

**MASTER THESIS**

# THE GILDEMEESTERS

**A FAMILY'S STRATEGIES FOR COMMERCIAL  
SUCCESS AND UPWARDS SOCIAL MOBILITY DURING  
THE 18TH CENTURY**



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Picture on front page: Daniel Gildemeester's Sintra Palacio de Seteais, 19th century, artist unknown, [www.serradesintra.net](http://www.serradesintra.net), visited on 22-08-2018.

**The Gildemeesters**  
**A family's strategies for commercial success and upwards social mobility**  
**during the 18<sup>th</sup> century**

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**22 augustus 2018**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1785, Lieutenant Cornelis de Jong van Rodenburgh visited Portugal's capital. Being a guest of Lisbon's Dutch secretary, he saw the city's most important commercial sites and added rich descriptions of the international elite of merchants and diplomats:

"This afternoon it was really windy and we had some heavy rainfall, yet this did not hinder me from attending the gathering of the old Sir Daniel Gildemeester. Here I saw many people, among others the secretaries of all nations, which is the entire *Corps Diplomatique*. [...] The Portuguese women seem to be very fond of jewels; I saw many and beautiful stones, one of the gentlemen told me that Mrs. Gildemeester owned almost as many as I saw on all the women here together. I do not hesitate to believe this, first of all, because everyone knows that the old Consul is astonishingly wealthy; he lives like a Prince; has a palace for a home; and is considered one of the richest of Portugal. Second, there was no one with better chances of acquiring beautiful stones than Gildemeester; since he has made an agreement with the crown, for all Brazilian diamonds that are to be sold. These stones are sent to Portugal the way they come out of the mines, then this house selects those stones that meet the requirements of the contract; subsequently they are sent to Holland to the lapidaries there. All the others that Gildemeester does not take, are kept in the treasury of the King. This agreement, which excludes all others from this trade, gives him substantial benefits."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cornelis de Jong van Rodenburgh, *Tweede reize naar de Middellandsche Zee, gedaan in de Jaren 1783, 1784, 1785 aan boord van 's Lands schip Prins Willem onder bevel van den kapitein Cornelis van Gennip* (Haarlem, 1807) 383-385. "Heden namiddag woei en regende het geweldig, doch dit belette niet dat ik mede van de partij was, om bij den ouden Heer Daniel Gildemeester, op het assemblee te gaan. Hier zag ik vele menschen, waaronder de Ministers van alle de Hoven, dat is het gehele *Corps diplomatique*. [...] De Portugeesche vrouwen schijnen zeer voor juwelen te zijn; ik zag er vele en fraaije steenen, en met dit al, zeide mij een der Heeren: dat Mevrouw Gildemeester er bijna alleen zoo veel bezat, als ik bij alle vrouwen te zamen zag. En zulks trek ik te minder in twijfel, om dat men eensdeels weet, dat de oude Consul verbazend gegoed is; hij leeft als een' Vorst; heeft een huis als een paleis; en wordt voor een der rijkste van Portugal gehouden: anderdeels, was er ook welligt nooit iemand, in beter gelegenheid, om schoone steenen te krijgen, dan juist Gildemeester; aangezien hij al sedert verscheidene jaren, eene vaste overeenkomst met de kroon gemaakt heeft, voor alle de diamanten die uit Brazil komen, en die men in omloop wil brengen. Deze steenen worden ruw naar herwaarts gezonden, zooa als ze uit de mijnen komen, en dan zoekt dit huis, uit de kisten waarin ze zijn, alle die genen welke het gewigt, en de vereischten hebben, bij het contract of de overeenkomst bepaald, en zend ze naar Holland om te slijpen. Alle de anderen, welke Gildemeester niet neemt, worden in 'skonings schatkist bewaard. Men wil dat dit verdrag, hetwelk hem bij uitsluiting van alle anderen in dezen handel stelt, zeer aanmerkelijke voordeelen afwerpt."

The main person of interest in De Jong van Rodenburgh's passage is Daniel Gildemeester (1714-1793), at the time of his visit, seventy years old and a prominent commercial figure in Lisbon. Daniel belonged to a protestant entrepreneurial family from Utrecht in the Northern Netherlands. His older brother Jan (1705-1779) had left for Lisbon as a teenager, to work in the insurance and trading company of his uncle. During the late 1730's, Jan Gildemeester set up his own company in the Portuguese capital, and soon his two younger brothers Daniel and Thomas (1720-1788) joined the business.<sup>2</sup>

Next to his trading activities, Jan Gildemeester became the Consul for the Dutch Nation in Portugal in 1740. Contrary to the Dutch ambassadors, Dutch Consuls in Lisbon were not appointed by the States-General, but selected among the community of Dutch traders who were active in Lisbon. Consuls were generally prominent and wealthy merchants and were recognised by the Nation and the States General as important figures. They had the authority to negotiate the interests of Dutch merchants at the highest administrative levels.<sup>3</sup> In 1757, Jan repatriated to Amsterdam to resume his trading activities in the Dutch Republic. He was succeeded in his role as Consul by his younger brother Daniel, who would hold the function until 1780. After that, Daniel's son, also named Daniel, would be Consul until 1802.

The most well-known figure of the Gildemeester family is Daniel Gildemeester, who mainly appears in historical literature because of his involvement in the Luso-Brazilian diamond trade.<sup>4</sup> Between 1761 and 1788, Daniel held the privilege to purchase Brazilian diamonds from the Portuguese Crown. He operated together with his brother Thomas (and later his sons) in Lisbon and his brother Jan became his agent in the Netherlands. The Gildemeesters derived enormous wealth from the diamond contract and their other commercial activities. *This thesis assesses the entrepreneurial strategies members of the Gildemeester family employed and that resulted in mercantile successes and upward social*

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<sup>2</sup> C.J. De Bruyn Kops, 'De Amsterdamse verzamelaar Jan Gildemeester Jansz', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 13 (1965) 3, 79-114.

<sup>3</sup> Catia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period: the economic relationship between Amsterdam and Lisbon, 1640-1705* (Amsterdam 2004) 132.

<sup>4</sup> Harry Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital* (London & Boston 1986), 58-91; Tijn Vanneste, *Global trade and commercial networks: eighteenth-century diamond merchants* (London 2011) 55-57.

*mobility*. By assessing the different strategies, this research stands at the intersection of different historiographical traditions and theoretical approaches. While respecting the historiographical debates, this research aims to reach beyond the borders imposed by historiography. This assessment affirms the complexity of the combination of this family's multiple mercantile activities and the hereditary consular position. I would argue that the analysis of the criss-cross of these different entrepreneurial strategies is the added value of this research to current historiographical debates.

### Historiography

Most of the Gildemeesters had very interesting lives, and their activities and environments have touched multiple areas of historical enquiry. They were consuls, (diamond) merchants, insurers, bankers, art collectors and (aspiring) noblemen. At times, family members cooperated in trade. In other occasions, they worked independently or with non-kin partners. They owned estates in the Netherlands and in Portugal, where both branches belonged to both countries's commercial elites. This thesis explores the intersection of these different contexts and multiple activities. Consequently, the historiographical foundation of this thesis is very diverse.

As the breadth of relevant literature is very large, I have decided to offer concise historiographical accounts of three subcategories. The most obvious line of research is about the Gildemeester family, that has gotten marginal attention in historiography. Therefore, publications about the Gildemeesters will not be listed separately. A single scientific publication focusses especially on one of the Gildemeesters: the article by C. J. de Bruyn Kops offers a brief family history and mainly focusses on the art collection of Jan Gildemeester Janszoon.<sup>5</sup> Daniel Gildemeester and his involvement in the diamond trade has been researched by Harry Bernstein,<sup>6</sup> and more recently Tijn Vanneste.<sup>7</sup> There is no publication that attempts to connect the family members. Neither does any publication do justice to the great set of activities the family employed. Both the element of family and the diversity of their strategies, are important to understand how the Gildemeester family attempted to become wealthy merchants and rise to the highest social strata.

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<sup>5</sup> De Bruyn Kops, 'De Amsterdamse verzamelaar Jan Gildemeester Jansz'.

<sup>6</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 58-91.

<sup>7</sup> Vanneste, *Global trade and commercial networks*, 55-57.

When we look at the wider historiographical context, an important area of research is the history of commercial family networks and family firms. Second, a historiographical overview will be presented regarding merchant communities in foreign cities. As the Gildemeesters were consuls representing a foreign community, the position of Consuls and the emergent body of historical research about this topic will be discussed in a third part.

#### Commercial family networks and family firms

The Gildemeester family was not at all times and places organized as one family firm, as researched in the time span of this thesis (1720-1805). According to Oscar Gelderblom and Francesca Trivellato, “a family firm is an enterprise run by relatives, often transmitted from father to son, and governed by a bundle of more or less specified obligations.”<sup>8</sup> On several occasions, members of the Gildemeester family cooperated in this manner. During other periods of time, the family rather consisted of several entrepreneurial individuals, who cooperated with one another occasionally. The cooperation between brothers (Jan, Daniel and Thomas), but also between father and son (Jan and Jan Jansson or Daniel and his sons Hendrik and Daniel Danielsson) existed at the same time. The cooperation took place as a single firm in the same city, Lisbon (Gildemeester&Companhia) or Amsterdam (Gildemeester&Co.), but also between these cities. This thesis tries to respect the individuality of commercial activities, while also assessing the roles of the Gildemeester family-firms and mutual ties.

The role of the family in entrepreneurial activities has been thoroughly researched by historians. When following the commercial activities of the Caeskoper family during the Dutch Golden Age, Bert Koene sketches an image of the family’s entrepreneurial activities and daily encounters, although he refrains from in-depth historical analysis. On the other hand, Emma Rothschild, who has studied the lives of eleven members of the Scottish Johnstone family, approaches her work from a micro-historical perspective, reconstructing afterwards a larger history in relation to space, as several families moved over great distances. Her microhistory also connects individuals and families to the larger social contexts of which they were a part: in this case the British empire and the Scottish enlightenment. The fourth chapter in Rothschild’s book discusses the economic activities of

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<sup>8</sup> Oscar Gelderblom & Francesca Trivellato, ‘The business history of the preindustrial world: Towards a comparative historical analysis’, *Business History* 31 (2018) 1, 1-35, 12.



the Johnstones: it was a commercially minded family and at times some brothers cooperated as within a family firm. Rothschild does not go into much details regarding the family's trading activities, but offers the relevant insight that economic and political contexts mattered. The commercial endeavours of the Johnstones were extremely dependent on Britain's empire and the state's changing economic policies.<sup>9</sup> This thesis aims to place more emphasis on the agency and activities of individual family members than Rothschild does. Yet it also takes into account changing political-economic contexts: in the case of the Gildemeesters the influence of the Pombaline reforms on the Luso-Brazilian trade.

While Rothschild discusses among other things cultural, social and philosophical aspects of the family, business historians have mostly analysed the family in strictly economic and commercial contexts. Peter Mathias asserts that kinship was very important for the day-to-day business of early modern merchants. He claims that entrepreneurship was "exercised within the parameters of high risk and uncertainty. Different stages in a person's business career and different circumstances at a particular point of time would determine varied responses" to deal with risks and uncertainty.<sup>10</sup> In this high-risk context, face-to-face personal relationships and kinship in business, especially regarding access to credit, was of paramount importance. He argues that family was often central to the operations of business, whether this occurred in a structural cooperation such as the family firm, or occasional dealings.<sup>11</sup>

Historians have discussed whether the family firm was a favourable model for doing business during the early modern period. While Mathias looks at family firms as positive because they reduced risks, there are also historians who are rather critical of the family firm as a business model. This insight is equally useful for this thesis, as commercial failure because of a reckless family members was a reality the Gildemeesters had to face. Sheryllyne Haggerty argues that family networks can be problematic, because family members feel they can take advantage of the implicit trust placed in them. She uses the case study of a Glasgow merchant in the mid-eighteenth century, whose dealings with his brother

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<sup>9</sup> Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton & Oxford 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Mathias, 'Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern enterprise' in: John J. McCusker & Kenneth Morgan (eds.), *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge 2001), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, 16-17.

in law led him to the brink of bankruptcy.<sup>12</sup> Next to problems regarding credit, misdemeanours of family members also caused reputational problems.<sup>13</sup> She also asserts that merchants extended their networks beyond their family, ethnic or religious ties. This argument is also made by Francesca Trivellato in her book *The Familiarity of Strangers*. Trivellato's research focusses on Sephardic Jews who migrated to Livorno from the end of the sixteenth century. She demonstrates that these Jews mingled with non-Jews and constructed high-trust networks between merchants who shared no natural affiliation. She analyses the connections of the family firms of the Ergas and Silvera families. Trivellato argues that Jews conducted cross-cultural long-distance trade despite of their marginalized position in society.<sup>14</sup>

### Foreign Merchant Communities in Lisbon

Since the 1960's, historians have been putting more emphasis on the complex relationships between individuals and communities during the early modern period. Historians like Jacob Burckhardt traditionally pointed out that an individualist spirit emerged during the European Renaissance and Reformation.<sup>15</sup> Yet since the 1960's, historians have challenged this notion by studying organized groups in early modern societies. Scholars are now of the conviction that communities provided stability which allowed for individual agency. Moreover, individuals established forms of association to advance their own economic, social, political and religious agendas.<sup>16</sup> The history of merchant communities fits into this appreciation of the cross-point between the corporation and the individual. The foreign merchant community (also called nation) offered a structure for foreign merchants to negotiate the commercial life within the host society. The nation acted within the city as a corporate body

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<sup>12</sup> Sherrylynn Haggerty, "You Promise Well and Perform as Badly": The Failure of the "Implicit Contract of Family" in the Scottish Atlantic', *International Journal of Maritime History* 23 (2011) 2, 267-282.

<sup>13</sup> Sherrylynn Haggerty, "I could 'Do for the Dickmans': When Family Networks Don't Work" in: Andreas Gestrich and Margrit Schulte Beerbuhl (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society, 1660-1914* (London 2011) 317-342.

<sup>14</sup> Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven & London).

<sup>15</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Basel 1860).

<sup>16</sup> Charles H. Parker, 'Introduction', in: Charles H. Parker & Jerry H. Bentley, *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World* (2006) 8-13.

and enjoyed several privileges, which provided advantage to their members when compared to unaffiliated peers.<sup>17</sup>

Publications about the organisation of commercial communities abound.<sup>18</sup> Historians generally agree that merchant nations across Europe served the purpose of unison in order to advocate for the rights of their members in an alien society. Still, the relevance and function of these organisations differed greatly over time and space. The nations in Antwerp became less popular during the early modern age because of institutional changes which provided prominence to individual merchants.<sup>19</sup> In the Mediterranean, the organisation of strong merchant communities with a consul as their representative was commonplace.<sup>20</sup> Dutch merchants in Spanish port cities needed to act as collective to enforce their trading rights. Swedish merchants in Cadix and Lisbon used their trading communities as substitute for their more traditional trading networks in Northern Europe.<sup>21</sup>

Even though there is an abundant availability of scholarly publications about foreign merchant communities, not much is written about the Dutch Nation in Lisbon during the eighteenth century. An especially important time for developments in Portugal's political economy was the era marked by the tenure of the Marquis of Pombal. There is no publication about the experiences of Dutch merchants in Portugal during this time. This has driven my attention to works regarding the relationship between other foreign communities

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<sup>17</sup> Donald J. Harreld, 'The Individual Merchant and the Trading Nation in Sixteenth-Century Antwerp', in: Parker & Bentley, *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity*, 188-196, 188.

<sup>18</sup> Oscar Gelderblom & Regina Grafe, 'The Rise and Fall of Merchant Guilds: Re-thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40 (2010) 3, 477-511; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640* (2007); Margrit Schulte Beerbuhl, *The Forgotten Majority: German Merchants in London, Naturalization and Global Trade, 1660-1815* (London 2015); Donald J. Harreld, *High Germans in the Low Countries: German Merchants and Commerce in Golden Age Antwerp* (Leiden, 2004) 40-60; Mehmet Bulut, *Ottoman-Dutch Economic Relations in the Early Modern Period 1571-1699* (Ankara & Hilversum 2001); Maartje van Gelder, *Trading Places: The Netherlandish Merchants in Early Modern Venice* (Leiden & Boston 2009) 11-15; Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean – The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London 2011); Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese nation: conversos and community in early modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington 1997); Oscar Gelderblom, *Zuid-Nederlandse kooplieden en de opkomst van de Amsterdamse stapelmarkt (1578-1630)*, (Utrecht 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Harreld, 'The Individual Merchant', In: Parker & Bentley, *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity*, 190.

<sup>20</sup> Marie-Christine Engels, *Merchants, Interlopers, Seamen and corsairs: the 'Flemish' community in Livorno and Genoa (1615-1635)* (Hilversum 1997), 70, 120-127.

<sup>21</sup> Maurits Ebben, 'Uwer Hoog Moogenden Onderdaenigsten Dienaers: Nederlandse consuls en staatse diplomatie in Spanje, 1648-1661', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 127 (2014) 4, 649-672; Leos Muller, 'The Swedish Consular Service in Southern Europe, 1720-1815', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31 (2006) 2, 186-195.

and Portugal as their host country after 1750. There are several publications about this topic, which is interesting because of the specific political and economic contexts.

In Portugal, a series of trade agreements signed between 1661 and 1703 with the house of Braganza, allowed the British to dominate Portuguese trade and to establish the highest number of foreign merchants in Lisbon. The most important book about the British *factory*<sup>22</sup> is that of L.M.E Shaw, who has extensively studied its structure and role. She lists the factory's most important figures, and explains how committees formed to act as pressure groups to deal with Secretaries of State and the Board of Trade. Shaw notices that the privileges of British merchants were reduced with Pombal's creation of the Portuguese monopolistic companies.<sup>23</sup> Catia Brillì, on the other hand, discusses the role of the Genoese merchants in Lisbon and Cadiz. Brillì describes how members of the relatively small Genoese settlement in Lisbon attempted to access colonial trade after the earthquake of 1755. The article clarifies that the Genoese merchants had great difficulties penetrating the Lisbon markets because of foreign competitors with more privileges. Her article also pays attention to the internal management of the Genoese community, which was especially important within the Italian context.

The position of the Dutch Nation in Portugal was better than that of the Genoese, while they were not as prominently represented as the British *factory*. Literature about the Dutch Nation in Portugal post-1750 is lacking, but Catia Antunes has written about this community during the seventeenth century. This publication is extremely relevant for this thesis, as it gives more insights about the peace treaties between the Dutch Republic and Portugal (1654 and 1704)<sup>24</sup>. These shaped the reality in which the Dutch Nation had to advocate for their commercial rights. The merchants referred to these treaties far into the eighteenth century, so the developments between 1654 and 1705 were of great importance to the Dutch Nation.

### Consuls and Diplomacy

Most often, the head of the foreign merchant community was the Consul, as was the case for the nations in Portugal. The merchants were the most important of his charges, because

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<sup>22</sup> The word *factory* stems from the Portuguese word *feitoria*, meaning a trading depot or group of merchants living abroad.

