed into a liquidity crisis for the company. Now that the directors faced a mounting financial problem, they assumed a cautious attitude towards their American colonies.<sup>189</sup>

With this rapidly decreasing reputation of the WIC among stockholders in the Netherlands and the failure to establish a stable colony that could promise good profits for the money invested. Much uncertainty was expressed among the company’s board of directors.

A possible solution to the economic difficulties faced by the colony in the mid-1620s, as was presented in the *Freedom and Exemptions of 1628*, would be a limitation of colonial migration to New Netherlands. The argument supporting this is that the company would be spared additional expenses of defense, supply and regulations and would thus be able to concentrate more on the fur-trade. In other words, the directors of the *trading faction* favored a policy of minimum expenditures, and they wanted to close off the emigration to their own colony, so that the WIC would no longer be responsible for the colonist’s safety.<sup>190</sup> With this view, the Dutch would continue with the establishment of strategically located trading posts in order to keep their exclusively fur-trading operations, but they would not expand to a more general colonization.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p.8,9.

<sup>189</sup> Rink. (1978) p.8.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. p.6-9.

This solution, which **Rink** calls “*The Factory System*”, would in turn, enable the WIC to maintain a commercial presence in the area with a minimum expenditure of capital. The most attractive feature of this system was that the company would get full control of the trade, prizes and policy without the interference of troublesome colonists. They could, the trading faction argued, deal directly with the Indians without middlemen.<sup>191</sup> With this factory system, the Company would strengthen its already weakened monopoly as well as gaining profit.

The opposition to “*the Factory System*” came from their comparably assertive rivals among the directors, who, it is believed brought up the idea of a revised plan, *The Charter of Liberties of 1629*. In this *colonization faction*, we can find Kiliaen van Rensselaer who spoke in favor for colonizing New Netherlands with private capital, and henceforth ending the monopoly arrangements as failure. His associates in this *colonization faction* would complain that the company management had not allowed reasonable profits to private traders.

According to van Rensselaer, the early proponents for the colonization would argue that because the trading posts were so widely separated from each other in distance, those with no other aim than to send ships from the Netherlands to trade with those places would gain no profit, and eventually this trading arrangements would damage the WIC. The financial losses would be due to the fact that costs of trade would exceed the returned.<sup>192</sup> They considered the company policy towards restricting trade in this way to be shortsighted, and they blamed the policy and its supporters for the failure in the colony.

In an effort to resolve this debate, **Janny Venema** argues in the spring of 1628, these two factions would reach a weak compromise. Yet even before this compromise was reached, the first patroonship plan had been endorsed, but it still needed to be approved by the *Heren XIX*.<sup>193</sup>

In the *Charter of Liberties from 1629*, patroons would be granted land and authority, in return for a promise to buy the land from the Indians, meaning that the policy of legitimation through purchase was still in play. Furthermore, as we have seen, they were also expected to import 50 or more settlers at the patroons’ own expense, to build better forts on Manhattan and supply the colonists with slaves.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid: p.6,7,8.

<sup>192</sup> Memorial of 1633, in *VRMB*, pages. 236, 237. & Bachman (1969) p.59.

<sup>193</sup> Venema (2010) p.217. & Rink (1978) p.7-10.

<sup>194</sup> Burrows, Wallace (1999) p.28.

As Article III of the charter states,

*“[···] All Such shall be acknowledged Patroons of New Netherland as shall agree to plant there a colony of 50 souls, upwards of 15 years old, within the space of four years after they have given notice to any Chamber of the Company here or to the commander or council there”*.<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore, the advocates of the new system, the patroons, were not inclined to settle at the Island of Manhattan, as *“they are warned that the Company reserves to itself the island of Manhattes”*. With this, it can be understood that the WIC retained for itself the lands in between the limits of the colonies settled by a patroon, and dispose of the respective lands as they pleased unless the commander or council shall for good reasons order otherwise.<sup>196</sup>

The proposal to import at least 50 colonists supports **Jaap Jacobs**'s statement of actual possession, meaning having a population of at least fifty settlers. In the copy of the original plan it had been stated, *“The Company offered land grants to individuals willing to settle sixty persons in New Netherland over a period of three years.”*<sup>197</sup> This shows that the number of settlers had been reduced in the revised plan. As we have seen, the time limit of three years had been increased. In other words, the revised Charter required the patroons to bring fewer people over a longer timeframe.

*“[···] The patroonship would extend four leagues along the coast or on one side of navigable river, or two leagues along both sides of a river”*.<sup>198</sup>

In addition, the *Charter of Liberties* of 1629 was less stringent about control of all mineral, fishing and hunting rights, and the patroons were able to use the lands that were retained by the company, unless the company decided to use the lands for its own purposes. It also allowed more jurisdiction rights over the colonists, but most importantly, the Charter allowed the patroons and their colonists to engage in the fur trade.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, if the place in which

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<sup>195</sup> VRBM (1908) p.138,139.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Rink (1978) p.10.

<sup>198</sup> Venema (2010) p.218 & VRBM (1908) p.138-139.

<sup>199</sup> <http://www.coins.nd.edu/ColCoin/ColCoinIntros/Netherlands.html>.



they chose to settle didn't please them, the patroons received the right to choose another place.

“[...] *From the very hour they make known the situation of the places where they proposed to settle colonies, they shall have the preference of all others to ownership of such land: but in case the location should afterwards not please them, they may, after memorializing the commander and council there, choose another place.*”<sup>200</sup>

As the foregoing discussion demonstrates, the original Charter, which was submitted on March 28 1628, represents an agreement that envisioned the use of private capital to colonize New Netherlands and, as such, it contradicted the WIC's policy of monopoly. By letting private wealth flow into the United provinces, the directors hoped to shift the financial burden from the colony to the private merchants.

As we will see, Van Rensselaer was appointed one of the first two directors of the Amsterdam Chamber in 1625, which would enable him to influence the policies of the WIC at another level. With this in mind, it is not unlikely that van Rensselaer had been one of the leading proponent of the *Freedom and Exemptions* Charter that established the patroonship plan.

Of further note, this information makes it plausible to think that Rensselaer with his influence in the Chamber, together with his keen eye for profit and trade, persuaded the company to adjust the *Freedoms and Exemptions* of 1628 into the *Charter of Liberties*. Moreover, as the intent of the original Charter of 1628 made it clear that New Netherlands would be unprofitable to colonize on Company expenses alone, the WIC had responded to the pressure of a few ambitious directors by modifying its trade monopoly. It would now permit a policy of limited private settlement that would allow private enterprises to bear the expense of the colony's development even as the Company reaped the profits of an expanded trade. Furthermore, in what may be the most far-reaching and dramatic change between the two charters, where the *Freedom and Exemption* of 1628 had put restrictions on the fur-trade, the *Charter of Liberties* “opened up the fur trade to all patroons and “free persons” in areas

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<sup>200</sup> VRBM (1909) p.139.

where the Company did not maintain a factor” the *Charter of Liberties*.<sup>201</sup> With this, we note that the WIC still had its fur monopoly, but only in certain areas.

It is also made quite clear that van Rensselaer was indeed one of these ambitious directors. After all, he was in a position to pull the strings in favor for the revised plan. **Burrows & Wallace** contend that van Rensselaer persuaded the WIC to give the colony a second chance, and his advocacy and “reform” efforts led to the patroonship plan.<sup>202</sup> This supports the suggestion that van Rensselaer was one of the leading persons behind the idea of patroonships. Furthermore, the existence of the original document was mentioned in van Rensselaer’s private correspondence,<sup>203</sup> and this strengthens the assumption that van Rensselaer may have played a major part in its alteration and “disappearing”. **Oliver A Rink** states that van Rensselaer “*complained later that the failure of the Company to open the fur-trade to the patroons was the principal reason why the “Freedom and Exemptions” were never implemented*”,<sup>204</sup> which gives us no reason to doubt his role in the enactment of the Dutch patroonship plan.