<sup>23</sup> L.M.E. Shaw, *The Anglo-Portuguese Alliance and the English Merchants in Portugal 1654-1810* (Aldershot & Brookfield 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Catia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period*, 141-181.

the consul was often dependent on them for a living, because the nation in Lisbon paid the consul a wage.<sup>25</sup> The network of consuls in the Netherlands reached much further than Portugal: the number of Dutch consuls in European port cities was impressive as they probably formed the largest consular service of all European states. Especially the Mediterranean boasted a dense network of Dutch consuls and vice-consuls.<sup>26</sup> I would argue that this was because of the Republic's strong interests in European trade and the need for Dutch communities in foreign cities to be represented.

Despite the great presence of consuls in early modern Europe, they have not received much attention from contemporaries and historians alike. The consular service was ironically named "Cinderella Service" by Desmond C.M. Platt, who studied British consuls during the nineteenth century. The nickname came from the contradiction between 'humble' consuls and their upper-class colleagues who worked as ambassadors for the state's foreign office.<sup>27</sup> Lucien Bely, who describes the birth of modern diplomacy also ignores the political relevance of Consuls.<sup>28</sup> Generally, historians were of the conviction that the diplomatic role of consuls merely involved the transmission of information to the residing ambassador and the government.<sup>29</sup> As a result, (Dutch) historiography about diplomacy has often been written from the viewpoint of ambassadors.<sup>30</sup>

Currently, historians are starting to re-evaluate and appreciate the political and commercial roles consuls have played in history. In the book *Consular Affairs and Diplomacy*, Ana Mar Fernandez and Jan Melissen have provided an overview of consular affairs. Themes ranging from Dutch consuls in the Republic's colonies from 1600-1900, to contemporary matters such as populism and the evolution of consular responsibilities receive attention.<sup>31</sup> Maurits Ebben concludes that consuls had many tasks, which varied from place to place and from time to time.<sup>32</sup> Generally, we can divide their activities into three operational spheres:

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<sup>25</sup> Shaw, *The Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*, 51.

<sup>26</sup> Maurits Ebben, "Uwer Hoog Moogenden Onderdaenigsten Dienaers".

<sup>27</sup> D.C.M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (1971).

<sup>28</sup> Lucien Bely, *L'art de la paix en Europe. Naissance de la diplomatie moderne X<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 2007), 677.

<sup>29</sup> Klaus Malettke, 'Hegemonie – Multipolares System – Gleichgewicht. Internationale Beziehungen 1648/1659 – 1713/1714, *Historisch Zeitschrift* (2013) 3, 816.

<sup>30</sup> For instance: M.A.M Franken, *Coenraad van Beuningen's politieke en diplomatieke activiteiten in de jaren 1667-1684* (Groningen 1966); S. Barendrecht, *Francois van Aerssen. Diplomaat aan het Franse hof, 1598-1613* (Leiden, 1965); J.G. Stork-Penning, *Het Grote werk* (Groningen 1958).

<sup>31</sup> Ana Mar Fernandez & Jan Melissen, *Consular Affairs and Diplomacy* (Leiden, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Ebben, "Uwer Hoog Moogenden Onderdaenigsten Dienaers".

providing information about commercial conditions, advocating the merchant's interests with the local authorities and performing juridical tasks.<sup>33</sup>

In his work about Dutch consuls residing in Spain after the Peace of Munster (1648), Maurits Ebben argues that the most important function of the consuls was to advocate the individual interests of merchants. In this process they were highly influential: they managed to contribute to the development of foreign relations with Spain despite their officious position.<sup>34</sup> On another example, Swedish consuls in Lisbon and Cadix managed to reduce transaction costs for the Nation's merchants, by supplying them with commercial information.<sup>35</sup> Dutch consuls in Lisbon operating from the 1640's until 1705 cooperated with the residing ambassadors and the Portuguese representatives in the Netherlands. This process heavily influenced the peace negotiations and the subsequent commercial conditions for Dutch merchants. Antunes argues that the ambassadors and consuls were important economic agents, with a tight relationship to the private sector. She argues that these men were extremely important in structuring commercial and financial networks which carried early modern globalization.<sup>36</sup>

Consuls were often experienced merchants themselves, with their own commercial interests. Consul's firms were those that had the largest and most frequent contacts with companies in the mother country. When consuls failed as businessmen, they were forced to leave their post. Muller gives an example of the Swedish consul Aders Bachmanson Nordecrantz, whose position ended after many conflicts with the Swedish Nation in Lisbon.<sup>37</sup>

Dutch consuls in Portugal were very important merchants, as they were appointed by the merchants of the Nation.<sup>38</sup> The Gildemeester brothers were also merchants of considerable commercial power, and businessmen advocating for their own concerns. This thesis takes the vantage point of the Gildemeester consuls as businessmen, instead of focussing on the political aspects of the position as consul.

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<sup>33</sup> Muller, 'The Swedish Consular Service', 186-187; Halvard Leira and Iver B. Neuman, 'The Many Past lives of the Consul', in: Fernandez & Melissen, *Consular Affairs*, pp. 230-234.

<sup>34</sup> Ebben, 'Uwer Hoog Moogenden Onderdaenigsten Dienaers'.

<sup>35</sup> Muller, 'The Swedish Consular Service'.

<sup>36</sup> Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period*, 180-182.

<sup>37</sup> Muller, 'The Swedish Consular Service'.

<sup>38</sup> Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period*, 137.

## Theoretical Approaches

In order to respect the several roles of members of the Gildemeester family, this thesis is written based on different approaches. Central to this thesis is the agency of individuals – whether this concerns the Gildemeesters as merchants or consuls. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks that I have applied are actor-centred. Two of the used approaches are Marc Casson's entrepreneurship theory and New Diplomatic History. These two frameworks are combined with the concept of *Portfolio Capitalists* as developed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C.A. Bayly. As this thesis is a biography of a family, the *Biographical Turn*, as understood by Hans Renders, Binne de Haan and Jonne Harmsma is used as a guideline to present my research.

## Entrepreneurship

Mark Casson argues that historians should place more emphasis on identifying individual entrepreneurs within firms, to analyse their influence on decision-making. Entrepreneurship is a concept that links different academic disciplines: economics, sociology and history. The theory is applicable to any time or place, as entrepreneurship will be present at all times in all societies, to differing degrees. While the theory of entrepreneurship relates to many different aspects of entrepreneurial life, this thesis focusses on three areas identified by Casson: networks, institutional frameworks and partner selection. The author considers entrepreneurship a general human capability, but argues that it is important to be sensitive to context.<sup>39</sup> For instance, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese economy with its monopolistic companies required different strategies from entrepreneurs than what was commonly known by the Amsterdam merchant groups. Still in Casson's theory of entrepreneurship, the strategy and performance of the firm was dependent on the personal qualities of the entrepreneur. He urges historians to depart them from historical biographies in order to test his proposal.

Casson links the qualities of a well performing entrepreneur to the quality of judgement in decision-making. Judgement is the ability to come to a sound, defensible decision in the absence of complete information. In order to make a judgemental decision, the entrepreneur needs a synthesis of different types of information. As most information

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<sup>39</sup> Mark Casson & Catherine Casson, 'The history of entrepreneurship: medieval origins of a modern phenomenon', *Business History* 56 (2014) 8, 1223-1242.

with commercial value is confidential, the entrepreneur needs to create a network of contacts who will supply him or her the right information.<sup>40</sup> Not only for acquiring information are networks crucial at all stages of entrepreneurship. Reputation is closely associated with network membership (e.g. Gildemeester and the membership of the Dutch Nation). Gaining access to a specific network in itself belongs to one of the talents of successful entrepreneurs. At the same time, transport networks allow entrepreneurs to distribute their products widely and facilitate social networks by encouraging mobility. This research focusses extensively on the personal connections of the Gildemeesters, be it within or outside the family. It also emphasises the use of the European and Atlantic network in which this family operated.

The second aspect of the entrepreneurship theory is that of the institutional context. Casson argues that entrepreneurship thrives in regimes that possess classic institutions of the liberal market economy. He names private property, freedom of movement, confidentiality of business information, access to impartial courts and a government that balances the power between opposing interests, among others as characteristics.<sup>41</sup> Most of these features were neither present in Portugal nor the Dutch Republic during the 18th century. Especially a strongly biased government towards certain interests was typical for the Dutch and Portuguese cases. This thesis does not assess how *ideal* the institutional contexts were in the markets where the Gildemeester family operated in. Yet it does take into account what the institutional context was in Lisbon after 1755, as institutional reforms were of great influence to the business opportunities available to the Gildemeesters and other fellow merchants and businessmen.

The third aspect identified by Casson is the selection of partners. The Gildemeesters partnered as brothers, as brothers in law and fathers and sons. They also attracted cousins and non-kin members to cooperate in their commercial ventures. According to Casson, "Business partnership was an important feature of 18<sup>th</sup> century entrepreneurship. The opportunities of an expanding economy could not be fully exploited by purely family firms."<sup>42</sup> He argues that entrepreneurial activities during the 18<sup>th</sup> century required greater scale and more financial assets than before. In order to tackle this problem, partnerships

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<sup>40</sup> Mark Casson, *Entrepreneurship: Theory, Networks, History* (Cheltenham & Massachusetts 2010), 9.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, 29-30.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, 33.



between people from different families became increasingly common. They organized themselves as shareholders in one company, involving either a single project or recurrent entrepreneurial activities. Partnerships of the 18<sup>th</sup> century required a great deal of trust, and Casson regards the ability to select the right partners as part of the opportunity seeking talent of entrepreneurs.<sup>43</sup> In the case of the Gildemeesters, partnerships were first made between brothers, after which members of the extended family got involved in their entrepreneurial activities. I would argue that the Gildemeesters were able to cooperate with family members mainly because there were quite many of them. This ensured a high level of trust and enabled them to establish a division of labour, based on their relative expertise. They managed to expand their high-trust network by forming partnerships with men within their kin groups, in both Amsterdam and Lisbon.

### New Diplomatic History

The second theoretical approach applied for this research is New Diplomatic History. The concept is appropriate to assess the Gildemeesters' activities as consuls, which receives attention in the second chapter of this thesis. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings claim that early modern foreign relations are usually studied in the lights of "state sovereignty, a clearly defined distinction between foreign and domestic, the presence (or absence) of international law, a professional diplomatic corps, and all the ingredients that today make the stuff of international politics."<sup>44</sup> They suggest to reassess diplomatic history by leaving this type of broad analysis and zooming in on the diverse, intricate and interconnected practices of diplomacy in the early modern period. They claim that it is difficult to determine where diplomacy began and where it ended in the various political encounters of this period: "not every person involved in diplomatic business was a diplomat, and not every diplomat's main concern was diplomatic negotiation."<sup>45</sup> Their bundle considers different types of diplomatic agents such as ambassadresses, merchant diplomats and stately ambassadors.

Sowerby and Hennings propose that diplomatic occurrences hold significance, when the sources offer information about the ways in which political communities maintained

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<sup>43</sup> Idem, 25-26.

<sup>44</sup> Tracey A. Sowerby & Jan Hennings, 'Introduction: Practices of diplomacy' in: Tracey A. Sowerby & Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (2017), 2.

<sup>45</sup> Idem.

their relations. They aim to place more emphasis on the actions, rituals and behaviour of diplomatic agents and the interplay of responses, rather than the influence these agents had on big happenings in the history of international relations.<sup>46</sup> New Diplomatic History has started discussions on who influenced diplomatic relations.<sup>47</sup> Scholars point out that diplomacy during the early modern age reached as far as the diplomatic agency of female courtiers in Rome,<sup>48</sup> Christian slaves in Algiers<sup>49</sup> or between fishermen in England and France.<sup>50</sup>

New Diplomatic History is also highly applicable to the intermediaries of the early modern world: the individuals undertaking diplomatic assignments without being fully accredited ambassadors.<sup>51</sup> Maurits Ebben puts forward that New Diplomatic History should also be put into use to study the actions of early modern consuls.<sup>52</sup> It could be argued that the consular activities of the Gildemeesters also fell into the category of intermediaries: they did not officially represent the Dutch Republic, but interacted with the States General, Portuguese officials and the Republic's representative. The focus on diplomatic processes of New Diplomatic History offers the possibility to assess the dynamics between these groups by analysing their correspondence. The case study presented in this thesis demonstrates that diplomatic behaviour of the consul and the resident changed, when Dutch mercantile interests were not respected. The actor centred approach of New Diplomatic History leaves ample space to elucidate the agency of the merchant nation and the consul as well as the importance of the personal relationship between the Gildemeesters as consul and the Dutch resident. Finally, New Diplomatic History respects that the lines between personal interests (of the Gildemeesters) or general interests<sup>53</sup> (of the Dutch Nation and the States General) were blurred during the early modern period. It is only with this realization that we can understand the actions and strategies of members of the Gildemeester family acting as merchants and consuls.

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<sup>46</sup> Idem, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Tracey A. Sowerby, 'Early Modern Diplomatic History', *History Compass* 14 (2016) 441-456.

<sup>48</sup> C. Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador* (Cambridge 2015).

<sup>49</sup> Natividad Planas, 'Diplomacy from Below or Cross-Confessional Loyalty? The "Christians of Algiers" between the Lord of Kuko and the King of Spain in the Early 1600s', *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015) 153-173.

<sup>50</sup> Renaud Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below and Belonging: Fishermen and Cross-Channel Relations in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present* (2009) 83-125.

<sup>51</sup> Marika Keblusek & Badeloch Noldus (eds.) *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Ebben, 'Uwer Hoog Moogenden Onderdaenigsten Dienaers'.

<sup>53</sup> Sowerby & Hennings, 'Introduction', 2.

### Portfolio Capitalists

The third concept that lies to the foundation of this thesis is called *Portfolio Capitalists*, a concept composed by the historians Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C.A. Bayly. Their theory is based on entrepreneurs in Early Modern India. It entails entrepreneurs who expanded their commercial and financial activities to many different economic sectors, to such an extent that their resources exceeded mercantile dimensions. A portfolio capitalist was “an entrepreneur who farmed revenue, engaged in local agricultural trade, commanded military sources (...) as well as on more than the odd occasion had a flutter in the Great Game of Indian Ocean commerce.” Their successful involvement in these activities was used as a means to obtain social upward mobility. To further their social positions, they reached out to government positions and offices. The consequence was that their entrepreneurial activities bordered aspects of state control. This resulted in a continued dynamic of their roles in trade and politics: partly investing in forms of less mobile capital and utilising their political positions to further their commercial interests, and vice versa.<sup>54</sup>

The latter aspect of this concept is a useful insight for this research. Portfolio Capitalists became intermingled in state power and service to improve their mercantile, but also their societal positions. I would argue that the Gildemeesters were prone to use similar strategies for upward social mobility. Members of the family obtained two type of positions which gave them influence in stately matters: the consular office and the privileged position to function as the commercial diamond contractor. In this thesis I will explore why and how the Gildemeesters came involved in these government-related positions, and how this was used as a strategy for upward social mobility.

### The Biographical Turn

While most biographies traditionally fall somewhere in between academic and popular works, the biographical turn offers a framework for scholarly writing from a biographic perspective, in the case of this thesis, a family biography. The scholarly application of biography as a method of research has important implications for the makeup and outcome of analyses. The approach constitutes looking at the past from the participant’s or agency

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<sup>54</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam & C.A. Bayly, ‘Portfolio capitalists and the political economy of early modern India’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25 (1988) 4, 401-424.

perspective,<sup>55</sup> as it is done in this thesis. One of the conditions for the application of this type of research is to take it into a broader framework of historical interpretation and analysis. The personal perspective of an individual – or in this case a family – can explore, relativize, confirm or correct existing understandings and interpretations of the past. The biographical perspective embodies the viewpoint of individual agency and human experience as a methodological tool. In this thesis I attempt to detect the Gildemeesters as individuals and operating as a family, to understand the dynamic roles they took. This approach puts the grand narratives of structures, such as the diamond trade or the consular service into the perspective of the individual.

## Sources

This thesis is based on relevant historical literature and a diverse selection of primary sources. In order to uncover genealogical data of members of the Gildemeester family, the municipal archives of Amsterdam, Leiden and Utrecht have been consulted. The baptism, marriage and burial listings (*Doop- trouw- en begraafregisters*) of these archives shed light on dates of birth and also offer information about family ties by marriage. Testaments and purchase agreements in the notarial archives (*notariële archieven*) of Amsterdam and Utrecht present interesting knowledge about the family's personal connections and assets, such as real estate and capital. The notarial archives have also allowed me to uncover much about the mercantile activities and commercial connections of the Gildemeesters. For this purpose, I have studied freighting contracts, powers of attorney, bills of exchange, and the purchase agreements of ships.

The second chapter is mainly based on archive material from the States General, which is housed in the Dutch *Nationaal Archief*. I have primarily based the research of this chapter on the incoming letters from (among others) the consul and the States General's representative (*Liasen Portugal*). These were classified as ordinary letters (*ordinaris*) or secret (*secreet*). In order to analyse the documents thoroughly, I have transcribed approximately 80 pages of reports and letters signed by consul Jan Gildemeester and the residents Jan van Til and Charles Bosc de la Calmette. In pursuance of a detailed assessment of the dealings of these men, I have chosen to focus on the sources from the period between

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<sup>55</sup> Hans Renders, Binne de Haan & Jonne Harmsma, *The Biographical Turn, Lives in History* (2016).

1750 and 1753. The archive houses a great wealth of such letters. However, for some of the years that the Gildemeesters were consuls, letters are lacking altogether. This makes it difficult to examine long-term diplomatic processes.

Another category of primary sources are personal family documents of the Gildemeesters, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste. These entail a short autobiographical document written by Jan Gildemeester senior and several testaments. The testaments especially offer insights into intimate familial relationships on the one hand, and an explanation for commercial successes and setbacks on the other hand.

The Gildemeesters have also left traces in the contemporary diaries of William Beckford, the Marquis of Bombelles and the Dutch Lieutenant Cornelis de Jong van Rodenburgh. These three men met Daniel Gildemeester, his wife Jane Garron and his son Daniel junior. Their accounts should be read critically and used carefully, but they provide knowledge about the family's social standing and give colour to the research subjects of this thesis.

Collectively, these sources provide a rich foundation for the research of this thesis. They have enabled me to discover many different aspects of the Gildemeesters: their entrepreneurial activities, personal connections, diplomatic behaviour and social mobility. A disadvantage for this research is my own lack of sufficient knowledge of the Portuguese language. This has disabled me to read most of the Portuguese sources or further this line of enquiry. Any Portuguese sources used for this research have been translated using an online dictionary. I would argue that the most important lacuna in the research material, is the absence of any business correspondence. Documents about the Gildemeester company's day-to-day dealings have not (yet) appeared, while they would have been of great help for this research. Nonetheless, the Gildemeesters have left many archival traces – accounting for a challenging yet fascinating research process.

### [The structure of this thesis](#)

The first chapter focusses on the roots of the Gildemeester family in Utrecht and the beginning of the brothers' trading careers in Lisbon. The chapter offers a short history of the economic context applicable to the family's city of origin, Utrecht. It goes on to present the activities of the Gildemeesters during the beginning of the eighteenth century. Attention is also paid to the socio-economic position of Johannes and Barbara Gildemeester, who were

the parents of Jan, Daniel and Thomas. The chapter analyses the family network, in order to explain the steps taken by the Gildemeester brothers at the beginning of their trading careers. This chapter further addresses the strategies that these brothers employ to build up their careers as merchants in Lisbon.

The second chapter focusses on the consulship of Jan, Daniel and his son Daniel. First, this chapter explores the diplomatic history between Portugal and the Netherlands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was relevant for the position of Jan and Daniel Gildemeester in their capacity of consuls, as treaties between the two countries determined the Dutch Nation's commercial privileges. Next, this chapter analyses the relationship between the Consul and the Representative of the States General in Portugal. After that, a case study of a diplomatic dispute during the 1750's between the Dutch Nation and Lisbon's prime administrative figure, the Marquis of Pombal, will be discussed. This chapter assesses the agency of the Gildemeesters as Consuls. It also examines why obtaining this position and holding on to it, belonged to the set of strategies the family employed to accumulate commercial power.

The third chapter addresses the involvement of the Gildemeesters in the diamond trade. It first gives a concise history of the developments in the diamond trade from the 1730's until the 1750's. Much attention is paid to the institutional context of the diamond trade, which was orchestrated by Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, better known as the Marquis of Pombal. This controversial figure was highly important to Portugal's political economy during the eighteenth century. He also appeared to be of great influence to the career path of Daniel and Thomas Gildemeester. The third chapter analyses how Daniel acquired the diamond contract, and managed to have it prolonged several times until 1788. I conceive the contact between members of the Gildemeester family, and the network of important connections outside the family, as important factors for their success. The strategy of making beneficial connections and keeping their family network intact, receives adequate consideration in this chapter. Finally, the chapter closes with a general assessment of the commercial activities of Jan Gildemeester and his son Jan (Junior).

The epilogue shows how the offspring of Daniel and Jan Gildemeester were able to profit from their ancestors commercial and diplomatic position. This part of the thesis argues that the family firm was not the ideal model for business during the early modern age: one of the sons of Daniel Gildemeester behaved recklessly, which greatly damaged the fortune

and reputation of the family. This chapter also focusses on the fruits of the family's commercial activities and their upwards social mobility. Jan Junior became a successful merchant and was an avid art lover. With his investments in Dutch paintings, he was one of the unofficial founders of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. His brother Hendrik Gildemeester married a girl from a noble family, and became the forefather of the Van Gheel-Gildemeester lineage.

## Chapter 1 - The firm Gildemeester&Co., 1705-1745

The brothers Jan (1705-1779), Daniel (1714-1793) and Thomas (1720-1788) Gildemeester left the Dutch Republic as young men and became successful merchants in Lisbon. They combined their mercantile careers with positions representing the Dutch Nation in Portugal. These brothers operated as a family firm for the greater part of their lives and established a name for themselves in Lisbon and in the Netherlands. This chapter discusses the first years of the Gildemeester brother's activities in trade, from 1721 to 1745. Which factors were of importance for a successful start of their trading careers? Why did the three of them choose Lisbon to move forward with their business, when the family originated from Utrecht, rather than a maritime commercial centre in the Republic? In order to answer these questions adequately, an analysis focussing on the assets and network of the Gildemeester family will be provided. While this thesis focusses on the activities of Jan and Daniel, the broader context of the social-economic standing of their (extended) family is needed, which will be presented in this chapter. As Mathias argues, modest capital and connections were usually preconditions for success and overcoming the initial risks of establishing a business.<sup>56</sup> This chapter confirms that connections and capital of the extended family were of great importance for the chances of the Gildemeester brothers to setting up business in Lisbon.

### The Gildemeesters in Utrecht

The Gildemeesters ended up living in Lisbon and Amsterdam, but they are originally from Utrecht. Utrecht belongs to the Randstad,<sup>57</sup> a conurbation that – from the Golden Age (ca. 1580-1680) on – comprises of the most important cities and large towns in the Northern Netherlands. These urban centres were connected with canals and had direct or indirect access to seaports. Utrecht was an important city during the Middle Ages, but its relative importance declined during the Golden Age. Utrecht was a bishopric during Habsburg rule,

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<sup>56</sup> Mathias, 'Risk, Credit and Kinship' in: McCusker & Morgan & Morgan (eds.), *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge 2001), p. 17-25.

<sup>57</sup> The economically most important cities during the early modern age in this region were: Amsterdam, Leiden, The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Haarlem.



and lost a significant part of the property of religious institutions to the States General and the Protestant Church after the Dutch Revolt. During the early seventeenth century, unrest within Utrecht's municipal and religious authorities also hindered the settlement of a good investment climate.<sup>58</sup> As a result, the economy of the city lagged behind compared to similar Dutch cities such as Leiden and Haarlem. It was the only city in the Randstad region that did not experience a large population growth during the seventeenth century.<sup>59</sup> At the end of the century, Utrecht's economy grew modestly when French Huguenots arrived in the city. The population benefited from their investments in industry, as well as from Dutch overseas trade.<sup>60</sup>

During this period of economic improvement, Johannes Gildemeester (1677-1738), father of Jan and Daniel, grew up as the son of a knife maker.<sup>61</sup> His parents Johannes Gildemeester senior and Maria Hardenberg were united in matrimony in the protestant church in Utrecht.<sup>62</sup> It is clear that Johannes did not follow the career path of his father, since notarial documents show that he was known as a merchant in Utrecht. At the age of twenty-seven, Johannes married Barbera de la Court (1682-1758), who came from a rather prosperous family in Leiden.<sup>63</sup> Johannes and Barbara were both baptized in the Dutch Reformed church, and they would remain protestants during their lives. Perhaps this marriage, combined with positive economic prospects enabled Johannes, the son of a knife maker, to enter trade.

Little is known about Johannes Gildemeester's trading activities, since evidence about him as a merchant is scant. We do not know what types of goods he traded in and how far the scope of his activities reached. Yet we can reconstruct some parts of his social and commercial network by analysing legal contracts. Johannes Gildemeester had financial

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<sup>58</sup> D.E.A. Faber, 'Politiek en bestuur in een soeverein gewest (1581-1674)'; J. Aalbers, 'Met en zonder stadhouders (1674-1747)' in: C. Dekker, Ph. Maarschalkerweerd & J.M. van Winter, *Geschiedenis van de Provincie Utrecht: van 1528 tot 1780* (1997).

<sup>59</sup> R.N.J. Romnes, 'De bevolking' in: Dekker, Maarschalkerweerd and Winter, *Geschiedenis van de Provincie Utrecht*.

<sup>60</sup> R.N.J. Romnes, 'Werken in de stad' in: Dekker, Maarschalkerweerd and Winter, *Geschiedenis van de Provincie Utrecht*; Anne Doedens, *Geschiedenis van Utrecht; De Canon van het Utrechts Verleden* (2013) 54.

<sup>61</sup> Het Utrechts Archief (HUA), Doop-, trouw- en begraafregisters (DTB), inventarisnummer 26, 26-09-1677.

<sup>62</sup> HUA, DTB, 99, 30-04-1672.

<sup>63</sup> It is not clear whether Barbara was related to textile merchant and economic and political thinker Pieter de la Court. Yet there was an enclave of De la Courts in Leiden, who were active as merchants. I think it is probable that Barbara was somehow related to this group of people. Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (ELO), DTB, 265, 06-09-1695; Margreet van der Hut, *Court, Petronella de la*, in: *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*. URL: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Court> [01/03/2014].

ties with family members as well as with others. A power of attorney of 1729 shows that he authorized Alexander Sheuse – a merchant from London – to settle some financial businesses in the English capital.<sup>64</sup> Johannes' trading activities probably reached at least as far as London, which indicates that he was a merchant operating internationally. Still, not enough evidence exists to paint a clear picture of his business activities.

Apart from Johannes' activities as a trader, the family owned real-estate. They possessed plots of land outside Utrecht that were let by a religious institution.<sup>65</sup> Johannes also owned several houses in the city of Utrecht that he rented out, such as two houses on the stately Oudegracht,<sup>66</sup> a dwelling at the Wijde Watersteeg<sup>67</sup> and a house at the Vrouwjuttestraat.<sup>68</sup> The Gildemeesters owned and lived in a house on the Oudegracht, the city's main canal, near the monumental Geertebrugge.<sup>69</sup> Johannes also appeared to be *regent* in Utrecht,<sup>70</sup> a position which was only occupied by inhabitants belonging to the city's upper societal layer. The impression one gets from this information, is that the family was relatively well-off and was able to rise socially, but confined to the city Utrecht.

### Social capital and marital relations

To entrepreneurs especially, the early modern age was marked by uncertainty and risk. In order to minimize or avoid risk, merchants attempted to build networks of people they could fall back on. In this sense, networks are defined by connections. They comprise elements that are connected to each other.<sup>71</sup> Here the focus is on social networks, where the elements are individual people and social units such as families. When the ties in a social network are strong, we can speak of a high-trust social network. The high-trust network of an individual merchant (or family firm) is called social capital. Casson's definition of social capital is used for this research, a component of his theory of entrepreneurship. He defines social capital as "the capitalized value of improvements in economic performance that can be attributed to high-trust social networks." An emphasis on networks highlights the 'social'

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<sup>64</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, inventarisnummer U123a008, 06-10-1729.

<sup>65</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U197a004, 12-03-1753; HUA, NA, U197a002, 01-06-1743.

<sup>66</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U162a019, 26-07-1738.

<sup>67</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U162a015, 23-02-1734.

<sup>68</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U197a003, 19-04-1749.

<sup>69</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U197a003, 14-08-1747.

<sup>70</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U152a004, 15-08-1730.

<sup>71</sup> Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, 152.

aspect of social capital, whilst emphasizing the value of future improvements highlights the ‘capital’ aspect. These aspects intertwine and are both important.<sup>72</sup> While networks have *intrinsic* value and improve the enjoyment in life (e.g. through emotional support and personal recognition), this thesis focusses on the *instrumental* benefits<sup>73</sup> of the Gildemeesters’ network membership.

Historians such as Mathias claim that kinship offered the best chances of setting up high-trust networks during the early modern age. In a society where one often could not fall back on institutions, trust was generally highest among family-members. Wealth from an aspiring merchant’s parents and his group of kin more widely could take away quite some insecurity related to early modern trade. Paired together with wealth and connections from his wife and her family, these factors overcame the first risks of establishing a business. Thus, marriages were essential to the survival and social position of the family, so these traders had deliberate marriage policies.<sup>74</sup> In the case of Jan, Daniel and Thomas Gildemeester, direct succession in the family firm did not happen. Yet I will argue that their entry into the trading world came about through close personal links, which I consider a precondition for their first successes in business.

Johannes and Barbara had at least ten children, of whom seven reached a mature age.<sup>75</sup> Inquiry into the spouses of the Susana (1706-1733) and Maria Magdalena Gildemeester (1724-1770), we get more insights into the social environment of this family. It seems very probable that the Gildemeesters devised a policy of marriage for their daughters. Susana Gildemeester entered marriage at the age of twenty-four with the Amsterdam-based merchant Jan Abouts. The couple got married in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>76</sup> Abouts was a business connection of Daniel de la Court and Michiel de la Court, Susana’s uncles on mother’s side. In 1729, Abouts had empowered Daniel de la Court to observe his interests in Amsterdam while Abouts had to travel for work.<sup>77</sup> In 1734, Abouts owned a trading company together with Barbara’s youngest brother, Michiel de la Court and the merchant Pieter

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<sup>72</sup> Mark Casson & Marina Della Giusta, ‘Entrepreneurship and Social Capital, Analysing the Impact of Social Networks on Entrepreneurial Activity from a Rational Action Perspective’, *International Small Business Journal* 25 (2007) 3, 220-244.

<sup>73</sup> *Idem*, 222.

<sup>74</sup> Luuc Kooijmans, *Among Regents: De elite in a Dutch Town, Hoorn 1700-1780* (Utrecht 1985) 119-161.

<sup>75</sup> The children who reached a mature age were: Jan (1705-1779), Susana (1706-1733), Barbara (1711-1740), Daniel (1714-1793), Willem (1718-?), Thomas (1720-1788) and Maria Magdalena (1724-1770).

<sup>76</sup> HUA, DTB, 102, 20-02-1730.

<sup>77</sup> Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief (GAS), Notarieel Archief, 9099, 10-05-1729.

Antonij Lespaul.<sup>78</sup> The connection between Abouts and the De la Courts remained tight over the years: Daniel de la Court would inherit one eighth of About's assets after his death, as stated in a testament from 1729. Furthermore, Jan Gildemeester was recorded in About's testament for receiving a sum of 3400 guilders.<sup>79</sup> The union between Jan Abouts and the oldest Gildemeester daughter did not last long, as Susana died three years into the marriage. The couple remained childless. Still, it seems probable that the Gildemeester's selected partners with a certain strategy. Jan Abouts was a close connection of their merchant uncles Michiel and Daniel de la Court. Yet – unlike the Gildemeesters – he lived in Amsterdam, the Northern Netherlands' trading centre, and participated in international businesses. The marital connection between Jan Abouts and Susana Gildemeester meant a closer relation with this group of traders in Amsterdam, which was useful for the Gildemeester brothers.

Fifteen years later than Susana, Maria Magdalena also married a merchant from Amsterdam, Johannes van Emst.<sup>80</sup> Both prenuptial agreements (marriage contracts) exist, providing historians with interesting information: it provides insight into their husbands' financial assets.<sup>81</sup> Prenuptial agreements were laid down in a contract of marital conditions, since many material interests were at stake during the closing of a marriage. Such a contract clearly symbolizes that marriage did not only link two people, but meant a financial alliance between two families: it was usually signed by various family members. (Susana's marital agreement was signed by both parents, Maria-Magdalena's contract only by her mother Barbara since her father had died before 1740.) The contract stipulated how the capital of the partners should be divided upon the death of one of them. Susana and Maria Magdalena both had the option to decide after the death of their husbands whether they wanted to share the capital in profit and loss. Then there was also the dowry. In most marriage contracts, in the event that there were no children at the time that one of the spouses died, it was determined that the survivor would receive alimony from the deceased's property. The amount of that benefit, the dowry, gave an indication of the assets of the partners or their parents. A study about elite families from Hoorn (a town in the Northern Netherlands) has revealed that the dowry was usually less than 20,000 guilders.<sup>82</sup> Susana's marital

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<sup>78</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 9120, 23-12-1734.

<sup>79</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 9120, 18-03-1730.

<sup>80</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U162a025, 21-09-1744.

<sup>81</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U162a001, 20-02-1730.

<sup>82</sup> Kooimans, *Among Regents*, 128-131.

contract shows that she would receive 30,000 guilders if Jan Abouts died before she did, which in this context can be considered an extraordinary amount of money. The sum of guilders that was promised as dowry, was often only around 5 to 10 percent of the husband's capital. This demonstrates that her spouse came from the upper layers of the Amsterdam merchant elite. It also shows that Johannes Gildemeester could pay for an extraordinarily high dowry, which demonstrates that the family was quite well-off.

It is very likely that Johannes van Emst knew the Gildemeesters quite well before he entered the marriage with Maria Magdalena. Van Emst already traded to Lisbon, before marrying Maria Magdalena.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps van Emst had met the Gildemeester brothers in Lisbon, who by that time were already recognized merchants. This marriage initiated a partnership between Jan, Daniel and Thomas Gildemeester and Jan van Emst, which would last until 1770.<sup>84</sup> The spouses of Susana and Maria Magdalena show that business connections overlapped with social connections. Establishing strong ties with members of the Amsterdam business community created new opportunities for partnerships and the opportunity for the Gildemeesters to rise socially.

### [The beginning of Jan Gildemeester's career, 1721-1735](#)

Why and how did first Jan Gildemeester, and later two of his younger brothers, start their trading careers in Lisbon? Concise autobiographical records of Jan from the Gildemeester private family archive shed more light on this matter. In 1715, Jan attended a French school in Nieuwersluis, a small town close to Utrecht. The school was well-known by contemporaries, who wrote about its excellent education.<sup>85</sup> In September 1718, Jan started an apprenticeship in the business of his uncle Daniel de la Court and Jan Wijnants in Amsterdam.<sup>86</sup> The firm also had an office in Lisbon, and Jan was sent on the ship *'t Nieuwe Huis* to work there for De la Court, Wijnants and Hermanus Van Holst in 1721. The Lisbon branch went over into the hands of Van Holst and Edouard Ketter in 1722. One year later, Van Holst passed away and Ketter was the only director of the company. Jan Gildemeester

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<sup>83</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 10907, 12-07-1742.

<sup>84</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 12393, 13-07-1770.

<sup>85</sup> Isaak Tirion, *Hedendaagse historie, of tegenwoordige staat van alle volkeren, vervolgende de beschrijving der Vereenigde Nederlanden. Dl. 11-22, Volume 12* (Amsterdam 1772), 80; J.A. Crajenschot, *Kabinet van de Nederlandsche en Kleefsche oudheden, Volume 6* (Amsterdam 1794) p. 124.

<sup>86</sup> De la Court co-owned a trading and insurance firm in Lisbon under the name of De la Court & Wynantz. Johan Engelbert Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578-1795* (Amsterdam 1963) 1041.

stayed with Ketter in Lisbon until 1727, by which time he was 25 years old. In March that year he returned to the Netherlands, possibly to discuss his future plans with his family. It is quite likely that Jan needed to arrange funding in the Dutch Republic to establish his own business, and acquired this through his extended family. Indeed, at the end of the year he returned to Lisbon to set up his own firm in 1728.<sup>87</sup>

The importance of the family network at the outset of Jan Gildemeester's career is evident. His uncle Daniel de la Court made sure that his nephew would learn the trade, by placing him in his own firm. There is more proof that uncle Daniel was a trusted and important family member: he was assigned the role of guardian over his sister's children in the eventuality of Barbara's untimely death.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, he lent his sister and her husband Johannes considerable amounts of money in 1719 and 1720.<sup>89</sup> The reason why Daniel de la Court might have been so prominent in family matters is that he remained strangely unmarried, and had no children. It is quite probable that he put his energy and resources into the children of his sister, because he had none of his own and aspired to pass on his company. It is also possible that he wanted to stimulate a form of upward social mobility for his sister and her family, as he might consider Johannes Gildemeester's commercial accomplishments and social-economic status insufficient for the De la Court family. By offering Jan these opportunities, the whole Gildemeester family could benefit from Jan's successes.