It was in this context, that the scheme of independent lordships was adopted, and according to **van Laer** such a scheme “*naturally suggested itself at a time when the administration of all rural districts in the Netherlands was organized on a similar basis.*”

It was also in this context that van Rensselaer would be the first person to apply for such a patroonship and that his Manor of Rensselaerswyck survived to become the most famous. The main reason why his patroonship became so well known, has to do with the simple fact that all the other patroons failed. Even though van Rensselaer would become the most important and successful of the patroons, other directors associated with van Rensselaer would follow with applications for their own. One example here is Michael Pauw, who constructed a house on Pavonia, (*which included Staten Island and the west bank of the Hudson River*), but an extensive loss of money and quarrels with the local Indians forced him to sell his right to Pavonia back to the company in 1637.<sup>205</sup> Another patroon is Samuel Godijn, who registered as a patroon in June 19 1629 and established his colony of Swanendael in the bay of the South River.

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<sup>201</sup> Rink (1978) p.18-19

<sup>202</sup> Burrows & Wallace p.28.

<sup>203</sup> Rink (1978) p.5.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid p.11.

<sup>205</sup> Burrows, Wallace (1999) p.28.

One interesting feature of the new system is that wealthy directors could apply for a patroonship in more than one place and they could share the costs and profit for their respective patroonships in New Netherlands, meaning they could engage in partnership. Van Rensselaer would engage in such partnership with Johannes van Lear among others. Be that as it may, on November 7, 1630, van Rensselaer would declare himself patroon of the Ile du Sable (Sable Island).<sup>206</sup>

In another interesting side note, it is a valid notion that the Dutch Patroon system can be seen as a semi-feudal system where large grants of land were given to entrepreneurs who undertook to build a Manor House and upon the land they were given, they would commence agricultural development and bring settlers which became tenant farmers, owing rent to the patroon.<sup>207</sup>

Looking back at this development, it is plausible to contend that under the Patroonship arrangement, the colony of New Netherlands continued to expand with more colonists arriving and settlements taking hold. Moreover, the person who became a patroon would receive privileges that had much in common with the manorial rights [*heerlijke rechten*] that were common still in the Dutch Republic.<sup>208</sup> In addition, the WIC Charter of 1621 stated that a monopoly of all trade in the Western Hemisphere had been granted, but as this paper had earlier demonstrated, the monopoly of WIC was never absolute (expressing a valid argument that the monopoly in its practical expression can be seen as a “Myth,” an exaggeration by later historians). As a clear, significant expression of this: it is quite evident that the WIC violated its own so-called monopoly in 1628 by envisioning and even supporting the use of private capital to meet the financial challenges of the period.

### **3.2 Patroon in America 1629-1640**

As we have seen, the supporters of the colony and the Directors of the WIC faced numerous financial difficulties in the mid-1620s. Some thought was given to abandoning the colony, and this seems to have been driven by a number of settlers in New Netherlands. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, some Directors in the Chamber of Amsterdam were convinced that

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<sup>206</sup> Venema (2010) p.220.

<sup>207</sup> Adams (1996) p.8.

<sup>208</sup> Venema (2010) p.218.

a new plan for settlement was needed and this should be that a new economic and social arrangement in the colony, designed to attract new investors to its colony in North America. If we go back to **Adriaen van der Donck**'s depiction of New Netherlands, we get a glimpse of what some of the directors wanted; that is, to go back to the "paradise" that was promised, but with some few alterations to the greater good. These Directors within the Amsterdam Chamber were not alone in their view of the colony and in the Zeeland Chamber, we'll also find merchants who supported the Amsterdam's colonization faction. **Janny Venema** mentions that on March 8, the mayor of Middelburg may have been the first person to be granted the right to establish a patroonship on the island of Tobago, confirming that the institution of patroonship must have been applied to all its colonies in the Americas.<sup>209</sup> Note, too, that this information does not take away the fact that Kiliaen van Rensselaer became the first patroon in North America itself.

It is most important to state: the Amsterdam Chamber, by following up soon after with their patroonship plan of *Freedom and Exemptions for patroon and masters or private persons who would plant colony and cattle in New Netherland*, projected a major challenge to the monopoly privileges of the Company for fur-trade and opened the colony for private capital. Van Rensselaer, however, would not agree with the terms and conditions of the first charter and considered it to be too limited and a weak compromise. He wanted additional changes, deeming the future of the colony to be at stake. "*He would refuse to take any assignment, neither of the directors nor the shareholders*".<sup>210</sup>

This view is advanced by **Oliver Rink**, who states that van Rensselaer must have been very busy during the winter of 1628, as he worked on a revised version of the *Freedom and Exemptions* along with some of his associates within the colonization faction. As one of the most prominent figures supporting this view, he may very likely have had the dominant influence on the later *Charter of Liberties* in expanding the privileges given to patroons. This revised vision of the Charter, written on March 10, would be submitted with several amendments, and at this time, the New Netherlands committee issued a resolution among the directors in the chamber of Amsterdam.

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<sup>209</sup> Venema (2010) p.217.

<sup>210</sup> Venema (2010) p.217,218.

*“[···] all the former articles, freedoms and exemptions granted the respective colonies in several former meetings and the matters connected therewith would be considered and where would be deliberated.”<sup>211</sup>*

These new amendments were finally ratified on June 7, 1629, and the *Charter of Liberties* thus marks the official end to the privileges of monopoly given to the WIC and the start of a new era in Dutch colonial history, a new era where we can see more private capital streaming into New Netherlands in the hopes of turning around its financial fortunes and public reputation.

### **3.2.1 Requirement**

Were there any requirements that had to be met to become a patroon and to apply for a patroonship? To be given a patroonship, it appears that a person had to meet several requirements: (a) They needed to invest a large sum of at least *f.* 10,000 (although an exact number is not mentioned in the *Charter of Liberties*). (b) They needed to have been active in some manner in a board or committee within the Company or (c) have acquired or experienced first-hand knowledge about the “general features” of the Company.

Given these expectations, it seems like the patroonship was to be reserved for the wealthy Directors of the Company. These requirements suited van Rensselaer, as he was both a wealthy Director of the *Heren XIX*, and he had invested heavily in the colonization of New Netherlands. He was therefore regarded as “fully qualified.” (We might also acknowledge that it might have been other patroons who may not have been as fully qualified as van Rensselaer but this will not be taken into account here).

As we have seen, the Charter(s) of *Freedom and Exemptions* were created to strengthen the New Netherlands to encourage more settlers and additional private capital, as the colony had experienced a declining economic curve. Dissatisfaction and worry about the fate of the colony had created some frustration among the *Heren XIX* and even created a rift among interested members of Dutch society. In the *Freedom and Exemptions of 1628*, we can see a compromise, but what seem to be the end to this divided community, may instead have actually caused more dissatisfaction among those who wanted an end to a monopoly, a policy

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<sup>211</sup> Rink (1986) “*Holland on the Hudson*” p.100-110.

that they had opposed and even considered a failure from the beginning of the enterprise. This assessment becomes clear as we examine particular feature of the *Charter of Liberties* together with the *Freedom and Exemptions* from 1628. Among the early critics of the monopoly, it is plausible to argue that the *Charter of Liberties*, in particular form represented the concerted efforts of van Rensselaer and his associates. Following the creation of the new Charter, many of van Rensselaer's associates in the colonization faction applied for a patroonship and invested large sums of private capital into the colony. With this in mind, it may be plausible that they demanded more privileges in return for rescuing the colony from its economical challenge. To summarize, van Rensselaer played a key role in changing the Charter of *Freedom and Exemptions* and he used his influence among Dutch merchants and among the Board of Directors to approve the *Charter of Liberties*.