The move from the Amsterdam office to Lisbon was not a strange step for Jan, when comparing this to similar careers of other young men. It was quite common for aspiring merchants like Jan Gildemeester to move abroad. Perry Gauci argues that an adolescent could only secure the formal route into overseas trade via an apprenticeship with the advantages of familial wealth or social capital.<sup>90</sup> Mathias also maintains that a personal introduction was a prerequisite for acceptance, especially when the apprenticeship occurred abroad. At issue was not just the means of learning the merchant's trade, with relevant skills, but of gaining access to a new network. De la Court probably saw potential in Jan Gildemeester, and arranged the introduction to personal contacts in Lisbon. Gauci's and Mathias' findings are supported by an analysis of Oscar Gelderblom of the Southern

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<sup>87</sup> Here I base my statements on the diary of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>88</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U162a024, 15-01-1743.

<sup>89</sup> De Bruyn Kops, 'De Amsterdamse verzamelaar Jan Gildemeester Jansz', 89.

<sup>90</sup> Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The overseas merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford 2001) 69.

Netherlands traders in Amsterdam. These merchants often sent their sons to work alongside (extended) family members in a different city or country.<sup>91</sup> Jan Gildemeesters' history confirms that the household or extended family provided capital and networks for beginning traders. Families with overseas familial connections such as the Gildemeesters enjoyed a distinct advantage in this regard: Jan could enter an international firm, yet practice in a protective environment.

In 1728 Jan started his own firm in Lisbon, while he lived at the house of Josuen van Hoogstraten, who used to be the bookkeeper of De la Court, Wijnants and Van Holst in Lisbon. Four years later he married Maria Ketter: another benchmark of his coming of age as a merchant. She was the sister of Jan's former mentor Jan Edwardt Ketter, in whose house the marriage took place. Besides having a direct link to the company through her brother, Maria belonged to the lower nobility.<sup>92</sup> It was quite usual that apprentices were linked through marriage with their former patrons – most often their daughters. The tie of matrimony represented not only personal attachment, but also enduring commercial priorities: the support of Ketter could have been important for the first years of Jan's business. As a potential economic opportunity and a chance to strengthen or extend one's network, marriage was viewed as a crucial turning-point in the young merchant's life. Notarial documents about the financial side of this union are lacking, but generally marriage came with a marital portion. This meant a welcome boost to the often modest capital of a budding entrepreneur.<sup>93</sup>

The first sign that Jan Gildemeester had established himself as independent trader can be found in a power of attorney at a notary in Amsterdam. Jan Mor, a local merchant in Amsterdam, empowered Gildemeester in 1735 to observe his business and to stand up for his interests. This contract mentioned that Jan was known as a trader in Lisbon.<sup>94</sup> The fact that he was trusted by a colleague-merchant to take care of other's company business abroad provides clues to the fact that Gildemeester had been able to build a favourable reputation for himself in Lisbon.

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<sup>91</sup> Oscar Gelderblom, *Zuid-nederlandse kooplieden en de opkomst van de amsterdamse stapelmarkt 1578-1630* (Hilversum, 2000) 188-207.

<sup>92</sup> Here I base my statements on the diary of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>93</sup> Gelderblom, *Zuid-nederlandse kooplieden*, 70-74.

<sup>94</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 10695, 15-06-1735.

## The firm Gildemeester&Co, 1728-1745

Daniel Gildemeester started his apprenticeship in Cadiz, where his other uncle Thomas de la Court led the Spanish branch of the De la Court firm.<sup>95</sup> In 1728, Daniel followed his older brother to Lisbon in order to become an employee in the newly established Gildemeester company. In 1736 Daniel officially became his brother's partner. Apparently the affair went very well: they soon hired Hendrik Poppe and continued the company under the name of Gildemeester&Co.<sup>96</sup> Hendrik Poppe was also connected with family ties to the Gildemeester brothers. His mother was Helena Gildemeester, who was married to Hendrik Poppe senior from Bremen.<sup>97</sup> Helena was probably a sister or cousin of Johannes Gildemeester. Several years later, Willem Gildemeester (1718-?) also arrived in Lisbon where he assisted in the company. In 1742, Thomas Gildemeester – the youngest of the brothers – joined the company too.

Although the brothers traded from Lisbon, their family connections in the Northern Netherlands remained strong. Notarial documents show that both brothers were involved in the family's dealings after their father Johannes had died in 1738. It is probable that they took turns living in the Dutch Republic for periods of time: Daniel and Jan enabled one another in notarial documents at the end of the 1730's to take care of the family's interest and their commercial dealings in Amsterdam.<sup>98</sup> This Amsterdam-Lisbon based cooperation between the Gildemeesters resulted in a strong link with the family's commercial hubs (Amsterdam and Lisbon) in the decade thereafter.

Significant in this development was the marriage of their sister Maria Magdalena Gildemeester to the Amsterdam-based merchant Jan van Emst in 1743. Willem returned to the Netherlands and co-owned the Amsterdam-based company together with his brother in law. During this marriage, the brothers in Lisbon cooperated with Jan van Emst and Willem. The first proof of their cooperation stems from the year 1745: the ship *De Laurens Galeij* would sail from Amsterdam to Portugal. Jan Van Emst and Willem Gildemeester were responsible for the chartering of the ship and the communication with the captain. They also had to ensure that the ship could load and unload the contents at the right locations.

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<sup>95</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 9089, 17-09-1725.

<sup>96</sup> De Bruin Kops, 'De Amsterdamse verzamelaar Jan Gildemeester Jansz', 85.

<sup>97</sup> Here I base my statements on the diary of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>98</sup> HUA, Notarieel Archief, U162a020, 01-07-1739.



Unfortunately, the document does not reveal any specific information about the cargo and its worth, as the transported goods were to be decided upon later. The galley would first sail to Faro to exchange some of its cargo and then resume its journey to Lisbon. There, the Jan and Daniel Gildemeester would be in charge of paying the harbour tax, receiving the goods and reselling the items.<sup>99</sup> The cooperation between Van Emst and the Gildemeester brothers occurred until 1770, when Van Emst passed away.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that social capital of the Gildemeester family mostly consisted of connections within their kin-group. Family networks were the prime factor for Jan Gildemeester's entry into Amsterdam's and later Lisbon's trading world. In the case of the Gildemeesters, family and business connections cannot be seen as separate: family members were partners in business and unrelated business connections were incorporated into the kin-group through deliberate marriage policies. Through this strategy, Jan Gildemeester and later his brothers too, managed to successfully establish a business in Lisbon that flourished because of strong connections with Amsterdam. Entrepreneurial efforts were also divided by the brothers, in order to expand their business activities.

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<sup>99</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 11893, 05-05-1745.

## Chapter 2 - The Consuls, 1740-1780

This chapter discusses the Gildemeesters' positions in the administrative body of the Dutch Nation in Lisbon. In 1740, Jan Gildemeester became the consul for Dutch merchants living in Portugal, a position which he would hold for almost twenty years. In 1759, brother Daniel took over Jan's position, and after that Daniel's son inherited the consulship. From 1762, Thomas Gildemeester was involved in the administration of the Dutch factory too as caretaker of the Nation's treasury. In 1772, he also operated as acting consul, when his brother Daniel was on leave of absence.<sup>100</sup> An analysis of the activities of Jan and Daniel as consul is essential for this thesis, as I identify the consulship as one of the family's strategies for commercial success and upwards social mobility.

The first part of this chapter offers a concise history of bilateral relations between Portugal and the Dutch Republic from 1640 to 1705. The peace treaties of 1653 and 1705 between the Dutch Republic and Portugal will receive adequate attention. The treaties had important and long lasting consequences for Dutch commercial interests in Portugal, especially for merchants of the Dutch Nation. The effect of these treaties for the Gildemeesters and the other merchants of the Dutch Nation was great. In 1753, 50 years after the last treaty was signed, consul Gildemeester still referred to these document to advocate for the Dutch merchant's interests. This illustrates why an understanding of the bilateral history between the Republic and Portugal is important, to contextualise the consul's actions.

The second part of this chapter discusses Jan Gildemeester's relations with the residing ambassadors in Lisbon. I will argue here that ambassadors had different interests than consuls, because they were representing different groups of interests. It propose that the relationship between the ambassadors and Gildemeester was somewhat ambiguous.

The last part of the chapter presents a case study about Jan Gildemeester as consul during the early 1750s. The scope of this thesis does not allow for a full account of Jan, Daniel and Daniel Junior's consular activities. However, this case study attempts to answer

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<sup>100</sup> O. Schutte, *Repertorium der Nederlandse Vertegenwoordigers, Residerende in het buitenland, 1584-1810* (The Hague 1976) 434-435.

how the Gildemeesters used their position to protect commercial interests of the Dutch Nation, working for their own benefit too.

### Dutch-Portuguese bilateral relations, 1640-1705

In 1640, the Iberian Union of Portugal and Spain ended with the Portuguese revolt. The war established the House of Braganza as Portugal's new ruling dynasty, replacing the House of Habsburg. The new king John IV immediately approached Spain's main enemies for economic alliances: the Dutch Republic, France, England and Sweden. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, John IV ended all embargo's against merchants, ships and goods from the Republic. This meant that Dutch traders and merchandise could access all Portuguese harbours in Europe, with normal taxation.<sup>101</sup>

Dutch-Portuguese relations during the 1640s came under strain because of mutual aggressions overseas. In Brazil, the Portuguese under Dutch West India Company (WIC) rule organized a revolt against the Dutch. The Dutch threatened Portuguese territories in Asia, and captured the fort of Galle (Ceylon)<sup>102</sup> from the Portuguese in 1640. At the same time, the WIC had also taken Angola, which halted the import of slave labour into Brazil. King John IV depended greatly on the Portuguese presence in Brazil as its tax income contributed greatly to the survival of Portugal as an independent state.<sup>103</sup> Because of this he supported revolts from Brazilian inhabitants against the WIC administration by sending soldiers and ships from Lisbon. During the battle of Guararapes, armies made up of natives, Europeans and Africans reconquered the Northeast of Brazil, dictating the end of the Dutch presence in Brazil.

After this defeat, the WIC demanded the payment of war damages, through the States General, from the Portuguese king. The Portuguese ambassador thought this was an unreasonable claim, but could not hold ground because the country was still burdened with the restauration war against Spain.<sup>104</sup> Portugal simply could not risk a war with the Dutch.

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<sup>101</sup> Catia Antunes, 'Oost voor West en West voor Oost. Nederlands-Portugese koloniale interactie in de zeventiende eeuw', in: Lindblad J. Thomas, Schrikker Alicia (Eds.) *Het Verre Gezicht. Politieke en Culturele Relaties Tussen Nederland en Azië, Afrika en Amerika. Opstellen aangeboden aan Prof Dr Leonard Blusse* (Franeker 2011) 35-48.

<sup>102</sup> The fort is situated in the Bay of Galle on the southwest coast of Sri Lanka and was built first in 1588 by the Portuguese, then extensively fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century from 1649 onwards.

<sup>103</sup> Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period*, 149.

<sup>104</sup> Antunes, 'Oost voor West en West voor Oost', 38.

Furthermore, Dutch-Portuguese economic ties and interests were also very strong, which did not allow for a long-lasting conflict.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, negotiations regarding the payments to the WIC lasted for almost ten years, until the parties came to a treaty in 1661.<sup>106</sup> The treaty's first part was purely diplomatic and encompassed the basis for future peace and cooperation. The second part consisted of the settlement for economic compensation and other economic measures. This part stipulated that the Portuguese ought to pay the WIC four million cruzados, (a converted sum of approximately eight million guilders) which was to be paid in cash, sugar, tobacco and salt. The salt payments were a significant part, because the Portuguese treasury was exhausted from the war with Spain. Second only to grain, salt was the most important bulk product in Europe. Because of the treaty, the Dutch would get as much as they would be able to ship. Next to a preferential entrance into Setubal, Dutch merchants received free access to all Portuguese ports in Europe and in the colonies. This was an important privilege, which had also been granted to the English in 1654. Dutch traders would have the same rights and privileges as the English, who were in strong competition with the Dutch in Europe and in overseas areas. It also meant new opportunities for the Dutch trade in the Atlantic.<sup>107</sup>

The 1661 treaty and its interpretation still led to ambiguity and conflicts, especially between Dutch skippers and the Portuguese port authorities. As a result, a revised version of the treaty was signed in 1669, which specified the amounts of salt to be imported and its respective corresponding prices in cruzados and guilders. The 1669 treaty valued the Dutch losses to 500.000 cruzados of salt (approximately 1 million guilders) and the right for the Dutch consuls to receive the royal taxation on salt exports from Setubal. The agreement moved from (only) a trading privilege for the Dutch to a trading privilege and tax farming arrangement. The tax farming arrangement of the salt ponds by the Dutch was not the only in its kind. Another example of this is the tobacco monopoly, which was farmed by the Dutch merchants De Bruijn, Cloots & Zeller in Lisbon between 1722 and 1727. For an annual fee of 720 million reis, they obtained the exclusive right to process and sell Brazilian tobacco in the domestic market. There was a pattern in the relationship between the Dutch merchant

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<sup>105</sup> Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period*, 141.

<sup>106</sup> Treaty of Peace and Alliance between Portugal and the Netherlands, signed at The Hague, 6 August 1661. <http://citator.ouplaw.com/followlink?type=direct&doc=law-oht-6-CTS-375#T=0>

<sup>107</sup> Catia Antunes, 'The commercial relationship between Amsterdam and the Portuguese salt-exporting ports: Aveiro and Setubal, 1580-1715', *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008) 25-53.

groups in Lisbon and the Portuguese crown, which was often a dynamic between trade and tax farming.<sup>108</sup>

The diplomatic situation changed again in 1703, with a new treaty on May 16. During the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713), Portugal became an ally to England and the Dutch Republic. It was the only allied country that bordered Spain, which was crucial for a land invasion of Spain. The importance of Portugal in the fight against the French for the Spanish throne, led the States-General to reconsider some articles of the 1669 treaty. They traded the support of the Portuguese king to invade Spain, with the termination of the payments for the damages in Brazil to the States General.<sup>109</sup> The 1703 treaty welcomed the beginning of peaceful diplomatic relations between Portugal and the Republic. While the treaties of 1661 and 1703 had several diplomatic articles, they also shaped the economic relationships between the two countries. They were the guidelines for later consuls like Gildemeester, who knew how to use the articles to defend Dutch traders' privileges as was registered in the treaties. While these treaties meant the framework for advocacy of later consuls, the documents were also designed by Dutch and Portuguese diplomats at the highest levels. These men were vital for the construction of physical, legal and symbolic foundations needed for the economic relationship between the two countries.<sup>110</sup>

### The Consul and the Resident

Consuls represented commercial interests of their country's trading communities in foreign parts of the world, and were often commercial figures themselves. Northern European countries had consular networks in Southern Europe, because it was part of the Mediterranean commercial culture. Swedish consuls in Cadix and Lisbon acted as merchants and agents for their compatriots. Their position depended on the support of important merchants belonging to the Swedish Nation in both cities.<sup>111</sup> Habsburg-Italian trading factories in Cadix were also represented by a consul or vice-consul, who was the most

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<sup>108</sup> Cátia Antunes, Susana Münch Miranda and João Paulo Salvado, 'The Resources of Others: Dutch Exploitation of European Expansion and Empires, 1570-1800', *unpublished article* (2018).

<sup>109</sup> Portugal also gained the right to free access of Portuguese ships through the Strait of Malakka. The VOC was also forced to accept Portuguese religious supervision in the cities that had been conquered from the Portuguese in Asia. Antunes, 'Oost voor West en West voor Oost', 39-45.

<sup>110</sup> Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period*, 141.

<sup>111</sup> Muller, 'The Swedish Consular Service'.

important merchant of their community.<sup>112</sup> Dutch consuls in Cadiz were appointed by the States General, but their trading connections were important in the selection process. They were chosen by the States General because they were supported by important merchants, connections they had made through their own trading activities.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand, the British nation in Lisbon paid the consul a wage, which gave these merchants the power to control the consul for their own gains. Their power was reflected by the right to withhold payment to the consul if they disapproved of his policies.<sup>114</sup>

Distinctive about Dutch consuls in Lisbon was that they were not appointed by the States-General, but by the Dutch merchant community. Their task was to represent Dutch merchant's interests in Lisbon by communicating with the Portuguese authorities, the Dutch community and the States General. The Republic did recognise these men's power to negotiate at the highest level: consuls played an important role in the negotiation processes of the treaties in 1661, 1669 and 1703. The consuls during this period were also commercially active and they were recognized as important men. "This recognition implies that they were acknowledged by the community there as men of influence. The origin of their influence is clear. They were very important merchants, a fact known by the States General, as well as everyone else."<sup>115</sup>

When Jan became consul in 1740, he had lived in Lisbon for almost twenty years. The firm Gildemeester&Co. was active from 1728 as a trading and insurance company. Their strength seemed to have lied, partially in their numbers. A small enclave of family members lived in Lisbon: Jan, Daniel, Thomas and Hendrik Poppe, were involved in the firm during the 1740s. As was presented in the first chapter, the company was strongly linked to Amsterdam by kin connections. It must have been the case that the business ran smoothly, and that the Gildemeesters were influential men in Lisbon's Dutch merchant community. Otherwise, Jan Gildemeester's request to represent them, would not have been accepted.

Next to the consul, there was also a Dutch resident in Lisbon. He was an appointee of the States General and represented the diplomatic and commercial interests of the state

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<sup>112</sup> Klemens Kaps, 'Small but powerful: networking strategies and the trade business of Habsburg-Italian merchants in Cadiz in the second half of the eighteenth century', *European Review of History/Revue europeenne d'histoire* 23 (2016) 3, 427-255.

<sup>113</sup> P.A. Boorsma-Mendoza, 'Merchant Consuls. Dutch consuls in Cadiz and their divided loyalties', Master's thesis at Leiden University (2015), pp. 13-35.

<sup>114</sup> Shaw, *The Anglo Portuguese Alliance*, 49.

<sup>115</sup> Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern period*, 132.

with Portugal. Letters of the Dutch residents to the States General mostly reveal information about the whereabouts of the royal family and politically sensitive information such as the location of warships. The resident also had to officially present himself to the Portuguese monarch. This illustrates that he was a representative of the States General at the Portuguese court.<sup>116</sup> The residents were salaried diplomats, although their income was not sufficient to support themselves in Lisbon and their income was complemented, in this particular case, by trading activities and financial services.<sup>117</sup>

The most important task of the consul was representing the collective interests of merchants of their own nation. The letters of Dutch consuls to the States General treated general affairs as well as acute events that led to complaints of the Dutch merchants in foreign areas. So the consul represented other interests than the resident.<sup>118</sup> The (honorary) consuls like Gildemeester did not receive a salary for their service from the States General, but received income from the nation.<sup>119</sup> For both representatives of the States General and consuls, the international political situation at the time determined for a great part the quality and type of diplomatic contact. The period from 1703 onwards was marked by peaceful bilateral relations between the Republic and Portugal. This meant that the resident and the consul had to maintain a good relationship, but were not confronted with the threat of war or embargoes between the two countries.

#### [Jan Gildemeester and residents Jan Van Til and Charles Francois Bosch de la Calmette](#)

Shaw has reviewed a great number of British consuls and envoys serving in Lisbon between 1654 and 1810. While they generally worked well together, she argues, there was a source of jealousy between them: consuls frequently earned more than envoys, without having to keep up lavish appearances. This sometimes led to friction between the two, which hindered their cooperation. In the cases studied by Shaw, this often led to the transfer of the envoy to a different post. The type of relationship and cooperation also differed with each consul and

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<sup>116</sup> Nationaal Archief (NA), The Hague: Staten-Generaal Archive (SG), Lias Portugal, 7026.

<sup>117</sup> The residents during Jan Gildemeester's time as consul, C.F. Bosch de la Calmette and Jan Van Til received 6000 guilders at the start of his tenure in Lisbon. Bosch de la Calmette received 6000 guilders extra after the earth-quake. Schutte, *Repertorium*, 428.

<sup>118</sup> Ebben, 'Uwer Hoog Moogenden'.

<sup>119</sup> Ana Mar Fernandez Pasarn, 'Consulates and Consular Diplomacy', in: Constan M. Constantinou, Pauline Kerr & Paul Sharp, *The Sage Handbook of Diplomacy* (2016) 2-11; Muller, 'The Swedish Consular Service'; Ebben, 'Uwer Hoog Moogenden'.

resident. There were consuls and envoys who divided the topics of their reports to the British government. Some envoys exclusively dealt with political matters, while others also reported on commerce.<sup>120</sup>

When Jan Gildemeester became consul in 1740, the resident was a man by the name of Jan Rochus van Til (1698-1755), who had already held the position from 1732. Van Til was the son of a theology professor at Leiden University, Salomon van Til. Jan van Til was educated in Leiden too, where he studied law. He practiced as a lawyer in The Hague and was the juridical councillor of Purmerend, a town close to Amsterdam.<sup>121</sup> He moved to Lisbon to become the resident for the States General in 1732. Van Til was a career diplomat: after a tenure of almost twenty years he became the resident in Cologne from 1751 until his death in 1755.<sup>122</sup>

In the summer of 1734, the two men already got acquainted in quite a special way. Jan had been arrested by an employee of the Portuguese port authorities,<sup>123</sup> which was deemed forbidden by treaties between the Dutch Republic and Portugal. The Resident had acted as Gildemeester's representative and made sure that he was set free. After that episode, Van Til took the case further and arranged a compensation for Gildemeester from the Portuguese authorities.<sup>124</sup> Van Til held his position until 1751 and the relationship between him and Gildemeester seems to have been quite harmonious. The letters from Van Til to the States General mainly concerned information about the royal family, the relationship with the diplomats from other countries and the location of Dutch convoys.<sup>125</sup> Gildemeester mostly wrote about more acute issues regarding Dutch merchants, and whether the conditions in Lisbon were favourable for commerce. This seemed to have been a clear divide in their communication and their tasks, which was inherent to the interests of the groups they represented.

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<sup>120</sup> Shaw, *The Anglo Portuguese Alliance*, 56-58.

<sup>121</sup> John Besseling, 'Joan Jacob Mauricius (1692-1768): bouwstenen voor een biografie Deel I: 1692-1737', *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weijerman* (2013) 140-153.

<sup>122</sup> George Sanders, *Het present van Staat: De gouden ketens, kettingen en medailles verleend door de Staten-Generaal, 1588-1795* (2013) 89-91; Schutte, 184, 428.

<sup>123</sup> Referred to as *Providoor van de Gesontheit*, these authorities inspected ships that imported foodstuffs into the Lisbon port. Any wares that were spoiled had to be thrown off the ship. This often irritated merchant, as they thought this was unfair.

<sup>124</sup> Nationaal Archief (NA), Den Haag, Staten Generaal (SG), *Liassen Portugal 1641-1795*, Inventarisnummer 7023, 1734; NA, SG, *Ordinaris Resoluties*, 2357, 09-1734.

<sup>125</sup> NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7023-7026.



The cooperation between the two men does not strike me as conflictual, yet there was something which probably influenced their professional relationship: Van Til was heavily indebted to Gildemeester personally and he had received money from the treasury of the Dutch Nation. Several letters from Jan Van Til describe his difficult financial situation. He wrote to the States General in 1735 about the “impossibility of his subsistence at the court.”<sup>126</sup> In a meeting of the province of Holland that year, Van Til wrote, it was advised that he would receive a raise on his salary of 6000 guilders.<sup>127</sup> Yet by 1736, nothing had changed. In 1738, Van Til had visited the Republic and managed to get 200 guilders extra per year, which was not sufficient according to him. In 1740 the Portuguese court celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the kingdom with festivities, which caused “the house rent and the compensations for the domestic aids and anything relating to maintaining an orderly household, to rise to a double price.”<sup>128</sup> This heavily indebted Van Til, after which he sought the aid from the Dutch nation. With permission from the States General, Van Til received 300 pieces of gold from the nation’s treasury. This only helped him temporarily: three years later, Van Til had a debt of 6000 guilders to Jan Gildemeester personally, which he did not know how to pay back.<sup>129</sup>

Why did Van Til have such financial problems? According to him, the expenses of living at Lisbon’s court were high compared to other places. Shaw mentions that life in Lisbon was very expensive, especially for envoys who were expected to appear as affluent men.<sup>130</sup> Still, diplomats could always resort to trading when their salaries were insufficient for their livelihood. While this was sometimes considered embarrassing as it damaged the prestige of their posts, some diplomats operating in the Levant resorted to this option.<sup>131</sup> Perhaps Van Til tried to trade and failed, or maybe he neglected that opportunity to boost his income. How did his indebtedness influence the relationship with the Dutch traders and with Gildemeester? It could have been the case that this made the resident obedient to the

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<sup>126</sup> “Ik had al getoond de impossibilitijt van mijne subsistentie aen dit hoff”, NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7026, 29-11-1746.

<sup>127</sup> Van Till received a yearly allowance of 6000 guilders. Schutte, *Repertorium*, 184.

<sup>128</sup> “den huijs huyren de beloningen der demstiquen en alles wat verder relatie heeft tot een dubbele prijs stijgende”, NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7026, 29-11-1746.

<sup>129</sup> Idem.

<sup>130</sup> Shaw, *The Anglo Portuguese Alliance*, 56-58.

<sup>131</sup> Niels Steensgaard, ‘Consuls and Nations in the Levant from 1570 to 1650’, *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15 (1967)1, 13-55.

wishes of the nation and the consul. I can only imagine that this influenced their working relationship in favour of Gildemeester and the other merchants.

In the same letter of 1746, Van Til requested to be transferred to Denmark or Russia, or another city which – according to him – required less money. He was given permission for this in 1748. He returned to the Netherlands in 1750, after which he became the resident for the States General in Cologne.<sup>132</sup> His successor arrived two years later, and in the meantime Gildemeester acted as interim resident. During this time Gildemeester dutifully wrote about the same topics to the States General as Van Til used to do.<sup>133</sup> The next resident was Charles Francois Bosc de la Calmette, son of French migrants living in Den Bosch, in the province of North Brabant. His father was a regent in this town and Bosch de la Calmette inherited the stewardship over Peelland, a rural area near Den Bosch. Bosc de la Calmette had started his diplomatic career in Switzerland as resident on April 10, 1748. He was transferred to Lisbon as minister in 1752. After serving six years in Lisbon, Calmette would move to Denmark, where he would work as resident until 1770.<sup>134</sup> Calmette informed the States General of similar issues as Van Til. Yet the political situation changed at the Portuguese court, which would demand a greater role in the commercial dealings of the States General than had been the case with his predecessor.

#### Case study: The Problematic 1750s

Analysing a period in more detail reveals a better understanding of the dynamics between the consul, the resident, the Dutch Nation and the States-General. How did the Dutch nation, headed by Gildemeester, advocate for the merchants' interests? The letters reveal which topics were of interest to the merchants, especially when certain issues were repeatedly written about to the States General. Bosc de la Calmette also wrote about commercial matters to the States General, often to present his own viewpoint. How did the reports of Gildemeester and Bosc de la Calmette differ, and why?

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<sup>132</sup> Sanders, *Het present van Staat*, 91; Schutte, *Repertorium*, 184.

<sup>133</sup> NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7026 and 7027.

<sup>134</sup> Schutte, *Repertorium*, 249-50.

### Justification of the case study: the years 1752-1755

A period of time which is very suitable for this case study, are the years from 1750 to the beginning of 1755 because of the political changes that took place. These years preceded the devastating earth-quake on November 1, 1755. Not only did this disrupt the physical appearance of the city, it also accelerated a reform process of Lisbon's (economic) institutions. However, the institutional reforms of the Marquis of Pombal had already made an introduction and stirred unrest in Lisbon's Dutch merchant community. This is why the documentation about commercial matters of this period is very rich, and lends itself well for this case study.

The new decade began with a profound political change, as king John V died in 1750. His son Joseph I was crowned King on July 31 that year at the age of 36. Joseph I had a great liking of Sebastiao Jose de Carvalho e Melo, better known as the first Marquis of Pombal. Pombal had served as the Portuguese Ambassador to Great-Britain (1738-1745) and Austria (1745-1749). One of the first acts of Joseph I was to appoint Pombal as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The King's confidence in him increased even more, and the King trusted him with more control over state affairs. In 1755 Carvalho e Melo even became the Secretary of State. For the resident and the consul this meant that they no longer addressed their issues, questions and complaints to the King, but to Pombal. During Pombal's rise to power, he also reformed many aspects of the Portuguese economy. These reforms will receive much attention in the third chapter. For now, it suffices to mention that Pombal aimed to make Portugal an economically self-sufficient and commercially strong nation. The Portuguese economy was dependent on income from colonial Brazil and England for manufactures. Even export from Portugal went mostly through foreign merchants like the English and the Dutch. Carvalho e Melo wanted to create a national bourgeoisie of Portuguese merchants, that would be financially strong enough to challenge foreign traders.<sup>135</sup> I would argue that the beginning of Pombal's tenure caused difficulties for merchants of the Dutch Nation. The treaties of 1661 and 1703 would often be violated in the viewpoint of Gildemeester and his fellow merchants.

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<sup>135</sup> Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge 1995) 87-111.

## Four grievances of the Dutch Nation

During the early 1750's, complaints relating to commerce started finding its way to the States General. In January of 1752, Gildemeester communicated these problems to the States General:

“My Gentlemen, it has been a long while that you have been disturbed with our grievances relating commerce. It is always my intention to address the issues by going to the courts and individual secretaries to arrange the best as possible for the [Dutch] Nation. Experience has taught me that it is easier and faster to try to settle matters there. [...] While I have chosen to deal with the grievances this way again, I would also like to inform Your Excellencies. The resolution of 1734<sup>136</sup> has not led to satisfaction and the old procedure has started again lately. [...] Especially the ship Leyhoff of Cornelis Metselaar that carried great quantities of cheeses had to throw much of it overboard, all against the existing regulations. [...] I have also addressed the issue to the secretary of state Sebastiaan Joseph de Carvalho, who has assured to inform his majesty.”<sup>137</sup>

The act of the Portuguese port authorities of throwing stale food stuffs overboard had been a common practise during the 1730's, and often led to conflicts with the merchants from the Dutch Republic. The practice was against agreements between the Portuguese Crown and the States General. So it was no more than logical that the consul addressed the issue with the Lisbon courts.

Not long after Gildemeester's briefing about these issues, the new resident arrived in Lisbon. On April 17, 1752, the States General sent a letter to the Portuguese court,

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<sup>136</sup> The resolution of 1734 contained rules regarding the inspection of ships that imported food stuffs. The authorities had agreed that they would conform to a milder inspection and discuss with the merchants and skippers about throwing away rotten food. NA, SG, *Ordinaris Resoluties*, 2357, 09-1734.

<sup>137</sup> “Het is een geruyme tijd geleeden dat u Hoog Moogde met geen commertie grieven zijn lasting gevallen. Vermits altoos tot mijnen oogmerk hebbe die so veel doenlijk bij de regtbanken en particuliere ministers ten beste van de natie te besoliciteeren, also de ervarentheid mij heeft doen ondervinden de saken daar veel spoediger en beter te beplijten zijn. [...] En hoewel meede die weg hebben ingeslaagen, heeft mij goed gedagt, sulk meede aan may te doen. Bij de resolutie van 1734 heeft men geen satisfactie kunnen verkrijgen en is der procedure thans weder levende geworden. [...] voornamentlijk aan het schip lelyhof schipper cornelis metselaar dat groote kwantetijd van voonde kaasen sijn gekomen [...] met aanhalinge overboord werpen, alles tegen reglementen en orders. [...] Reets so verre gevorderd, dat den Hr secretaries van staad Sebastiaan Joseph de Carvalho mij ook reets versekering gegeven sijn may de nodige informaties soude late doen. NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal 1641-1795*, 7027, 18-12-1752.

presenting Charles Francois Bosc de la Calmette as the new Dutch representative.<sup>138</sup> Bosc de la Calmette arrived in Lisbon in July, after a hazardous journey by carriage from Madrid. Bosc de la Calmette described in a letter to the States General that he and his family were ambushed on the road and his child had fallen ill.<sup>139</sup> Shortly after his arrival, the merchants of the Dutch Nation started complaining to Bosc de la Calmette about their problems with the Portuguese authorities. He thought that many of the merchant's complaints contradicted each other. So he had consul Gildemeester assemble the Nation in his house and write a general report about the problems that they encountered. This document was sent to the States-General on March 16, 1753. Alongside with it, Jan Gildemeester sent reports about four different issues which damaged the Dutch merchants who traded with Portuguese ports.<sup>140</sup> Bosc de la Calmette also wrote a long dispatch with his impressions of the problems encountered by the Dutch traders, together with several recommendations to the States General.<sup>141</sup> These documents will be compared, analysing the issues written down by different (groups of) people: Jan Gildemeester, the nation and Bosc de la Calmette.

There were four points which the Dutch merchants in Portugal wrote down in their address to the States-General. The first issue was related to *Aposentadoria Passiva*: the right of the Dutch merchants to not be removed from a rented house and to pay the same amount of yearly rent. They argued that this privilege was important, because it was a condition to live in the city without trouble. Recently, there had been a case with the Dutch traders George Arnaldo Dohrman and Manuel Joseph Vermeulen, where *Aposentadoria Passiva* was not respected. The other factories, such as the Hamburgers and the English also had the right of *Aposentadoria Passiva* and the Dutch nation argued that now they were disadvantaged compared to these other communities. Resident Bosc de la Calmette thought that the Dutch were right in this matter, as they had obtained this privilege as early as any other factory. He said the right was also fixed in the 1661 peace treaty. This is true, as the fourth article of this treaty states that Dutch merchants have the right to live in houses on Portuguese territories and to have warehouses to store their merchandise.<sup>142</sup> However, he

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<sup>138</sup> NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7026, 17-04-1752.

<sup>139</sup> NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7026, 16-07-1752.

<sup>140</sup> NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>141</sup> NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>142</sup> Treaty of Peace and Alliance between Portugal and the Netherlands, signed at The Hague, 6 August 1661. <http://citator.ouplaw.com/followlink?type=direct&doc=law-oht-6-CTS-375#T=0>

had heard from a Dutch merchant that soon there would be a favourable moment to bring the issue up with the authorities. If one picked the wrong moment at the Portuguese court, he argued, it would take forever to settle the matter.<sup>143</sup>

The second grievance had to do with *Interim Moratorium*, which was a legal remedy to prevent enforcement of financial rights in the Lisbon courtroom. Specifically, it disabled creditors for a given period of time, for the debtor's sake of paying off debts, to access the assets of the debtor. In the words of the nation, it was a "novelty that emerged a couple of years before, which was designed by defaulters."<sup>144</sup> *Interim Moratorium* was a royal mandate, but Bosc de la Calmette argued that it conflicted with the fourth article of the 1661 peace treaty. In 1710, he claimed, the Dutch consul had requested King John V to disengage the Dutch traders from *Interim Moratorium*. Together with the English nation, Dutch merchants were granted this privilege. The result was that Portuguese or other merchants did not receive special protection from the court, when they were sued by Dutch and English merchants. While the legal remedy was abolished in 1710, the Portuguese merchants had invented a new construction that delayed the judicial process. Now, the Portuguese court considered the case only after a couple of months, and the merchant could not force the debtor to pay. Calmette wrote that this way it could take years before a debtor was legally forced to pay the creditor. Both the letters of the Dutch Nation and the report from Bosc de la Calmette are convincing pleas for the injustice of the new practice. As with the right of *Aposentadoria Passiva*, the Dutch held the same privilege as English traders, which was highlighted in both letters. Jan Gildemeester had already addressed this issue with Carvalho e Melo who had answered Gildemeester that the practice was not against the law. He wrote that he would also send the nation a document which would explain why the Portuguese had the right to do this.<sup>145</sup> A report of this document cannot be found in the archive. The nation wanted the resident to argue their case with the Portuguese authorities too. Bosc de la Calmette argued: "this practice was founded on the loopholes of the law, and definitely in itself unjust. However, I fear that scarcely any redress can be obtained, because

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<sup>143</sup> NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>144</sup> "nieuwigheid welke zeedert korte jaaren eerst voor den dag gekomen, en door de quade betaalders is geinveteerd geworden" NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>145</sup> NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

it appears as the administration of justice. Already too many merchants look for their bills at the court.”<sup>146</sup>

The Dutch merchants in Lisbon must have been in financial trouble themselves, when they were unable to make a claim on their capital. The money owed from Portuguese merchants was probably needed to pay their agents in Amsterdam or elsewhere, in order to continue their business. I would argue that the difficulties concerning *Interim Moratorium* originated from a small financial crisis beginning in January 1753, which was related to the Brazilian diamond trade. This crisis will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but for now it is of interest to specifically consider its effects on Lisbon’s merchant community. In 1753 the diamond trade came to a standstill because of defects in its financing structure. The trade in Brazilian precious stones was a rather significant part of the Portuguese economy, and the impasse caused a lack of circulation of money, which paralysed the whole trading community of Lisbon. The problem was that some merchants were indebted with private merchants, as well as with the Portuguese government. The authorities tried to solve the problem by putting pawned diamonds up for public auction, but because of the low bids, a new diamond crisis occurred. The crisis dragged on for the rest of the year, until the diamond trade was restructured in 1754.<sup>147</sup> Because the cash flow had stopped, the Portuguese court’s reaction was probably to delay lawsuits from foreign merchants. While Gildemeester and Bosc de la Calmette could attempt to appeal to the authorities in Lisbon, it was a settled case. The problems were temporary for the Dutch nation: when the crisis ended, similar complaints were not voiced to the States General again.