### **3.3 Kiliaen van Rensselaer**

In this section, we will look at Kiliaen Van Rensselaer and some of his ideas that shaped his efforts to make the New Netherlands a success. By doing this, we will get a better understanding of how his idea of patroonship developed. We will also discuss how others around him might have influenced him. We ask, "Were there others who guided him into the direction of adopting the patroon system as the best way to address the challenges of the struggling colony?"

The section reviews some aspects of his biography and how these may have influenced his views on trade and agriculture, on the policies that shaped the development of the colony. In this, we will also see how the city of Amsterdam might have had an effect on van Rensselaer's choices. Such a discussion presupposes that the business environment of the city and the distinctive economic activities of other Dutch merchants and investors influenced him.

Kiliaen van Rensselaer is probably best known among historians of the field as one of the co-founders and Directors of the chartered Dutch West India Company, as well as the founder of the first patroonship in North America. He was one of the first individuals who could title

himself as patroon.<sup>212</sup> Born in 1586, he grew up in the town of Hasselt. After losing his mother in childbirth and later his father, Hendrick, probably to warfare, Rensselaer moved to Amsterdam in 1601.<sup>213</sup> Before his death, Hendrick Van Rensselaer, Kiliaen`s father, was a well-known and successful noble figure in the Dutch society, and it is very likely that Kiliaen was born into a wealthy family. At the time, children born into wealth could be thought to have a ticket to a bright and prosperous future.<sup>214</sup> This seems to be true for Kiliaen, who grew up to become a wealthy pearl and diamond merchant within the growing trading environment of Amsterdam.

I argue that in Amsterdam he gained the necessary knowledge that would enable him to become one of the most famous Dutch figures of his time. Such an environment provided opportunities that would not have been available in any other place in the Netherlands at the time. I contend that the context surrounding Van Rensselaer is important for an understanding of how he managed to gain influence in the *Heren XIX*.

Just as the Dutch Republic experienced a tremendous growth during the seventeenth century, the city of Amsterdam was booming with new businesses and trade and an ever-expanding population of well-to-do merchants. The city found itself in the midst of changes during the beginning of the 1600`s. To put this growth into perspective; In 1578, Amsterdam`s population is estimated at between 25,000 and 30,000 people. By 1613, some 70,000-people inhabited the city and the population grew to reach some 100,000 by the year of 1623. Nine years later it reached 120,000 and within Van Rensselaer`s lifetime. Amsterdam became the third largest city in Europe.<sup>215</sup> It was within this growing, business-oriented urban environment that Van Rensselaer would achieve his great success.

**Janny Venema** in her book about van Rensselaer, depicts him in such way to indicate that she believes he could not have arrived in Amsterdam at any better time than he did. Other historians of the era are likely to affirm her claim.

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<sup>212</sup> It is also believed that the major of Middelburg may have been granted the status of a patroon before van Rensselaer, since the Chamber of Zeeland enacted the Freedom and Exemption two days before the Chamber in Amsterdam. It is, however, acknowledged that van Rensselaer was in fact, the first person who received a patroonship under the revised version of the Freedom and Exemptions. See Janny Venema "kiliaen van Rensselaer" p.217.

<sup>213</sup> His father, Hendrick, had served in the army of Prince Maurits in the struggle against Spain.

<sup>214</sup> Venema J "Kiliaen van Rensselaer" (1586-1643) p.26-30.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid; p.59.

“[...] *Kiliaen had arrived in the center of a new, developing world which was full of energy, enterprise, hope and expectation.*”

Among the population in Amsterdam at the time of Van Rensselaer we can find a great variety of people, not just migrants from other provinces of the nation but people from other places in the world, who poured into the thriving city. Between 1578 and 1585, thousands of Calvinists, Protestants and Portuguese Jews came streaming in. Many of these migrants came from the city of Antwerp, which had experienced a great prosperity during the sixteenth century and offered a high standard of living for many of its inhabitants.<sup>216</sup> According to Professor **Jonathan Israel**, historians have agreed that Amsterdam’s rise to world trade primacy would have been impossible without the Dutch Revolt and the subsequent decline of the Antwerp market. He strongly emphasizes the crucial role of Antwerp’s merchant elite, many who had moved to Amsterdam, when talking about Amsterdam’s rise to become an economic center, a hub of world trade. In his view, their knowledge of trade in luxury goods was a tremendous help to the Dutch economy and these well-to-do merchants and business people influenced the economic and artistic life in Amsterdam to such a degree that we can talk about a transformation of the city into a rich town, full of possibilities and growing businesses.

Prior to the influx of these newcomers, Amsterdam merchants simply lacked the financial resources and international networks to initiate such wealthy trades and to take the economic development to new heights.<sup>217</sup> It is as **Maarten Prak** puts it, that these new *burger*, “*had been drawn to Holland by the upsurge in the economy, which in turn was boosted by their labors.*”<sup>218</sup>

What we can understand, then, is that the Dutch Revolt sets the context, indeed might be seen as “the creator” of new ways and opportunities in the colonial trade for Holland.<sup>219</sup> Together

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<sup>216</sup> This period in Dutch history, the city of Amsterdam experienced a resurgence in population with migrants fleeing from Spanish persecution during the Dutch Revolt. The Spanish crown had also been burrowing huge amounts of money into Antwerp, which had caused the city to suffer several setbacks, which eventually led to bankruptcy. Because of this an undermining faith was bestowed upon the Antwerp capital market in the period. However, Amsterdam’s peak came when the city of Antwerp fell into Spanish control in 1585, and scholars have often been referring to the fall of Antwerp as the boom in which Amsterdam became the new center for trade and business. Many of these successful merchants from Antwerp moved to Amsterdam as a way of continuing their businesses away from war and the struggle they had endured in their home regions. See Janny Venema “*Kiliaen van Rensselaer*” p.60-62. & Maarten Prak “*The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*” p.13-64, 90-97.

<sup>217</sup> Israel: p.6-9 & Gelderblom: p.248.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Gelderblom p.247



with flourishing businesses generated within Amsterdam itself, the numerous voyages to the East and West Indies to gain profit, enable Amsterdam to find itself to be the most important *stapelmarkt*<sup>220</sup> for goods from the East and West Indies. Taken this into account, it is by no coincidence that Hendrick van Rensselaer wanted his son to grow up to seize some of the great many possibilities the city could offer.<sup>221</sup> This further amplifies **Janny Venema**'s statement.

Van Rensselaer was about the age of 14 when he moved to Amsterdam in 1601, to begin his career as an apprentice to the master jeweler, Wolphert van Bijler. The fact that his father knew Van Bijler from earlier business ventures may have influenced and enhanced Kiliaens's choice of learning the jeweler's trade.<sup>222</sup> Through Wolphers, he was to become interested in the East India Trading Company, where Van Bijler was a major shareholder.<sup>223</sup> Van Rensselaer had arrived in Amsterdam around the time of the creation of the East India Company, and it is plausible that he might also have invested some money in the company as his own wealth increased.