The third reason for complaint of the Dutch nation was to do with an argument concerning import duties. The nation wrote that the Dutch paid 10% taxes when importing half-silk fabrics. On December 22, 1752, the port authorities had raised the import duty to 20%, without consulting the Dutch nation. According to the merchants, this raise was contrary to the royal orders because the King had not given an explicit mandate to the port authorities for any changes to taxation. They argued they had paid the double of their normal taxation, and wished a restitution of that money. Resident Bosc de la Calmette did

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<sup>146</sup> “Gefundeert op de chicanes van Regten is zekerlijk in sigselfs seer onregtvaardig. Dog is te vreesen, dat beswaarlijk eenig Voldoende redress daar omtrent zal zijn te verkrijgen, omdat het een apparentie heeft van regtspleeging. En al te veel luijden haar rekening vinden, bij het zelfde te rechteren.” NA, SG, *Lias Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>147</sup> Vanneste, *Global Trade*, 53.

not think the complaints of the merchants were well-grounded. He argued that the half-silk fabrics were also made out of yarn. For yarn, a twenty percent import duty was in place. He attributes the increase of import duties to a more watchful stand of the Royal Family. He called the 10% duty “an old use, or rather misuse”.<sup>148</sup> I would argue that the increase of taxes should be seen in the light of Carvalho e Melo’s mercantilist policies. During his first years as secretary of foreign affairs he installed a policy of import substitution to stimulate Portugal’s production of – among other products – textiles. The policy was especially meant to reduce Portugal’s trade deficit to Great-Britain,<sup>149</sup> but it must have impacted the Dutch merchants too.

Then who was right: the Dutch Nation or Bosc de la Calmette? Imposing higher taxes on the Dutch merchants was prohibited by the eighth article of the 1661 treaty. Yet Calmette does not consider the change of 10% to 20% taxation on half-silk fabrics as an increase, but a revision because it concerned a different fabric. The Dutch nation, I would argue, was especially affected by the sudden stringency of the port authorities and the fact they were not properly informed.<sup>150</sup> The British traders encountered the same problem: the valuations on new types of cloth were not yet enumerated by the port authorities. The president of the customs was rigid and sometimes over severe in the interpretation of set customs.<sup>151</sup> Whether the taxation was revised after some time is not clear, but the complaint was not voiced again.

The fourth complaint of the nation had already been articulated by Jan Gildemeester: employees of the port authorities came on board ships and threw foodstuffs overboard when they were rotten. This was a recurring issue, which really bothered the Dutch merchants. Between 1734 and 1743, there had been several of these cases, and the Portuguese and Dutch had never come to a settlement. In 1734, Gildemeester himself had refused to pay the fine, which the Portuguese authorities required him to pay after mooring a ship with stale foodstuffs. As a result, the port authorities had imprisoned him. It is quite likely that this incident caused even more irritation with Gildemeester. On January 18, 1752 Gildemeester had mentioned that the practice had started again, with his own ship. The ship

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<sup>148</sup> “Een oud gebruik, of eerder misbruik” NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>149</sup> Susana Munch Miranda, Leonor Freire Costa, Pedro Lains, *An Economic History of Portugal, 1143-2010* (2016) 27-38.

<sup>150</sup> NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>151</sup> Shaw, *The Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*, 106



had carried wheat, of which just a small part had gone bad, but the port authorities had thrown all of it overboard.<sup>152</sup> Another aggravation was the fine of 4800 reis the merchant had to pay to the authorities when this happened.<sup>153</sup>

The practice of throwing foodstuffs overboard seems very harsh, especially when considering that merchants had to pay a fine too. When Gildemeester confronted Carvalho e Melo with the practice, the latter had responded that the Portuguese authorities were allowed to do this. He advised Gildemeester not to take the case to court. The advice was ignored. Gildemeester did take the case to the Portuguese Higher Council: the verdict was in his favour. Consequently, the port authorities took the case to the Royal Council. The judges decided against the Dutch consul, based on the advice of Carvalho e Melo.<sup>154</sup> Calmette argues that this verdict was unjust, as it conflicted with the treaty. However, he feared that he would achieve nothing by confronting the secretary of foreign affairs, because “being the author of the mentioned advice, it would be difficult to change his mind on this matter.” Bosc de la Calmette suggested that the inspections would still be welcome on the ships, yet decided together with the skipper which foodstuffs were not suitable for import.<sup>155</sup> A diplomatic solution, but not to be considered by the merchants.

Who was behind the reoccurrence of the strict inspections of the port authorities? I would argue that it was Carvalho e Melo, who had initiated a power play with the Dutch nation and specifically their consul. It was his policy to favour Portuguese merchants over foreign traders and the inspections were a way to damage the Dutch. The secretary of foreign affairs seemed to have controlled the port authorities, instructing them to inspect Gildemeester’s ship. That it was the consul’s wheat thrown overboard does not strike me as a coincidence. I would argue that this should be considered as intimidation from Carvalho e Melo towards the Dutch traders. The fact that Gildemeester went to court against Carvalho e Melo’s advice, I would suggest, is a sign that he would not let the secretary of foreign affairs undermine him. After Gildemeester’s claim was denied by the Portuguese court, his strategy was to inform the States General of the harmful practice in order to get their support.

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<sup>152</sup> NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7027, 18-12-1752.

<sup>153</sup> NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>154</sup> NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>155</sup> “den Autheur zijnde van voors. Advis, moeilijk zoude zijn tot andere gedagten op dat stuk te brengen” NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

In the resident's long letter, he makes several concluding remarks regarding the state of Dutch commerce in Lisbon. The Nation and Gildemeester convincingly argue that the commercial privileges of Dutch traders were being attacked by recent developments in the Portuguese government. Calmette agrees on most points with them and the general impression is that he understands their grievances. However, in the concluding pages of his letter he plays down how recent developments were affecting the Dutch merchants:

"Noble gentlemen, you have seen all the grievances relating commerce, that the Nation, as well as the Consul have informed me of which exist nowadays. Most are valid, but of the greatest part they consist of vexations of the clerks of different tribunals that should not occur. Often the merchants themselves present them with this opportunity because of their slyness. One cannot say that this harms the soul of commerce and the subsequent decline of our commerce in this empire cannot be attributed to it. The same vexations are committed against other foreign Nations, which should lead to a decline in their trade as well. I have not as yet noticed this, as that of the English and the Hamburgers only increases."<sup>156</sup>

#### Economic consular agency

Next to the four complaints of the nation, Jan Gildemeester also voiced two of his own grievances. These were also mentioned in Bosc de la Calmette's long report, accompanied by his own conceptions and suggestions. Why did Gildemeester articulate two separate concerns, apart from the letter on behalf of the Dutch nation in Lisbon? First of all, Gildemeester was the consul general, which meant he was responsible for commerce in all of Portugal. The merchants of the nation only represented interests in Lisbon. Second, I would argue that Gildemeester considered it a strategy to represent those commercial

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<sup>156</sup> "Ziet daar u Edele Gestrenge Heer, alle de commercie Grieven, die zoo de natie, als de Consul mij opgegeven hebben Voor het tegenswoordige alhier te exteeren. En hoe weesentlijk De meeste van dezelve plaats mogen hebben, zal men egter moeten toestaan, dat van het grootste gedeelte, bestaande in eenige Vexatien, van de bediendens van de differente tribunaaten, Die altoos geen plaats hebben, en tot welke al dikwijls de Koopluiden selfs occasie geeven door des meening vuldiger sluijkerijen, dat men eijgentlijk niet kan seggen, dat de ziel Van de commercie raken, en vervolgens dat het verval van Onze commercie in dit rijk aan dezelve niet tegeschreeven Kan werden. Want behalve, dat dezelve vexation even Gelijk gepleegt werdende, tegens alle de andere vreemde Natien, daar uijt zude moeten volgen, dat derzelve commercie uijt dezelve oorszaak insgelijk wrede moeten verminderen, daar men nogthans het contrarie gespeurt Dewijle onder anderen dat van de Engelsche en Hamburgers, Dagelijcx meer en meer toeneemt." NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

**Picture 1.**



Portrait of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, 1st Marquis of Pombal, 1st Count of Oeiras. Museu de Lisboa, *Joana do Salitre*, 18th Century.

affairs, in which he probably had mercantile interests. Gildemeester's first complaint had to do with the purchase of salt at Setubal:

"A complaint, about which we have reason to demand repairs, has to do with the noncompliance of the second peace article. It explicitly and clearly stipulates the free trade and unhindered purchase of salt of St. Ubes.<sup>157</sup> When not permitted, this leads to great disadvantage of commerce, originating from an old use of selling to foreigners with a set price that was made years ago, according to the repartition taxation of the salt ponds. There were already complaints about this before the States General made peace. This article takes it in explicit consideration, and was postulated for, the free purchase [of salt] by the national subjects, without having to be constrained by taxation as specifically treated in the mentioned article."<sup>158</sup>

Gildemeester aimed at the 1669 treaty, which stipulated the agreements regarding the collection of salt at Setubal's evaporating ponds and the right for the Dutch to collect taxation. This treaty awarded an important role to the Dutch consuls in Lisbon: these men were the collectors of the taxation at Setubal's salt ponds. They were also exempted from paying taxation over the salt by the treaties of 1661 and 1669.<sup>159</sup> The treaty of 1703 ended this article, when all the damage costs to the WIC had been considered paid for. Yet the Dutch still held a privileged position for collecting salt. So Gildemeester is quoting the old treaty rather than the latter for his own advantage. In his report, Jan Gildemeester is aiming at repartition: instead of selling the salt to the first ship arriving in Setubal, clerks were dividing all available salt by all ships entering the port. That meant that skippers from different countries could get the salt. The advantage was that it lowered the prices of

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<sup>157</sup> Setubal was called St. Ubes by the Dutch and English.

<sup>158</sup> "Een grief, waar over met reeden en fundament reparaties Kan geeyscht werden, bestaat in het niet Nakomen van t' 2de Vreedens Art: waarbij uytdrukkelijk & klaar werd bedongen, den Vrije handel en onverhinderde Inkoop van t'Sout tot St. Ubes, dat Al meede niet permitteeren, tot groot naadeel van de Commerce, Spruijtende uijt, een oude ingevoerte gewoonte en ordonnantie Tot St. Ubes, van het niet anders als aan vreemdelinge int generael te verkopen en te leveren als tot een vastgestelde prijs Die alle jaaren gemaakt werd, en daarna afgeladen, volgens de Repartitie der Zout pannen, waar teegen al klagten sijn ingekomen Voor het sluijten der vreeden en daarom door Haar Ho: Mo: bij dit Art: wel expresselijk in agt genomen, en solemneel bedongen, de Vrijheyd van Inkoop voor haar onderdanen, sonder aan deeze repartitie gehouden te sijn, als heel omstandig in t' voors. Art: Verhandelt werd." NA, SG, *Liassen Portugal*, 7040, 16-03-1753.

<sup>159</sup> Antunes, 'The commercial relationship', 39-43.

purchase. However, the Dutch felt disadvantaged: as privileged traders, they were used to having the right to be the first to enter the port. Calmette agreed with Gildemeester on this point, and expected that it would be possible to claim some damages from the Portuguese, if the States General would allow it.

The second grievance at hand was a debt of the Portuguese Crown with merchants from the Dutch Nation, who had been suppliers of the King. The King had appointed a commission in 1749 with the task to amortise the debts. This was done with the income from tobacco, gold and wood from Brazil. The Portuguese state had also issued bonds with a 5% interest rate. This arrangement provided for a partly payment of the debts to the merchants, until the payments had ceased in 1753. The King had notified that he needed the funds for his other plans, but that the restitution would commence the same year. Calmette wanted to wait on this. But of course it was not his own capital that was at stake. Gildemeester was less willing to believe the Portuguese court. This seems obvious, as he defended the interests of Dutch merchants who depended on the repayments from the Portuguese king. Their trading activities in Portugal would become subject to uncertainty, when the Portuguese court was unable to provide the reimbursements. While the consul advocates the general interests of Dutch merchants on this point, I would argue that it is likely that Gildemeester's company was vested in this matter too. It could be the case that Gildemeester wanted to place extra emphasis on this matter by including it in his reports to the States General.

Gildemeester's general objectives seem clear: as consul he needed to defend commercial conditions for Dutch traders, and specifically for members of the Dutch nation. I would argue that the interests of the nation were also relevant to Gildemeester's own mercantile activities. He traded under the same conditions as the other Dutch merchants and was equally disadvantaged when Dutch privileges were not respected. Furthermore, the consul received more income when the community of Dutch traders was large and when many Dutch ships sailed to Portuguese harbours.

The group's interests as well as his individual stakes made Gildemeester a dedicated agent for Dutch merchants' interests in Portugal. He employed several strategies in order to reach his objectives. His first strategy was to confront the Portuguese authorities himself, as he chose to do when the port authorities had begun the practice of throwing spoiled foodstuffs overboard. Gildemeester was not the only trader who had experienced such

violations, which made it more feasible for him to act as representing agent. The next step was to inform the resident: shortly after Bosc de la Calmette had arrived, Gildemeester arranged a meeting with him to discuss recent grievances of Dutch merchants. The consul and resident also cooperated by arranging an assembly for the Dutch community in Gildemeester's home, so the Nation's main grievances could be voiced to the States General. The consul added to this reports of other instances in which he thought the Dutch were being disadvantaged. Very important in these documents is how the consul and the merchants articulated their plight to the States General. They proved the legitimacy of their complaints to the Portuguese authorities as well as the States General by referring to the peace treaties which stipulated Dutch traders' rights. Advantageous conditions for the Dutch in Portugal were not only important in itself, their compared advantage to other foreign merchants' privileges was also significant. So the international competitiveness of Dutch commerce depended greatly on the treatment by the Portuguese authorities. This was a fact known by the Dutch merchants living in Lisbon, as well as by the States General. This explains why the reports often mention whether similar incidents had occurred against the English or the Hamburger merchants.

What were the nation's and the consul's objectives by involving the resident and sending such detailed accounts to the States General? I would argue that it was their strategy to receive diplomatic backing from the States General. In order to receive the State's support, they needed to communicate effectively with its representative, Bosc de la Calmette. While the resident displayed his objections to some of the Nation's complaints, he did take the Nation seriously by writing up detailed reports of their grievances. For the nation, the consul and the resident, the peace treaties were of vital importance in this process. These were the diplomatic tools provided to them, structuring their economic frameworks. By demonstrated that the treaties were violated on the Portuguese side, they forced the States General to support the Dutch in Portugal.

### [The consulship and the family](#)

The 1755 earthquake had an enormous impact on Lisbon and its inhabitants. It also shocked Jan Gildemeester greatly. In a letter to the VOC office in Amsterdam, he writes about the damage done to his possessions:

Picture 2.



Print of the Gildemeester family at Huis Frankendael in Amsterdam. Private collection Eugen Brandel, *Jan Gerard Waldorp*, 1776.

“I do not know the date of my last letter because of the earthquake and the fire after that. My house and that of commerce have suffered the same fate since both have gone to ashes. Not the smallest paper has survived, I have found only a bit of melted gold and burned jewels of small value in the rubble. This is nothing compared to the great capital that I had there. Still the Lord takes and gives as he pleases and I praise him for his mercy and kindness to not lose any (family) of mine. So many thousands of souls have lost their life in the blink of an eye and the deplorable state of the ruin that is this city cannot be painted with a pen.”<sup>160</sup>

By this time Jan Gildemeester had turned fifty. He was still married to Maria Ketter and together they had two children who were named after their father and uncle: Jan and Daniel. In 1757 Gildemeester had requested the States-General to visit the Republic. He lengthened his stay with another year and eventually asked for his brother Daniel to take over his position.<sup>161</sup> Jan stayed in the Netherlands and bought a stately house in the Amsterdam Canal district and Frankendael, an estate in the perimeter of Amsterdam. Daniel Gildemeester, who was nine years younger than his brother, became Consul for the Dutch Nation of merchants in Lisbon. This position was fulfilled by him for more than twenty years, from 1759 to 1780. After that, Daniel’s son, also called Daniel, took over the consular office.

This succession from brother-to-brother and father-to-son indicates that the consulship might turn into a hereditary position. This makes it even more evident that the consul was a powerful figure and that there were certain aspects about the role which were beneficent for commerce. As the Dutch nation’s main agents, the Gildemeesters were able to lead the conversation with the highest officials of the Dutch and Portuguese states, thus influencing the commercial contexts in which they operated as merchants. As the consulship

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<sup>160</sup> “Seedert mijn laatste waar van nog dag of datume weeten dewijl door de aardbeving en daar op gevolgte brand van des voorleden jaars. Mijn huys end at van negotie het selfde noodlot is te beurt gevallen van in de asschen te zijn gelegd, zonder het aldergeringste papiertje te Bergen. Uit de puinhopen is allenig wat gesmolten goud en verbrande juwelen van wijnig of geen consederatie na maaten van het groote capetaal so daar hadde. Dog den Heere geeft en neemt na sijn welgevallen en sijn alderheijligste name sijn eeuwig gepreesen voor sijn groote genade en goedheijd dat geene van mijne hebben gemist, daar so veel duysende zielen in een oogenbleeq destijds het leven hebben verlooren. De deernis waardige staad die deese fataal ruine geloove niet door eenige penne met genoegstane levendige verve kan afgeschildert werden.” NA, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), *Buitenlandse correspondenten van de VOC*, 11172, 1756.

<sup>161</sup> Isaac Scheltus, *Generaale Index over de elf deelen van het Recueil der Placaaten, Ordonnatieen, Resolutieen en Reglementen, betreffende de Convoyen en verdere Zeezaken, beginnende met den jaare 1492 tot den jaare 1771 inclusive*, 196.



brought influence and wealth to the family, it was a position to hold on through generations. One can draw a parallel to Julia Adams *The Familial State*, in which she offers an analysis of Dutch early modern governance. She reasons from the concept of patrimonialism: a pattern of rule in which the head of state delegates sovereignty to subordinate family heads. These subordinate family heads included organized urban groups,<sup>162</sup> and as I would argue, also foreign merchant communities. As was the case with merchants in local and regional Dutch governments, the merchant communities headed by a consul, acted in concert to compel rulers to adopt changes in their political and economic organizations. Another aspect of Adam's patrimonialism resonates with how the Gildemeesters managed their position of consul: the family's heads derived part of their power from hereditary aspects of their positions. Members of the elite had familial or dynastic interests to manage, which were assured when administrative positions stayed in the family. They ruled paternally over their familial subordinates: their wives, children, younger brothers or cousins.<sup>163</sup> This explains why the Gildemeesters were invested as a family in the administration of Lisbon's merchant community. I would argue that they did not merely consider the position for their individual gain, but saw it as a strategy for their family's advancement.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis the relationship between the Jan Gildemeester and the diplomatic representative of the States General. The consul's need for a functioning relationship with the representative was great, but this could occur in different ways. In the case of Van Til, the relationship was characterised by mutual links of power because of Van Til's debt to the Nation and Gildemeester. The relationship with Bosc de la Calmette defined by cooperation between the resident and the Dutch Nation.

Next, this chapter has assessed the consular activities as an entrepreneurial strategy of the Gildemeesters in Lisbon. I have argued that the position of consul cannot be considered apart from mercantile activities. Consuls were important economic agents and were the advocates of their nation's as well as their own commercial interests. The position enabled the Gildemeesters, for a period of more than sixty years, to lead the discussion with

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<sup>162</sup> Julia Adams, *The Familial State, Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca & London 2005), 25.

<sup>163</sup> *Idem*, 101.

the States General and the Portuguese court. This brought them close to the centres of power in a foreign country – an advantage that would turn out to be beneficial, as pointed out in the third chapter of this thesis. I have argued that the hereditary position of consul belonged to the set of strategies the Gildemeester employed in order to maintain and increase their commercial successes. Lisbon's consuls were regarded as the most important men of their nation. This aspect lent the Gildemeesters prestige and contributed to the family's rapid upwards social mobility.

## Chapter 3 - the international diamond trade

The former chapter has argued that maintaining the consular office was part of the Gildemeesters set of strategies, to advance their commercial success and societal position. Apart from the family's consular activities, the brothers were especially active as merchants, with a strong commercial and familial link between Lisbon and Amsterdam. This chapter analyses the career paths of the Gildemeester brothers during the second half of the eighteenth century, with specific attention to Jan and Daniel Gildemeester. During this period the brothers consolidated their commercial success and became extremely wealthy. Contemporaries believed that Daniel Gildemeester was one of the richest men in Portugal during the final years of his life. While Jan would repatriate to the Dutch Republic in 1757, Daniel obtained the Royal Portuguese commercial monopoly to sell diamonds. This chapter investigates these mercantile tactics in detail

This chapter first describes the Pombaline reforms that the diamond trade underwent, in order to demonstrate in which context Daniel Gildemeester entered the contract. Next, this chapter answers the question as to how and why Daniel obtained the commercial monopoly, and how he managed to hold on to it for 27 consecutive years. I would argue that part of the explanation for this lies in the social network in which the Gildemeesters operated. This strategy will get special attention by way of analysing (travel) journals. Finally, attention will be given to the continuation of Jan Gildemeester's trading activities in Amsterdam, and that of his son Jan.

### The Pombaline Reforms and their implications for the diamond trade

Daniel Gildemeester's commercial successes coincided with the rise to power of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the future Marquis of Pombal. Pombal's economic policies were an important turning point in Portuguese economic history of the eighteenth century. The policies were of great influence to Portugal's trade with Brazil and the relationship with foreign traders. Thus, Pombal was also a key figure in the reform of the diamond trade and – as will become clear later in this chapter – the Gildemeesters' economic position. This paragraph will sketch the broad outlines of Pombal's plans regarding Portugal's economy in

general. Next, it will focus on how this influenced the trade in diamonds and eventually determined a large part the development of the Gildemeesters' activities.

Carvalho e Melo was already Portugal's minister of Foreign Affairs when the 1755 earthquake hit the country and severely damaged the city. Caught by the surprise and magnitude of the tragedy, neither King Joseph (who had fled the city) nor the other two secretaries of state in the government were capable or willing to act.<sup>164</sup> In contrast, Pombal seized the opportunity and organized a quick and centralized relief effort.

The earthquake and subsequent flooding and fire greatly damaged the city and destroyed almost all merchants' assets. Many foreign businessmen abandoned the Portuguese capital as a consequence of economic distresses. They suffered from a loss of capital, which stemmed from destroyed or lost merchandise and unpaid debts.<sup>165</sup> Two of the long-term economic consequences of the earthquake were a deterioration of the public finances and of the external trade balance. This provided a stimulus for an agenda of economic reforms and institutional change,<sup>166</sup> which Carvalho e Melo had already introduced before the earthquake. Until the catastrophe however, Pombal did not have the political support to fully implement his reforms. The earthquake gave him momentum and his relief efforts won him an unprecedented political capital in the Portuguese court. Without the earthquake, it would have been impossible for him to implement his nationalistic commercial and import-substituting policies.<sup>167</sup> It is very important to consider that Pombal was not the only reformer: he was supported by a network of "political accomplices." This was a group of administrators who supported Pombal's policies and implemented the institutional reforms.<sup>168</sup>

The earthquake had worsened the State's finances and the already existing trade deficit with England had grown even larger. Although Carvalho e Melo had already commenced with his reforms,<sup>169</sup> there were now acute incentives for him to implement a

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<sup>164</sup> Alvaro S. Pereira, 'The Opportunity of a Disaster: The Economic Impact of the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake', *The Journal of Economic History* 69 (2009) 2, 466-499.

<sup>165</sup> Munch Miranda, Freire Costa, Lains, *An Economic History of Portugal*, 210-211.

<sup>166</sup> Pombal's measures were extended to social, cultural, and economic areas, as well as to the relations between State and Church and the Inquisition. Pombal's policy also addressed human capital through basic education and setting up an emergent school system.

<sup>167</sup> Pereira, 'The Opportunity of a Disaster'.

<sup>168</sup> Jose Subtil, *O terramoto Politico (1755-1759). Memoria e poder, [The Political Quake (1755-1759). Memory and power]* (Lisbon 2007).

<sup>169</sup> Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo was Portuguese ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1738 to 1745. In London he had become inspired by British mercantilist policy and economic theories.

mercantilist policy. He aimed to limit Portugal's dependence on foreign goods, which caused large outflows of gold to Portugal's main trading partners.<sup>170</sup> In his manuscript he wrote that "their position (of Portuguese merchants) was substituted by many foreign merchants to sell their merchandize for themselves with an insupportable arrogance."<sup>171</sup> Pombal stressed that the commercial power of especially British merchants had to be refrained. His frustration with the British and his measures against them is also highlighted in historiography. However, the relationship between him and traders from other countries has remained virtually ignored. Yet, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, Pombal's mercantilist policies also affected Gildemeester and the Dutch merchant's community in Lisbon.

The purpose of Carvalho e Melo was to strengthen the Portuguese bargaining position within the Atlantic commercial system. He aimed to create a national bourgeoisie of Portuguese merchants who would eventually have the financial and commercial power to challenge foreign traders. Pombal wanted to defend the exclusivity of Portugal's merchant marine by stimulating corporate enterprise and fostering Luso-Brazilian economic relations. He followed the principles of political economy of the time, which deemed that chartered companies were effective instruments for international competition and rewarded investors. Despite these nationalist aspirations, Carvalho e Melo's plans were also highly pragmatic. Foreign traders like the English, the Dutch and the Germans did own most capital at the outset of his reforms. To exclude them would take away every chance of success and would furthermore threaten the treaties that Portugal had with these countries.

### Reforms in the mining and trading of diamonds

The trade in diamonds was also subject to Pombaline reforms, with which he began in the years before the earthquake. These reforms were also caused by an acute happening: the diamond crisis of 1753. Towards the end of the 1720's, diamond deposits were discovered in Brazil. The Crown enforced its claim to total ownership of diamonds, from extraction to sales.<sup>172</sup> In the beginning, diamond mining was permitted for anyone willing to pay a head tax for each slave that they employed. The result was an overflow of Brazilian diamonds on

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<sup>170</sup> Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge 1995) 87-111.

<sup>171</sup> 'Deduçcão Compendiosa', f. 323, *Os lugares delles (Portuguses traders) haviam ser substituidos por outros tantos Comerciantes Estrangeiros para vendessem as Suas Fazendas per si mesmos com huma insuperavel arogancia*. In: Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks*, 54 and 197.

<sup>172</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 13.

European markets and a subsequent drop in diamond prices. The Portuguese Crown made the drastic decision to close the mines after complaints from merchant houses in Northern Europe. Five years later, in 1739, the Crown granted a monopoly contract to a Portuguese company that was to mine the diamonds. Rough diamonds were transported to Portugal and received by two representatives of the contractor – called *caixas* – that also had to answer to the State. The diamonds that arrived in Lisbon were bought there by merchants with good connections to Europe's diamond capitals: London, Antwerp and Amsterdam.<sup>173</sup>

This construction functioned relatively well until 1753, when a diamond crisis occurred. The diamond contractor was accused of mining too much diamonds and the *caixas* refused to pay for the bills of exchange that arrived on the fleet arriving from Rio de Janeiro. An important buyer of diamonds, Sebastian Vanderton, had purchased diamonds on credit and pawned many of the stones he had bought to different Lisbon firms. The *caixas* had done the same and they became indebted to the Portuguese Crown, as well as to private merchants. As a consequence, the diamonds that had also arrived on the fleet, could not be sold. This led to a paralysation of the diamond trade and caused a financial crisis that strongly affected the Crown and Lisbon's merchant communities.<sup>174</sup> In the absence of the King, the future marquis of Pombal started working on a plan to restructure the trade of Brazilian diamonds. He decided to also offer a commercial monopoly in Brazilian diamonds (next to the mining contract). The marketing of the diamonds was left to merchants, who entered into a contract with the Crown. The contractors had to take a certain minimum quantity of carats during a set period, at a fixed price per carat.<sup>175</sup> The King agreed to Pombal's proposal and also made him fully responsible for all dealings relating to the Brazilian diamonds.

### The diamond contractors 1753-1759

Gildemeester was not the first merchant to enter this contract, although it was consequently exploited by English and Dutch traders. While Pombal wanted to preserve a bigger role for the Portuguese bourgeoisie, he realized that the English and the Dutch had more expertise and financial means with regard to diamond trading. Holding onto the diamond contract

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<sup>173</sup> Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks*, 50-53.

<sup>174</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>175</sup> Marten G. Buist, *At spes non fracta: Hope&Co. 1170-1815: merchant bankers and diplomats at work* (Den Haag 1974) 384.

required both a large capital and extensive know-how, so Carvalho e Melo had no other choice than to bestow it on a Northern European trader. Portuguese merchants did obtain a significant role in this construction: they were incorporated into the administration of the diamond contracts and would always occupy the role of *caixas*. Jose Francisco da Cruz and Jose Rodrigues Bandeira were appointed as *caixas*, positions that their families continued to hold until the end of the eighteenth century. These families – next to the Ferreira, Quintela, Bandeira and Braamcamp– were also part of the tobacco contract; the *Junta do Comércio and the Pernambuco and Grão Pará & Maranhão trading companies*. These families were all connected by marriage, but also formed marital alliances with some of the foreign contract holders.<sup>176</sup> The Brazilian-Luso trade in general and specifically the diamond trade thus shaped important social and commercial interactions between the Portuguese commercial elite and English and Dutch traders.

Next to that, a personal connection to Carvalho e Melo could be of great importance for upward social mobility. The first contract holder was John Bristow, whom Pombal had become acquainted with during his years in London. Bristow was actually known as a diamond smuggler, prosecuted by a Portuguese court. Pombal saw him as a potential contractor and prevented Bristow's trial. Despite this, he was granted the commercial monopoly contract because Pombal thought of him as a very capable merchant. This indicates that his personal connection to Pombal was of such influence that Bristow obtained a very important economic opportunity. Later, the diamond contract was taken away from him when Bristow appeared to have obtained illegal diamonds and had entered an illicit cooperation with a Jewish trader. Men like Bristow belonged to the group of foreign and Portuguese traders, that Vanneste refers to as "economic accomplices".<sup>177</sup> While Pombal needed his "political accomplices" to restructure Portugal's institutions, he depended on his "economic accomplices" to execute the desired commercial reforms.

After Bristow, the contract passed into the hands of John Gore, an Englishman and Joshua van Neck, a Dutch trader in London. Only one year later, in 1759, Gore and Van Neck wanted to dispose of the contract. Apparently, they were being pressured by Jewish

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<sup>176</sup> Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks*, 50-53.

<sup>177</sup> Tijl Vanneste, "Money Borrowing, Gold Smuggling and Diamond Mining: An Englishmen in Pombaline Circles" *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 13 (2015) 2, 81-94.

diamond traders who wanted to put a halt to the Brazilian competition.<sup>178</sup> These Jewish merchants were the Sephardim Jews, specializing in the gem trade with India from Amsterdam, London and Livorno.<sup>179</sup> So there was a competition between the Jews controlling the Asian diamond trade, and Christian Portuguese networks of diamonds from Brazil. At the same time, Pombal finished off the division between Old and New Christians. He wanted the capital of the New Christians to be saved from the inquisition, who wanted to prosecute some new Christians for Judaism. The share of Jews or New Christians in the Portuguese trading communities, and state officials realized that the actions of the inquisitions harmed the Portuguese economy.<sup>180</sup>

He also wanted to limit the commercial power of the British, so the idea of bestowing the diamond contract on a Dutch merchant was more interesting to him in view of the European and overseas wide competition between the Dutch and the English. I would argue that Carvalho e Melo first selected English merchants for the diamond contract, because he wanted to satisfy the British nation. Of all foreign factories in Lisbon, the British merchants were most prominently present. As demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis, Carvalho e Melo's mercantilist policies were received by protest from the foreign trading nations in Lisbon. Pedreira and Shaw both confirm that British merchants in Portugal strongly resented the changes. They were backed by the British government, which advocated for the redress of this state of affairs, although without much success.<sup>181</sup> Carvalho e Melo needed to implement certain measures in order to silence the potent group of British merchants. According to Vanneste, the *Caixas* claimed that the system with a foreign contract holder was meant to keep the English and Dutch traders quiet.<sup>182</sup> Next to that, Northern European capital and expertise were required for the organization of the Brazilian diamond trade. Carvalho e Melo soon discovered that his plan did not work out, when several British contract holders cheated on him. This brought him to the decision to select a Dutch trader.

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<sup>178</sup> Gedalia Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral. Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (Leicester 1978) 121-122.

<sup>179</sup> Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 224-250.

<sup>180</sup> Tijn Vanneste, *Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon: een eeuw diamantgeschiedenis in Minas Gerais (1729-1832)*, Dissertation at KU Leuven, 146-147.

<sup>181</sup> Jorge Miguel Viana Pedreira, 'From Growth to Collapse: Portugal, Brazil, and the Breakdown of the Old Colonial System (1750-1830)', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80 (2000) 4, 839-864; Shaw, *The Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*, 106.

<sup>182</sup> Vanneste, *Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon*, 155.



## Daniel Gildemeester and the Diamond Contract

Pombal approached Daniel Gildemeester to enter the diamond contract, who by that time had established himself as a wealthy merchant and had succeeded his brother as consul. The contract promised the opportunity of extracting enormous wealth, which meant that it was much sought after by merchants. The powerful company Hope&Co from Amsterdam had put in repeated efforts from the 1760s to the 1790s to secure the diamond contract.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, it is safe to assume that Daniel Gildemeester was also eager to obtain the commercial monopoly.

What were the factors that made Daniel Gildemeester a suitable candidate for the diamond contract? I would argue that Daniel was eligible for the diamond contract because of his position of consul. It is intriguing that his brother, Jan Gildemeester, was in constant conflict with Pombal and left Lisbon after the earthquake. Daniel took over the consular office in 1759, but he had been acting as interim from 1757. We can see that Daniel became consul around the same time that he entered the diamond contract. I would argue that Pombal offered Daniel Gildemeester the diamond contract, because the former Dutch consul had been provoking Pombal during the (problematic) 1750s, as described in the second chapter. It is possible that Carvalho e Melo promised Daniel Gildemeester the diamond contract, as long as he would halt the diplomatic charges on behalf of the Dutch nation. The need to silence Gildemeester was even bigger after the earthquake and the overall bankruptcies that ensued.

Furthermore, Pombal needed a merchant who had knowledge of the diamond trade and had enough capital after the earthquake. As a matter of fact, the Gildemeesters were no strangers to the diamond trade. In 1753, a magistrate of the Portuguese court had formulated a list of all persons that had purchased diamonds from Sebastian Vanderton. One of the buyers was Jan Gildemeester.<sup>184</sup> The missive of Jan Gildemeester to the Dutch East India Company after the earthquake also testifies that the company's storehouse had stocked 'jewellery and gold'.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Buist, *At spes non fracta*, 384.

<sup>184</sup> *Processo relativo a arrematacao dos contratos dos Diamantes e suas contas*, 1751. Cited in: Vanneste, *Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon*, 151.

<sup>185</sup> Nationaal Archief, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, *Buitenlandse correspondenten van de VOC*, Inv. No. 11172, 1756.

How about the creditworthiness of the Gildemeesters? Jan Gildemeester's letter mentioned that his Lisbon trading house and "the great capital that he had there" had been destroyed during the fire that followed the earthquake.<sup>186</sup> An abstract from Gildemeester's personal notes tells the following:

"Because it has pleased the Almighty, an earthquake has visited the Kingdom of Portugal on the morning of the 1st of November. Within a matter of minutes the royal capital was destroyed, and ruined again with the fire that followed it. Of the inhabitants, many Germans have died, some think even 70 to 80.000 souls in total, as not church or convent has survived. However it has pleased the Almighty by ways of his inconceivable mercy to protect me and my whole family, servants and to save us from a great danger. My house in the city has burned down without sparing anything. Yes, even the least scrap of paper, so all of my notes about the family and other things such as testaments and all other documents are lost."<sup>187</sup>

While the short-term impact of the catastrophe on their assets was probably considerable, it is unlikely that it greatly damaged the firm in the long run. Apart from the letter to the VOC, I have not found any historical record that testifies the losses of the Gildemeesters. Still it should be mentioned that most merchants exaggerated their losses in order to postpone the payments of debts. According to the British Consul Edward Hay, the lion's share of British merchants were able to recover their losses, especially those suffered by merchants involved in the Brazilian trade.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, only two years after the devastating earthquake, Jan

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<sup>186</sup> Idem.

<sup>187</sup> "Aangezien het den Almoogende behaagt heeft op den 01/11/1755 s'morgens omtrend halftien de stad Lisbon x het gansch konenkrijk van Portugaal met een geweldig aardbeving te besoeken waar door het grootste gedeelte van die koninklijke hoofstad in wynig minuten tijd tot een Puynhoop is verandert en door de door opgevolgde brand bijna ten eenemaal geruineert, x van desselfs inwoonders veele Duijsende Jammerlijk gesneuvelt t'geen door sommege wel op 70 a 80000 ziele begroot werd, mits so te seggen geen kerk of klooster is blyve staan, heeft het egter den Alderhoogste behaagt na sijn ondoorgrondelyke genade x bermhertigheid van mij x myn gansch Familie knechts x mejden inclus alle te behoeden x uyt een groot gevaar te redden, schoon mijn huijs in de stad tot de grond toe is afgebrand sonder its te bergen Ja selfs niet tot het minste papiertje, waardoor al mijn aantekeningen so van familie als andere saken Testamenten & alle andre bescijdens sijn verlooren." Here I base my statements on the diary of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>188</sup> Cited in Charles R. Boxer "Pombal's dictatorship and the Great Lisbon Earthquake, 1755" *History Today* 11 (1955) 5, 737.

**Picture 3.**



Presumably a portrait of Daniel Gildemeester, *artist and location unknown*, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), visited on 22-08-2018.