By 1606 when the draft of the WIC was drawn and it was clear that the States General emphasized navigation and trade rather than agricultural pursuits, Van Rensselaer had reached twenty years of age. At this age, he was a likely participant in the many discussions about Company investments and even in the formulation of the specific goals and purposed of the WIC. At this time, however, the formation of an enterprise to explore and develop a region in the North America was put on delay. Everything seemed to point towards the creation of WIC at the time, but because of negotiations with the Spanish over a truce, all preparations for a West India Company ended and the plan postponed.

Around 1611, enthusiasm within the Amsterdam Stock Exchange may have caused a boom in speculations of the company's shares among the merchants; Van Rensselaer may have participated in these speculations. Whatever the case may be, it is plausible that during the

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<sup>220</sup> A Stapelmarkt is a market for a specific staple or goods.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.p.29-60.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.p.32.

<sup>223</sup> A major shareholder differed from lesser shareholders and is understood as those who invested to such an extent that they became in part of the directorship and got charge of the administration and took care of the preparations. See Janny Venema "Kiliaen van Rensselaer" p. 85.

early 1600s, he developed his abilities in the trade of shares and learned how to become a successful merchant. In other words, van Rensselaer grew up to become a jeweler and merchant in the boom of the Golden Age, in which the climate was full of promise for dealers in the art of jewelry and luxury products.<sup>224</sup>

Around the period of 1612-1615, van Rensselaer would succeed his master and start his own jeweler business. The business was somewhat successful, according to **Janny Venema**.<sup>225</sup> Moreover, and what is certain, this business environment and exchange of trade goods that gives us the context which formed and influenced the career of Kiliaen van Rensselaer.

### 3.4 Van Rensselaer as WIC director

As previously mentioned, by the 1620s Dutch officials and business leaders made plans to engage in overseas warfare and to strengthen Dutch possessions. As Van Rensselaer continued the jeweler business, he would engage himself in the plans for a West India Company and the idea of returning Spain to the state of poverty.<sup>226</sup> By this time, it is likely that he had established himself as a prominent merchant in Amsterdam. **Janny Venema** tells us that from the beginning van Rensselaer had invested a sufficient sum to be chosen to represent the shareholders, both in the Chamber and in the meetings of the Directors.

To say “the beginning,” probably indicates a bit of uncertainty about whether it was the year 1621 or 1623 (when the first WIC ship *Mackreel* took sail to the New World), though I must say that 1621 seems more likely. **Venema**, for her part, states that van Rensselaer was chosen to represent the major shareholders interests among the Directors in 1623<sup>227</sup>. This makes it likely that van Rensselaer was either representing the major shareholders from the beginning or that he had done so well that he received a promotion shortly after the company had gotten started. This promotion meant that he now spoke for the major shareholders, where he previously he had represented only the lesser shareholders.

As a representative of the major shareholders interests among the Directors, it is likely that van Rensselaer attended the first meeting of *Heren XIX* in August 1623. What this shows is a clear indication that he had by then gained a voice in the meeting of *Heren XIX*, where he

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid p.98-129.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid p.130-166.

<sup>226</sup> Venema J (2010) p.167.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid: p.180.

would be able to influence the board to a much greater degree than previously. An example of this increased influence can be noted in a protest made by van Rensselaer to the Directors, where he demanded that he should be assigned another rank in the company. The protest, however, was rejected in March 1624, and he ended up being assigned to the lowest seat for the time being.<sup>228</sup>

It is uncertain how long time he was to have the lowest seat, but it is clear that by 1625 he received a directorship. With this promotion, we can say that he must have been a very active voice in the board of the *Heren XIX*. It was in 1625 that van Rensselaer was appointed one of the first Directors of the Chamber of Amsterdam, meaning that he now represented twenty-three major shareholders in the Company. According to the WIC's charter, major shareholders would have the right to examine the books, invoices and other documents and to inspect the merchandise and the correspondence concerning the trade.

In 1623, when the first voyage was ready for departure, Van Rensselaer had invested 18,200 *Guilders* and a further 17,400 on the account of friends and relatives.<sup>229</sup> All this tells us that by the middle of 1620's, van Rensselaer had gained a large stake in the company, and much knowledge about the inner working of the company's affairs, and he would now likely be able to exercise significant influence in the company's policies. Van Rensselaer was now part of the *Heren XIX*.

It is clear that to receive a directorship or become a major shareholder, a large sum was required. It is unclear how large an investment was needed to get a high position in the WIC, but the literature on the subject tells us, for example that Leonora and Willem van Wely invested 10,000 *Guilders* to become major shareholders.<sup>230</sup> As a major shareholder and a director, van Rensselaer was now in a position to be given information about the value of the goods and how they were obtained, transported and eventually stored. By this, it seems like that advanced knowledge of the company's activity was reserved for a board position. If extended experience with the company or special knowledge of its operations was a "requirement" for a board position, then **Janny Venema** tells us that this position was

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid: p.180.

<sup>229</sup> Venema (2010) p.174-178.

<sup>230</sup> Willem and Leonara van Wely were the children of Geertruid van Bijler, who was the sister of Wolphert. Janny Venema tells that the Van Bijler family was relatives to van Rensselaer's father and therefore Willem and Leonara would be relatives to Kiliaen.

something van Rensselaer was prepared to handle, for he had become well aware of how the international policies worked and how to obtain reliable information. **Venema** further mentions that by virtue of this directorship, van Rensselaer may have been part of meetings and get-togethers where key company experiences were shared, operational matters discussed, and the shaping of ideas on investment, management and business expansion had taken place.<sup>231</sup>

### 3.5 Kiliaen van Rensselaer and the colony of New Netherland

Direct influence within the Company's councils was obtained primarily by a government seat in the Assembly of the Directors and as a Director within the Chamber of Amsterdam, van Rensselaer was now part of the most powerful chamber of the Company.

The Director's responsibility was to see the execution of the policy developed by the *Heren XIX*, and they were usually organized in different committees (this often depended on the size of the chamber), each with their own special tasks. Van Rensselaer participated in several of these committees, but most interesting here, is his involvement within the one dealt that with the policy concerning the colony of New Netherlands and the lucrative fur trade in North America.<sup>232</sup>

**Janny Venema** contends that van Rensselaer's interest in New Netherlands may have been encouraged by the company's repeated experiences of a lack of access to a maritime base in the Atlantic. She argues that from New Netherlands, where the Spanish had no claim, the travel time to the Brazilian mainland could be shortened remarkably. In the light of the Dutch's previous privateering expeditions, it can be assumed that the van Rensselaer and other patroons saw the importance of providing a maritime base in order to have greater success in their old quest for Spanish silver.<sup>233</sup> This also shows that the military agenda of the WIC may also have been continued among the patroons. If so, it contributes to an argument

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.p.178,179 (van Rensselaer is believed to have gained knowledge about the international policies through Wolphert van Bijler and Jan van Wely. Jewelers traveled often to places where they knew there would make profit, so if necessary they would also need to travel abroad. If so, then van Rensselaer, as Wolphert's apprentice, would have traveled with them in order to gain insight in how the business was done abroad. His jeweler business may also have taken him abroad after the passing of his master.) See Janny Venema (2010) "*Kiliaen van Rensselaer*" p. 108.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid p.189.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid p.221.

that the institution of patroons also would continue to inflict damage upon their enemy, since a patroon had been strongly tied to the board of directors in the WIC.

**Van Cleef Bachman** states that,

“[···] *about 1628 or 1629, the Dutch conceived the idea of establishing a shipbuilding industry in New Netherlands, by which the New Netherlands timber could be made to provide rather than require shipping space over to Europe*”<sup>234</sup>

Here it seems that the timber production in New Netherlands required a shipbuilding industry, and this may have given further support for van Rensselaer`s claim that a maritime base would be of import. In the course of the years, van Rensselaer seems to have gained such a reputation, as a prominent merchant, jeweler and a director, in the Dutch society, that he not only represented the policy surrounding New Netherlands, but he was also one of eight Directors who received the responsibility for developing a plan regarding the maintenance of the Brazilian trade. By this, we can tell that, after 1625, van Rensselaer became a man of influence and importance.

What is of further importance is that there existed an unwritten rule, a rule in which the Chamber, which represented towns or provinces that had established intensive trade relations with areas included in WIC`s charter, was to gain the right to administer the trade in those respective areas. Because traders and merchants from Amsterdam had taken up interests in the North American region, the administration of New Netherlands was given to the Chamber of Amsterdam.<sup>235</sup> It can be said that the Amsterdam Chamber of the WIC dominated much of the policy thinking for New Netherlands.

That van Rensselaer played a dominant part in the colony is clearly stated in Article of the *charter of Liberties*,

“[···] *patroon of the first settled colony shall retain the command of each bay, river or island, under the supreme jurisdiction of the High Mightiness the States General and the Company*”<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Bachman (1969) p.92.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. p.215.

<sup>236</sup> VRBM (1908) p.141.

Moreover, van Rensselaer may also have been tempted to invest in private voyages, which would have been in contradiction to the WIC's monopoly, a policy which van Rensselaer should have been protecting. Referring to the private voyage of "De Ruijter", which has been discussed earlier, **Oliver A Rink** contends that van Rensselaer, along with another WIC Director Samuel Godijn, may have used their influence as representatives of the largest chamber to profit from the trade with New Netherlands.<sup>237</sup> What **Oliver Rink** seems to be saying is that van Rensselaer took advantage of his status as a Director, to gain personal profits. This can also cast light upon **Jaap Jacobs**'s statement that the voyages of "*De Ruijter*", were, in fact, under the control of the WIC. Even though the investors behind such private going voyages took part in the directorship of the WIC, their private investment in fitting out the voyage was completely in violation with the Company's own monopoly as earlier mentioned. Despite this, the State General did not examine the policy of the *Heren XIX*.<sup>238</sup>

In this context, the Dutch colony of New Netherlands may have been considered as less important and valuable by the majority of Dutch merchants, when compared to its other colonies in the Americas. With the perception of North America as a less attractive destination, it may be reasonable to believe that the extent of control, along with the number of voyages to New Netherlands, must have been far fewer than those to other Western Hemisphere locations. This opens up the possibility that it was easier for privately funded voyages to sail to their North American colony, which would give a quicker and less dangerous way to profit, than to Dutch colonies in the south.

### 3.6 The Patroonships of New Netherlands

*[...] The case stands thus that nothing can be accomplished there by poor people, who are like dying plant or a leaking roof, also that the rich and well-to-do will not go there themselves, but that a good work can be accomplished by the two, just as the blind can carry the crippled and the crippled can show the way to the blind, so the rich may stay*

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<sup>237</sup> Rink (1986) p.83.

<sup>238</sup> Venema (2010) p.216.

*at home and send their money thither and the poor may go and perform their work with the money of the rich.*”<sup>239</sup>

The above quotation is taken from the van *Reansselaer Bowier Manuscript* and is a statement made by Kiliaen van Rensselaer in 1633. By the time of this statement, van Rensselaer’s contract as a Director within the WIC had most likely come to an end, and he now represented only the patroons. To this end, he contended that the *Freedom and Exemptions* were needed in order to raise up patroons who should send out many laborers, as he and his associates have done, and as it appeared (to him) that many others would have followed their example had they not been treated so indiscreetly and been forced to suffer losses, with losses also to the Company.<sup>240</sup> In other words, this statement can be seen as a way to encourage the patroons as well as blame the Company’s ills for the colony’s stagnation.

As we have seen, the policy of *Freedom and Exemptions* would allow wealthy directors and merchants to invest privately in the colonies or to establishing their own patroonships. Van Rensselaer’s patroonship of Rensselaerswyck was established in 1629, not long after the directors of the company had given their consent to the charter. It was situated around Fort Orange in today’s Albany.

Now that we have discussed the origin of the patroons as well as its requirements, let’s depict how the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck may have looked like in order to understand what a patroon represented within the colony. We ask, “What rights were actually given to the patroon in addition to the tract of land. How did a patroon appear and how it was to be organized within North America?” **Janny Venema** states that this was not an easy task as matters were complicated. The supporters for the *trading faction* seem not to have given up and gained the majority in the Amsterdam Chamber soon after the Freedom and Exemptions had been enacted. (A little too late, but not too late for causing some problems for the patroons by hindering the patroon(s) ability to transport people to their oversea domains).<sup>241</sup> What may have been a dispute over the policy of New Netherlands, had now developed into a

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<sup>239</sup> VRBM, p.246 & Venema (2010) p.241.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Venema (2010) p.141.

matter of sabotage. Differences between the directors and the patroon concerning the fur trade and other trade rights still continued.<sup>242</sup>

The very idea of patroonships was not something that was new to the Dutch Republic, as in the seventeenth century 60 percent of the nobility in Holland enjoyed their own *heerlijkheden* [read. Manor], and their status was considered to be very high in the Dutch government. Rensselaer himself was not any stranger to the noble rights within the Dutch Republic, as he was born into this status and would also acquire some fiefs near Nijkerk, which he would inherit (most likely from his family and relatives in Nijkerk, and there may as well been inheritance from others who were close to him). These fiefs of *heerlijke rechten* [read. *Manorial rights*] had sub-fiefs for which people had to pay him rent. In a word: these are arrangements that share a certain similarity to the those of patroonship charter.

*[...] They shall forever own and possess and enjoy all the lands lying within the aforesaid limits, together with the fruits, right, minerals, rivers, and fountains thereof; as also the chief command, and lower jurisdictions, fishing, fowling, and grinding, to the exclusion of all others, to be Holden from the company as an eternal heritage.*"<sup>243</sup>

According to Article V of the Charter of Liberties, the patroon(s) were, by the virtue of their power(s) bestowed upon them, permitted to settle their colonies and to extend four miles along the shore, that is on one side of navigable river, or two miles on each side of a river, and so far into the country as the situation would permit. This was permitted on the condition that the WIC could keep for themselves the lands lying in between the colonies of the patroons.<sup>244</sup> Furthermore, if there happened to be Indian tribe(s) in the area where the patroon wished to settle, they found themselves under the obligation to purchase from the natives those lands which belonged to them and were within the bounds of the colony.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, in Article XXVI of the *Charter of Liberties*, they seem to have been “[...] obliged to satisfy the Indians for the land they shall settle upon, and that may extend or enlarge the limits of their colonies if they settle a proportionate number of colonist thereon.”<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> VRBM. p.76.

<sup>243</sup> VRBM. p.140-141.

<sup>244</sup> Article V in *Charter of Liberties*. p.371.

<sup>245</sup> VRBM. p.51.

<sup>246</sup> Article XXVI of the *Charter of Liberties*. p.376.



**Janny Venema** argues that the patroons were granted a perpetual “free ownership of all land” and that they were able to appoint officers and magistrates as they saw fit. If the patroon was obliged to purchase the land from Indian tribes in the area and the WIC could reserve their right, then patroons could not enjoy such “free ownership of ALL lands,” but rather of some specific areas in the colony.

Moreover, according to Article Six of the *Freedom and Exemptions*, all lands and properties held by the manorial lord (read. Patroons) were to be held as perpetual fief of inheritance.<sup>247</sup> This is understood to mean that the holdfasts of the patroons would stay in the family name unless they agreed to sell it. According to Venema, “*Other articles stated that, contrary to the former WIC articles, free colonists’ land titles were no longer perpetual, but upon the death of the title holder they would revert to the company*”.<sup>248</sup> It is vital to mention here that patroons in the Dutch Republic were the only ones who became perpetual land owners, and if the role and privileges of patroon were passed on the next line of succession, meaning the role of title holder, then these “*other articles*” to which **Venema** refers may be the mention of unusual cases where no other family members were left to inherit. This issue, however, is difficult, to determine. **Oliver A Rink** seems to agree with **Janny Venema** on the fact that the land titles were no longer perpetual but were lost to the patroons when they died. He further claims that, in effect, this permitted the Company to retain control of a large portion of New Netherlands.<sup>249</sup>

The Patroons jurisdiction extended over minor felonies and misdemeanors, but it extended to capital offenses,” meaning that the patroons was to have full judicial authority over the punishment of crime within his patroonship.<sup>250</sup> By contrast, in the *Freedom and Exemptions of 1628*, it is stated that the patroon’s judicial rights did not include that of capital offenses.<sup>251</sup> If this is the case, it appears that the patroon’s privileges must have been strengthened in the revision.

In addition, patroons were permitted to use WIC ships to send over people and goods, provided that a Company ship was available and that they paid the Company upfront for the

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<sup>247</sup> VRBM. P.141.

<sup>248</sup> Venema (2010) p.244.

<sup>249</sup> Rink (1978) p.20.

<sup>250</sup> Venema (2010) p.143.

<sup>251</sup> Rink (1978) p.11.

costs of transportation, including the freight fee of 5 percent of the total value of the shipped goods.<sup>252</sup> In examining the newly found original Charter from 1628, **Oliver A .Rink** tells us that the patroons were obligated to make use of Company ships for the their trans-Atlantic crossing and to pay a fixed fee for cargo space to be rated on a per ton basis.<sup>253</sup> Moreover, in the *Charter of Liberties* translated by *the Dutch Colonial Records*, it is stated that a freight of five per cent, ready money to be reckoned on the prime cost of the goods.<sup>254</sup> The *Charter of Liberties* from 1629 do not mention the obligation to make use of Company ships, but only that the patroons were privileged to use them. This suggests that the *Charter of Liberties* had been made in order to give patroons more freedom than indicated in the 1628 Charter.

As we have seen, the patroons promised to send over 50 persons to their dominions within four years, and they were to have the sole right to open trade with whomever they saw fit. This right may have been restricted to some specific trade goods such as fur, grain, timber and minerals. In the *VRBM, De Laer*, states that the patroons on the North river (Which included the patroonship of Rensselaerswyck) while recognizing the Company`s fur trade monopoly on Manhattan, also declared that they would abstain from the weaving of woolen, linen and cotton goods.<sup>255</sup> As previously mentioned, the WIC had reserved the fur trade to itself, but only in areas upon which the patroon had not settled. In other words, van Rensselaer and his fellow patroons could conduct fur trade in specific areas of the colony as well as along the coastline where private trade were allowed. **Janny Venema** contends that this enabled Manhattan to become a market for staple commodities and the port of transshipment because traders were required to carry their furs to Manhattan for inspection.<sup>256</sup> As we have seen, the island of Manhattan had been reserved by the WIC but,

*[...] patroons of colonies in New Netherland and colonists living on the island of Manhattes shall be at the liberty to sail and traffic all along the coast, [...] provided, that they do again return with all such goods as they shall trade to the island of Manhattes. ”*<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Venema (2010) p.143.

<sup>253</sup> Rink (1978) p.12.

<sup>254</sup> Article X in “Charter of Freedom and Exemptions of 1629 “found in VRBM p.143.

<sup>255</sup> VRBM. P. 51. See also Article XXIX in” “The Carter of Liberties ” p.376.

<sup>256</sup> Venemea (2010) p.244.

<sup>257</sup> Article XIII in “Charter of Freedom and Exemptions of 1629found in VRBM p.143-144.

It was under these conditions that van Rensselaer began the establishment of what would become the most famous Dutch proprietary patroonship in North America, Rensselaerswyck, an area that would include present day Albany, Rensselaer, and Columbia counties, about 700,000 acres surrounding Fort Orange.<sup>258</sup>

### 3.7 Rensselaerswyck

It was not unusual for wealthy merchants to participate in or be directly involved in land reclamation.<sup>259</sup> In times where such involvement meant high profits and privileges as a patroon, it was no wonder that one of the wealthiest directors of the WIC became involved in such land reclamation and seized a great deal of land for himself and family. Furthermore: he had been directly involved in the proclamation of the Patroonship plan and a sturdy defender of the colonization faction within the Company. His role within the *Heren XIX* as well as his belief that colonization of their North American lands would be the most beneficial policy for the Company, may have influenced him to take up the responsibility and risk of becoming the first patroon and to serve as a model for other patroons. What may have been new and unusual about Rensselaerswyck compared to other Dutch patroonships was that van Rensselaer's manor (*heerlijkheden*) was that it was located far away (from the center of the colony), and that few were familiar with the area and the idea of colonization as an agricultural-dominant enterprise.<sup>260</sup> This may serve as an indicator that the Dutch had little experience when it came to establishing a prosperous long-lived community within the colony. This makes sense because up until the charter of Freedom and exemptions was ratified, the Dutch had mainly used North America as a base for trade and a station for warfare.

How did Van Rensselaer manage to organize his own patroonship if he had little experience on how to do it? Janny Venema tells that during the time right after the Company had enacted the Freedom and Exemptions, the trading faction within the Chamber of Amsterdam had gained the majority and had now changed the local administration in New Netherlands in order to hinder the patroons in their effort to transport people to their overseas domains and provide these colonists with various necessities.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Bush (2011) p.18

<sup>259</sup> Venema (2010) p. 241.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

**Venema** states that around 1650 the nobility of Holland`s countryside still owned 60% of the Heerlijkheden and contends further that their status was still very high although most of the privileges tied to their possessions had been.<sup>262</sup> Here it is clear that the very idea of patroonships and manorial right had been well known within the Dutch Republic, although there seems to have been a major problem seem to in transferring the manorial rights to their colony in North America. Here, it may seem unclear whether or not **Venema** contends that the Dutch was well aware of the idea before they enacted the charter of Freedoms and Exemptions or if they were well aware of it because of it.

However big the problems might be, van Rensselaer seems to have been aware of the positive reports of the area surrounding Fort Orange. From his position as a Director, he may very have received first-hand information through letters and reports from people who had been there. With this new knowledge about New Netherlands, van Rensselaer seems to have recognized the great potential of the area and the agricultural possibilities it offered. In the years ahead, the products grown in the fertile lands of the patroonship would bring in about *f.* 2.500 per year. It is believed that van Rensselaer filed the reports and maps of his land claims with the Amsterdam Chamber during the last months of 1629 and that these land claims were quickly approved by the WIC Directors. It was, however, on the 12 of January 1630 that van Rensselaer instructed Bastiaen Jansz Krol to buy the lands that would be hereafter named for van Rensselaer. He purchased the lands from the native inhabitants who had claim to them.<sup>263</sup>

*[...] The limits he shall extend as far as possible, as high above Fort Orange and as far inland as they will in any way cede, equally below Fort Orange, even if it were five or more leagues above and as many below the same fort, and as far inland as possible, especially in places where there is flat and good land and the least underbrush and trees.*<sup>264</sup>

For these lands, exchange was made with the Company merchandise then available in the colony and van Rensselaer paid the bill for these Company goods. A bill of sale from the Indians and registration of the purchase was made with the supervision from the Company`s secretary at Fort Amsterdam. On January 16, 1630, van Rensselaer instructed Krol to

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid. pp 242, 243.

<sup>263</sup> Rink (1978) p.20.

<sup>264</sup> VRBM. p.159-161.

purchase cattle and to oversee the erection of buildings as well as *“to look out that my men work faithfully and diligently and that they do not cheat me or sell any of my goods.”* Van Rensselaer would also receive annual reports from his North American colony, meaning that he may have been well informed of the situation at Rensselaerswyck. Supplying his new patroonship however, turned out to be no easy task.

In 1631, shortly after the enactment of the Freedom and Exemptions, the trading faction had gained the majority of influence in the Chamber and used this influence to damage the patroons. The shift of power within the Chamber resulted in van Rensselaer and his supporters of the colonization faction losing seats on the board of Directors and with this, losing their influence over the Company Policy. Led by Marcus de Vogelaer, a merchant from Amsterdam and an ardent supporter of the Company’s monopoly, the Company now worked against the patroons and accused them of having defrauded the Company of the best lands in New Netherlands. This frequently delayed the transportation of goods to reach the patroonships and upon occasion even refused to transport some cargo. By invoking these new measures, de Vogelaer made enemies of the patroons.<sup>265</sup> On June 1632, the Directors had issued an ordinance forbidding private individuals from engaging in the fur trade, a measure that gave the patroons great annoyance as they were, technically, private persons.<sup>266</sup>

The controversies that emerged between patroons and company officials were often rooted in their differing interpretations of the claims given in the Freedoms and Exemptions. Shortly after the Charter was enacted and Krol had purchased the lands from the Indians in accordance to Article XXVI, van Rensselaer claimed that the purchase included the land on which the Fort Orange stood. This claim was, however, strongly denied by the Company, but van Rensselaer would maintain his claims throughout the timeframe of the Dutch colonization in North America, and this claim generated much controversy with the company officials.<sup>267</sup> By refusing to make available their company ships for transportation of cargo for the patroons the Board of Amsterdam was disobeying their own charter. (This view was countered by another but less likely notion that the patroon(s) had not fulfilled their payments in accordance with Article X of the Freedom and Exemptions).<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Venema (2010) p.247,248.

<sup>266</sup> Sherwood (1931) “THE PATROONS OF NEW NETHERLAND” p.280.

<sup>267</sup> Van Lear (1909) p.224,225 & VRBM p.151.

<sup>268</sup> VRBM p.143.

Nevertheless, this systematic anti-patroon policy of the trading faction was aimed at regaining the WIC monopoly of the fur-trade, and was an effort to eliminate patroonships altogether.<sup>269</sup> Amid the turmoil of problems within the Company, other problems occurred regarding livestock and that of finding enough colonists to meet the expectations of Article III.<sup>270</sup> Van Rensselaer had been recruiting colonists and arranging for their transport but the new disputes within the WIC had made it difficult to find enough colonists and “*shipping space was impossible to acquire, and that the Company refused to build stalls below decks for cattle.*”<sup>271</sup>

As the preceding account demonstrates, we can tell that the policy and the system of patroons met with opposing opinions even after the Charter was enacted, and the patroons met with enmity as they struggled to establish a functional patroonship in a turbulent context that emerged in the early 1630`s. **Rink** states that to implement this plan of opposition to the patroon system, their rival faction pushed the WIC to develop fur trade at Fort Orange, thus depriving van Rensselaer of the lucrative profits that he sought, as well as defying his claim to own the land. In this context, the patroons met growing hostility among the directors of the WIC. Moreover, this turbulence may even have created unrest among the common people in the Dutch Republic, to such an extent, that to some of the general public the patroons appeared as if they had taken the lands under fraudulent conditions.<sup>272</sup>

Amidst the context of the early 1630`s, many patroons reported that the declining profits in furs threatened their operations and many patroons even gave up and sold their lands back to the WIC.<sup>273</sup> **Rink** argues that to solve this hostility between the patroon(s) and the WIC, the State General saw no other option than to intervene. A committee was appointed to review the controversy, and it reported that both sides had indeed exceeded their initial rights, and the faction should to “*settle their differences by mutual agreement and accord.*” More importantly, the WIC was chastised for obstructing the operations of the patroons and was told to pay them for their losses.<sup>274</sup> Arguing that peopling the territory would be necessary to defend it and that free trade was the only way to promote further colonization of the area, the

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<sup>269</sup> Venema (2010) p.245-247 & Rink (1978) p.20-22.

<sup>270</sup> VRBM p.138.

<sup>271</sup> Rink (1978) p.24.

<sup>272</sup> Rink (1978) p.23.

<sup>273</sup> Rink (1978) p.22,23.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. p 23 & Sherwood (1931) p.281.

State General urged the *Heren XIX* to give up the Company's fur trade monopoly as a way populating the colony. With the support from the States General on the matter, the patroons had inflicted a massive blow to the trading faction as the Company gave up its long-favored fur trade monopoly in 1639; thus, as of January 1639, all citizens of the United Provinces could participate in the fur trade and private shipping was allowed on a larger scale.

This account on an ongoing rivalry between factions demonstrates that even though the patroon system had been initiated and its terms had been agreed upon and finalized in the *Charter of Liberties*, the bitterness between the two factions in the Chamber of Amsterdam was not yet healed. These problems and this paper's discussion of them sheds some light on the sources at least some of the complications that van Rensselaer faced in the early stages of Rensselaerswyck.

To comment a bit more on the context of the 1630's, many patroons gave up on their dreams of establishing prosperous patroonships and ended up selling their lands back to the Company, mostly because of financial stagnation or in some cases, the frustration related to Indian attacks. According to **van Lear**, the Directors of the WIC had never established a consensus of support for the policies that shaped colonization. This situation can be described as a fluctuating and half-heated policy that include the promotion of an agricultural operation which was quickly undermined by efforts that one faction took to cripple the patroon's undertakings. This lack of consensus and unanimity among the directors provides a plausible explanation for the many of the obstacles that were put in the way of the patroons almost immediately after the granting of the first and the second *Charters of Freedoms and Exemptions*.<sup>275</sup>

By 1636, van Rensselaer was the only patroon who still exercised the rights granted to him in the *Charter of Liberties* of 1629. He was now the only lord of a patroonship left in the New Netherlands and he had passed through the darkest days of the colony.<sup>276</sup> With an end to the Company's interference with his business, van Rensselaer wrote that the colony, "*needed nothing but people, who will now arrive to the number of 38, among them six women and several children, while some still expect to give birth on the way.*"<sup>277</sup> **Venema** states that due to a set of delays, the first colonists of the patroonship arrived in Rensselaerswyck in 1637.

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<sup>275</sup> Van Lear (1909) p.224.

<sup>276</sup> Sherwood (1931) p.281.

<sup>277</sup> Venema (2010) p.255.

The arrival of these colonists four years later than had been stipulated in the 1629 *Freedom and Exemptions* showed that van Rensselaer had failed to settle fifty inhabitants that were stipulated in Article III of the Charter.<sup>278</sup>

Even though the required fifty colonists had not arrived in New Netherlands in accordance with the Charter requirements, the instructions for a formal organization of a court carried out in 1632. Van Rensselaer was never present at his own patroonship, so he had to instruct others to lead in his stead, even though he commanded them from the Dutch Republic. The court consisted of was *schouts* and *schepens* and functioned as the administrative and juridical body of Rensselaerswyck. Van Rensselaer found his schout in Rutger Hendricksz whose duties were to demand and execute justice and serve as a head of the court's deliberations. The duty of the schepens, by contrast, was to listen to complaints and render judgment in particular cases, as well as to pass resolutions in conjunction with the schout.

[...] *“Theoretically, they represented and were to be elected by the people, but in accordance with a common practice in the lordships in Holland at that time the first schepens were appointed by the patroon and instructed to take the oath before the schout. The Schepens were five in numbers and as a sign of their office were presented with a black hat with a silver band.”*<sup>279</sup>

With this court in place and more colonists arriving, the affairs of Rensselaerwyck were well under way. Van Rensselaer must have started to realize that his hopes of making the patroonship into a prosperous settlement that might soon repay him for the expenditures he had invested. Already in 1632, van Rensselaer stated in a letter to Johannes de Leat,<sup>280</sup> *“The company will have to keep at the Fort Orange some 25 men, from whom, by providing for them with everything, we may draw some 2500 guilders.”*<sup>281</sup> This letter suggests that van Rensselaer saw the opportunity of letting the WIC win the claim to lands around the fort, as a means to profit from the sale of commodities to the men at arms.

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<sup>278</sup> Article III in “Charter of Freedom and Exemptions of 1629” found in VRBM p.139.

<sup>279</sup> Van Lear (1909) p.226.

<sup>280</sup> De Leat was a Dutch geographer and Director of WIC. He was one of the founding fathers of the Company and is believed to have been a partner and a close friend to van Rensselaer.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.* p.227.



Moreover, the prospects of making a profit changed from year to year, first during the period in which van Rensselaer served as Director of the WIC and then during the following decade when he was the lord of a patroonship, these years took a toll on van Rensselaer. He never traveled to North America, but rather relied on the expectation that his colonial representatives would execute his orders. We now know that in his absence, there were many problems regarding illicit trade with the Indians and complications in some financial matters, including the sale of grain to the highest bidder. In addition, **Venema** contends that the farmers at Rensselaerswyk may have done things that served their own interests at the expense of their patroon (they could easily have done this, given the absence of their liege lord). In fact, van Rensselaer may himself have created this situation, leaving himself open to the conflict. Because of these new incidents regarding the farmers, in 1639, van Rensselaer established new rules to overcome the problems. Tenants were now required to pay *f*.16 a year as an extra payment or charge for each farmhand to cover all minor expenses, while payment of the tithes was now mandatory. Resisting, the farmers refused his new rules and kept producing for sale instead of for van Rensselaer and this created additional turmoil, in which van Rensselaer threatened with the intervention with the Company's militia, to which many farmers responded by a counter-threat to leave the colony.

Amidst these conflicts, the patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer died in 1643 and he was buried in October during the same year. **Janny Venema** states,

*"[...] Kiliaen must have died with the idea that things were not going well with his overseas domain, but with the hope that his measures would improve that situation."*

## 4 Conclusion

In addressing the patroonship (*Patronenschap*) in the Dutch colonies of New Netherlands, I have first given my description of the essence of patroonship and what it meant for the colonial development. I then depicted who the patroon Kiliaen Van Rensselaer was, including some discussion of the requirements to be fulfilled to be eligible for a patroonship. In particular, the main focus of this paper has been to give a description of this particular patroon and how his ideas influenced and changed the policy of the West India Company regarding the colonization of New Netherlands.

We have followed the West India Company and the wealthy directors and private persons who later would become patroons of New Netherlands and the many problems they confronted from its beginnings, whether it was the continuation of the warfare with their Spanish overlords or financial issues and factional rivalry in the board of directorship. In the time of oversea expansion and with the Dutch arriving later in North America than their European rivals, we may say that the Dutch was struck by luck regarding the situation which led up to the discovery of the Manhattan Island.

We acknowledge the Dutch ability to negotiate the best possible trade arrangements that they put to good use when they purchased the Island from Indians. Regarding whether the Indians intended to sell their land, the WIC managed to maintain a good trading relation with at least some of the native tribes for several years. As we consider the Dutch-Indian relation, however, we acknowledge that Indian attacks may have occurred because of several changes regarding the fur-trade.

We can easily conclude that, despite the rough start on their colonial affair in North America, enacting the *Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions*, the WIC found a way to save their colony from an early destruction. By letting private capital into the colony—a position advocated by van Rensselaer he succeeded in his work of guiding the WIC in the direction of enacting the patroon system.

In the introduction of this paper I asked the question of whether *Van Rensselaer may have had influenced the West India Company and its policy towards the enactment of the patroonship*. To conclude the research question, we must acknowledge that Kiliaen van Rensselaer had a major influence on the company's affairs and its policies.

From an early stage in life, he had invested money in the overseas expansion to the West, and he became one of the first and wealthiest Directors within the Board of Amsterdam. From his position, van Rensselaer could not only influence and lead the company towards a patroonship plan and gain a prime patroonship himself. He was one of the main agitator behind the scheme and gained a position on the Board so that he could persuade the majority of the other directors to adopt policies that he favored. We might even say that he, among several other wealthy investors, developed the *Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions* to present to the rest of the Board as a way to address significant challenges within the Colony's development.

We know that van Rensselaer was a well-respected merchant and a director in the Dutch Republic and together with other wealthy investors (from the colonization faction), he may have developed and adjusted the Freedoms and Exemptions to fit his own interests, to advance his agenda and to make it the guiding practice of the Company. We have also seen that other directors, principally those interested in maintaining the monopoly on fur trade would openly be against it, but because they needed private capital, van Rensselaer and his followers gained the majority on the Board of Directors.

The study has advanced a treatment that facilitates an understanding of how van Rensselaer changed the WIC policy toward adopting the patroon system in a time where Dutch trading monopolies had been a dominant pattern in the commercial practices in the Republic. Earlier in his investment career, Kiliaen van Rensselaer himself had been willing to invest in such a proprietary expedition.

With the original charter, which had been lost due to a fire in 1813, we can clearly see that major changes had been made to advance the privileges of the patroons and of van Rensselaer. I contend that Kiliaen van Rensselaer was the Director-Investor who most influenced the company's policy, as he was, together with Usselinx, the leading figure who pushed the Company towards a new and revised version of the Charter. The "Trading faction" among the Directors may even have been forced to accept the terms written into the *Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions* of 1629 by van Rensselaer.

I acknowledge that the conclusion given here may well be influenced (possibly somewhat biased) by the principal focus on van Rensselaer. This was a reasonable choice of emphasis, for most of the surviving sources and the subsequent historical literature on the patroon system and the individual patroons "lords" have centered on van Rensselaer his patroonship. This may have to do with the fact that there are more sources and literature to be found on the business of van Rensselaer.

Moreover, in the *Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions*, van Rensselaer had been given the powers to conduct juridical, governmental and financial matters as he saw fit in his colony, even though he never traveled to Rensselaerwyck, and as he was not have been able to set these powers into action himself. As we have argued, local problems arose and van Rensselaer had no assurance that his subjects actually did as van Rensselaer instructed; indeed, there is clear evidence that they often pursued their own interest at his expense and resisted efforts to remedy the conflicts that emerged.

#### **4.1 Further Reasearch**

In the future, more work might be done on the relation of van Rensselaer and his rivals, but most of the sources of the other patroons have either been lost or are not available to the author. The discovery of new sources and analysis of van Rensselaer`s rivals must await a future study to shed more light on the issue of the Company changes of policy in the late 1620s and early 1630s. Another aspect that would be interesting and would bring new light on the study is to look at the way(s) the common man and families back in the Dutch Republic were affected by the patroonship plan.

## Abbreviation and Glossary

WIC-West India Company.

*Burgers*- Citizens of a town.

*f.*-Reference to *Guilders*, which was the Dutch currency at the time of New Netherlands.

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