Gildemeester had bought the Frankendael Estate and a townhouse on one of Amsterdam's finest canals. It is thus likely that the Gildemeesters were everything but financially ruined after the earthquake. They probably benefitted from it too: a notarial document shows that ships owned by the Gildemeesters left from the Netherlands to Portugal in 1756.<sup>189</sup> Raw materials and foodstuffs were in great demand after the earthquake and Pombal had removed all import duties on them, which did not prevent an increase in prices.<sup>190</sup> It is quite likely that the Gildemeesters had the entrepreneurial spirit to take advantage of the market and started a chain of supply of construction materials and primary foodstuffs to the city. According to Carvalho e Melo, Daniel Gildemeester was known as the merchant "in Lisbon who, according to the public opinion, had amassed the greatest capital."<sup>191</sup>

It is clear that the Gildemeester family possessed capital and expertise, which were determinants stressed by Vanneste for the potential contract holders. Another factor that he takes into account is the proximity to the Marquis. Bristow was a contact that Pombal had known since London and he was respected by Pombal as a trader. Herman Jose Braamcamp, one of the other first contractors, had (like the Gildemeester brothers) portrayed a diplomatic role. During several years he was the representative for the Prussian King at the Lisbon Court. The Gildemeesters were no strangers to Pombal either, before Daniel obtained the diamond monopoly his brother had been consul and their collective reputation as traders was well known. As consuls, Jan and Daniel had to address Pombal to advocate for the Dutch merchant's interest.<sup>192</sup> More importantly, the Gildemeesters were increasingly involved in the Brazilian-Luso trade, and had seen the opportunity to become part of the predominantly Portuguese merchant elite. The importance of belonging to the small clique of Portuguese merchants is also stressed by Catia Brilli. She argues that merchants depended on personal relations established with Pombal before he became minister. Brilli also stresses the construction of strategic business alliances between Portuguese and foreign merchants in order to become commercially successful.<sup>193</sup> This elucidates that a personal

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<sup>189</sup> GAS, Notariele Archieven, 31809, 22-06-1756.

<sup>190</sup> Pereira, "The Opportunity of a Disaster".

<sup>191</sup> *Duducção Compendiosa*, "Em razao de ser Negociante da Praca de Lisboa aue pela commua opiniao tinha acumulado os mayors Cabedaes pecuniarios." Vanneste, "Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon", p. 151.

<sup>192</sup> Before Jan Gildemeester quit his position as Consul and moved to the Dutch Republic, his brother Daniel acted as his deputy on several occasions.

<sup>193</sup> Catia Brilli, 'Coping with Iberian monopolies: Genoese trade networks and formal institutions in Spain and Portugal during the second half of the eighteenth century', *European Review of History* 23(2016) 3, 456-485.

connection to such a powerful figure and the embeddedness in the right network of Luso-Brazilian traders must have benefitted Gildemeester in obtaining the contract.

#### The conditions of the contract, 1761-1771

The period from the 1730's until 1759 with respect to the diamond trade was marked by unrest and saw several contractors. Daniel Gildemeester would hold the commercial diamond monopoly from 1761 until 1786, which made him the longest operating contractor.

The Gildemeesters were depending on Dutch capital, and had important connections in Amsterdam. After Jan Gildemeester's arrival in Amsterdam, he arranged for a swift construction of a merchant network in the Northern Netherlands. So when Pombal proposed Daniel to arrange the foreign trade in diamonds, he replied that he first had to send his brother Thomas to Amsterdam to come to an agreement.<sup>194</sup> On January 12, 1761, the *Caixas* signed a contract with Daniel Gildemeester. Gildemeester promised to buy a yearly amount of 40.000 carats for a period of three years, for 8600 reis per carat.<sup>195</sup> 400 reis were worth 1 cruzado, which was worth approximately 1 guilder.<sup>196</sup> This means that Gildemeester paid around 21,5 guilders for one carat. These were better conditions than former contractors Gore and Van Neck had obtained, as the price per carat was lower.<sup>197</sup> This demonstrates Gildemeester's favourable bargaining position. His direct or indirect participation in buying *India Oriental* diamonds was forbidden and would immediately deprive him of the contract. Gildemeester would make monthly payments and was allowed to be present when the diamonds arrived on the Rio fleet. He also had the possibility to extend the agreement after the three years were up, but for a higher price of 9200 reis per carat.<sup>198</sup>

The *Caixas* and Pombal were satisfied: the second contract that would run from 1764 to 1766 was made under the same preconditions. The contract was renewed in 1767 for a

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<sup>194</sup> Thomas Gildemeester (1720-1788) was the youngest of the Gildemeester brothers and also was part of the family firm and mostly acted as courier. For the rest, sources about him are scarce. Thomas was appointed conservator of the fisc of the Dutch Nation in 1762. *Verzameling van Geheime Brieven van en aan de gezanten der Nederlandse Republiek, April 1756-April 1762, Volume 14*. p. 4.

<sup>195</sup> Vanneste, Vanneste, *Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon*, 151.

<sup>196</sup> The calculation is based on the exchange rate in: Catia Antunes, Rob Post & Paulo Salvado, 'Het omzeilen van monopoliehandel: Smokel en belastingontduiking bij de handel in brazielhout, 1500-1674' *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 13 (2016) 1, 23-52.

<sup>197</sup> Vanneste, Vanneste, *Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon*, 155.

<sup>198</sup> *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 80 Do Descobrimto dos Diamantes, e Diferenttes Methodos que se tem Praticado na sua Extracção* (1964), Copy of the the contract 12-01-1761, pp. 198-201.

period of three years and in 1770 for a period of six years.<sup>199</sup> The cooperation between the Gildemeesters and the *Caixas* was more stable than with the previous contract holders. Daniel Gildemeester bought more carats than the minimum laid down in the contract, which meant a greater revenue for the Portuguese Crown. It remains unclear why Daniel Gildemeester bought such a great quantity of diamonds. Generally, it was more profitable to buy less, to create scarcity to push up the market price. It is possible that Gildemeester aimed to start his activities as diamond contractor by attempting to increase the market share of Brazilian diamonds. By offering many lower-priced Brazilian diamonds on international markets, he would be able to out-compete the Indian diamond merchants.

**Table 1: Daniel Gildemeesters diamond purchases 1764-1771**

| Year                       | Carats | Price per Carat<br>( <i>Reis</i> ) | Sum ( <i>Reis</i> ) | Sum<br>(Guilders/Cruzados) |
|----------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| The second half<br>of 1764 | 29.260 | 8.6                                | 251. 636. 000       | 629.090                    |
| 1765                       | 84.862 | 8.6                                | 729. 813. 200       | 1.824.533                  |
| 1766                       | 91.382 | 8.6                                | 785. 885. 200       | 1.964.713                  |
| 1767                       | 70.942 | 8.6                                | 610. 101. 200       | 1.525.253                  |
| 1768                       | 74.450 | 8.6                                | 640. 270. 000       | 1.600.675                  |
| 1769                       | 76.689 | 8.6                                | 659. 525. 400       | 1.648.813,5                |
| The first half of<br>1771  | 23.811 | 8.6                                | 204. 774. 600       |                            |

**Source:** *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 80 Do Descobrimento dos Diamantes, e Diferentes Methodos que se tem Praticado na sua Extracção* (1964), Copy of the the contract 12-01-1761, pp. 198-201; Calculation to Guilders/Cruzado's: Antunes, Post & Salvado, 'Het omzeilen van monopoliehandel', 30.

#### The proposal of diamonds in banking

In 1770, the same year that Gildemeester obtained the contract for six years, the number of carats dropped significantly, from 76.689 to 55.414 carats. Since he had bought a significant amount of diamonds during the first years, the market had probably started to become saturated. He deliberately bought less carats, to create scarcity and to push up the price in

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<sup>199</sup> *Idem*, p. 201.

Amsterdam.<sup>200</sup> It was this strategy of offering the exact right amount of diamonds to the market, what the Gildemeesters were very good at. They were able to succeed in this because of the help of their high-trust family network in Northern Europe.

Still the practice of buying less diamonds displeased the *Caixas*. There also was another problem. Gildemeester postponed the payments of the *letras* (bills of exchange) to people who had invested in the Brazilian diamonds. In 1771, he still owed 384.000.000 *reis* to investors. Furthermore, the contract of the diamond miner Joao Fernandes de Oliveira Filho ended, who had a debt to the royal treasury of 536.000.000 *reis*. The system with the bills of exchange was a structural problem, because Portuguese traders in Rio de Janeiro and stakeholders in Lisbon were not only dependent on the influx of diamonds from Minas Gerais, but also on Daniel Gildemeester and the number of carats he bought. If he was unable or unwilling to sell his diamonds in Amsterdam, the *letras* could not be paid and the investors had to wait on their capital. A similar problem that had occurred in 1753 – a lock in of capital – arose again.

I would argue that the Gildemeesters did not have problems in keeping up liquidity, as one might think. Possibly, Daniel Gildemeester wanted to make the Crown and the *Caixas* even more dependent on his actions than they already were. In a meeting with the *Caixas* several solutions were offered, and Gildemeester had a rather interesting idea. He proposed using the diamonds as deposit for loans, for which he suggested a bank in Amsterdam. He thought he could use his Dutch connections to convince the Portuguese Crown of the advantage of sending diamonds to a bank in Amsterdam. The Bank would then receive the diamonds as security for the loans in Lisbon. This idea was immediately turned down by the *Caixas* and Pombal. He even threatened to put the King's vast collection of diamonds on the market, which would send Gildemeester's prices and profits down, should he ever consider the project again. While the proposal for a loan was rejected, the idea still drew attention thirty years later.<sup>201</sup> Gildemeester's idea failed, but it testifies his entrepreneurial talent. First of all, the solution was creative as the Portuguese Crown had never heard from it before. More importantly, he was part of a problem that he had created himself, yet came up with a solution that would come to his own advantage. As broker for the loan he would be able to

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<sup>200</sup> Vanneste, *Tussen Tejuco en Lissabon*, 153.

<sup>201</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 58-63.

influence the process and it would put the Portuguese Crown in an even greater dependency of his services.

The problem was solved by putting the mining of diamonds directly in the hands of the Crown. The unpaid bills of exchange were reimbursed by a loan from the Portuguese Crown at the end of 1771. To be less dependent on Gildemeester, the decree of July 12, 1771 determined that the *Caixas* would be responsible for the *trato mercantil*, the commercial part of the diamond contract. Furthermore, the royal treasury would from then on be responsible for the payment of the *letras*. The flow of capital changed, which was a clear message from the Crown: they wanted to limit the control of Daniel Gildemeester, who had decreased the number of sold diamonds.

#### Gildemeester's bargaining position

While Gildemeester's powerful position in the diamond trade dwindled from the 1780's, he still played a significant role. In 1782 he obtained roughly 40.000 carats, which was more than the preceding year, but not as much as his yearly average. In 1784, the sale of diamonds had recovered to numbers around 60.000 carats again, which would stabilize for the next four years. After that, Daniel Gildemeester would buy less diamonds than was allowed in the contracts. The authorities had likely become weary of Gildemeester's meagre purchases: in 1786, he even obtained the right to select the diamonds he wanted to buy. During the month of January that year he selected 5000 carats of diamonds: "eight hundred carats of the chosen white kind, one thousand seven hundred carats of diamond without being chosen, two thousand carats of large stones, five hundred carats of small stones, all for the price of six thousand and six hundred Reis each".<sup>202</sup> The year of 1787 was the last that Gildemeester bought diamonds, for about 12000 carats, far below the agreed 50.000.<sup>203</sup> In 1786 and 1787 the production of diamonds in Serro Frio declined, and Gildemeester quit as contractor. It is not clear who initiated the breach, but the Crown accepted an offer from two Portuguese traders, Paulo Jorge and Joao Ferreira, with contacts in Northern Europe. By this time, *Gildemeester&Companhia* had acted as diamond contractor for 27 years. Never

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<sup>202</sup> "oicentos quilates de miúdo branco escolhido; mil e setecentos quilates de miúdo sem ser escolhido, dois mil quilates de refuge grande, quinhentos quilates de refuge miúdo, todos pelo preço de seis mil e seiscentos reis cada quilate" in: *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, pp. 225 and 226.

<sup>203</sup> Idem, pp. 226 and 227.



would a company hold on to the commercial contract for such a long time and buy as many diamonds as Daniel Gildemeester.

The latter years of his involvement show that Daniel Gildemeester could be a rather capricious businessman to deal with – something that was tolerated only to a certain extent by the Portuguese authorities. During the 1780's, the production in the diamond mines dwindled, which led to a cautious policy on the part of the Crown. This meant that it probably was a terrible idea to exclude the most experienced merchant from the diamond trade. During the "Gildemeester Era" there were not many bids from other traders who wanted to obtain the monopoly.<sup>204</sup> People thought his power was impressive. At one time, when it was thought he might be removed from the contract because of his low price bids, some Portuguese merchants were unwilling to compete against him, in bidding for the diamond contract. They said they were afraid that Gildemeester might exclude them from his several other profitable business enterprises, one of which promised diamonds for the Latin American market.<sup>205</sup>

I would argue that Daniel Gildemeester derived his power and strong bargaining position from his many other trading activities and personal connections. However, it is difficult to prove this, because his other trading activities have left few traces in Dutch archives. Because the diamonds bought by Gildemeester were for a large part meant for the Northern European market, the link to Amsterdam must have been strong. Gildemeester had valuable contacts in the Dutch Republic, among whom his family members. The Portuguese authorities realized this, which strengthened Daniel's position. The connection to Amsterdam also manifested itself in other ways. The close cooperation between Daniel's brother Jan and his brother in law Jan Emst remained strong. Jointly, they bought ships to sail between the Dutch Republic and Portugal. The majority of these ships were freighted to transport foodstuffs like cereals.<sup>206</sup> The cooperation seems to have come to an end when Daniel and Jan's sister Maria Magdalena died in 1770.<sup>207</sup>

More importantly, Daniel Gildemeester was involved in many lucrative aspects of the Luso-Brazilian trade. He was an important share holder in the *Companhia de Pernambuco e*

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<sup>204</sup> During the "Gildemeester Era", only one Portuguese trader submitted a request for obtaining the contract.

<sup>205</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 59.

<sup>206</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 31809, 22-06-1756; GAS, Notarieel Archief, 98077, 10-06-1763; GAS, Notarieel Archief, 11966, 01-07-1768; GAS, Notarieel Archief, 86513, 09-10-1770.

<sup>207</sup> *De Maandelykse Nederlandse Mercurius, Volumes 28-31*, p. 51. There are no documents which specify the involvement of Jan Emst in commercial activities after 1770.

*Paraíba*,<sup>208</sup> the chartered company directed toward Atlantic commerce in general, with a concentration on the Brazil market. The company received the monopoly on produce from the entire Brazilian northeast, which was the most developed area in the country because of its sugar industry. The participation in the *Companhia de Pernambuco e Paraíba* was only granted to the Portuguese bourgeoisie and a few wealthy foreign traders.<sup>209</sup> This again, shows the embeddedness of Daniel Gildemeester in the network of Pombal's "economic accomplices" and his dominant role among the Portuguese bourgeoisie.

A Genoese merchant also remarked that Daniel Gildemeester had accumulated a great fortune from the Spanish war with England during the American Revolution (1779-83).<sup>210</sup> It is unclear whether he was referring to his financial, lending or shipping activities.

During the 1770's, Gildemeester had offered to lend 250.000 *cruzados* to the Portuguese Crown, which he did in cash, in the form of a short-term loan. When the loan was rejected, he added another 15.000 *cruzados* to his offer. The revised offer was accepted.<sup>211</sup> This episode hints at the fact that Daniel Gildemeester acted as moneylender to the Crown and as such became further intertwined with national and colonial politics and policies. Further evidence that the firm was turning into diverse lending and banking activities is the episode of 1771, when Jan Gildemeester and his sons granted a short-term loan of 10.000 *Guilders* to the company *Negotie Pye Rich & Wilkieson*. Within six months, the merchants Pye Rich and Wilkieson had to pay their debt with an interest rate of 20%. That same year, Jan Gildemeester and sons lent fifteen bonds worth 1000 guilders each to the Russian Empire.<sup>212</sup> The loans to people and firms was continued as Jan Junior lent money to a widow who owned a brewery in 1786.<sup>213</sup>

## Personal Connections

The personal connection to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo was very important for Daniel Gildemeester to obtain the diamond contract. Their connection remained a significant factor in the continuation of his career. Reports from the 1770s testify that the Marquis and Daniel

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<sup>208</sup> Idem.

<sup>209</sup> Jose Jobson de Andrade Arruda, 'Colonies as Mercantile Investments: The Luso-Brazilian Empire, 1500-1800 pp. 395-396', in: James D. Tracy, *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires, State Power and World Trade, 1350-1750* (Cambridge 2010).

<sup>210</sup> Brilli, 'Coping with Iberian Monopolies'.

<sup>211</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 63.

<sup>212</sup> GAS Notarieel Archief, 101467, 10-4-1786.

<sup>213</sup> GAS Notarieel Archief, 68762, 18-01-1771.

Gildemeester were friends.<sup>214</sup> In this respect, we should refer to the notion of friendship in the Early Modern period. During the eighteenth century, friends were ‘people who could be approached to accomplish certain goals or solve problems’.<sup>215</sup> Daniel was eager to be part of the network of “economic accomplices” of Carvalho e Melo, because he knew that his own commercial successes depended on it.<sup>216</sup>

The Marquis was disgraced from power in 1777, when King Joseph died. This did not mean the end of Gildemeester’s involvement, because of his know-how, capital and connections in Northern Europe, but also because by this time he had become part of the ruling group of merchants. The social activities of the Gildemeester family are subject of discussion in multiple journals from ambassadors and travellers. The French Ambassador, Marquis de Bombelles, wrote several passages about Daniel Gildemeester, his British wife Jane and their sons. The English writer William Thomas Beckford has also written numerous episodes about Portugal’s elite, in which the Gildemeesters figure too. Lieutenant Cornelis de Jong van Rodenburgh wrote about the ball that Daniel Gildemeester threw in lieu of his birthday. The mere fact that this family was a topic of discussion, tells us something about their relevance in Portuguese upper society. While these accounts were mostly anecdotal to contemporary readers, they offer us insights into the social networks of the family and their place in Lisbon’s society. The fact that Gildemeester was prominent in this network is clear by the marriage of his son Daniel to Maria Theresa Machado. The Machados belonged to the oligarchy of families that were involved in the Luso-Brazilian trade. A French ambassador wrote about this marriage:

“Monsieur Gildemeester the son, consul-general of Holland and charge of the affairs of the Republic in the absence of the minister of their high powers, informed me of the consent which his father has just granted him to marry Miss Machado, daughter of a Portuguese merchant whose business is said to be good. Father Gildemeester had for a long time refused this marriage because Miss Machado is a Catholic. Also because she has a mother whose conduct has not been and is not yet good. But he has been defeated by the sorrow of

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<sup>214</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 61-62.

<sup>215</sup> Kooijmans, *Vriendschap en de kunst van het overleven in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw*, 327

<sup>216</sup> Vanneste, ‘Money Borrowing, Gold Smuggling and Diamond Mining’.

his son that his refusal inflicted and the certainty that this young man would not neglect his passion”<sup>217</sup>

It remains a question whether Daniel Gildemeester remained faithful to Protestantism in Lisbon. His son eventually married the girl from a Portuguese Catholic family, which testifies the commercial interests of this union. That Daniel junior married Maria Theresa Machado also demonstrates the extent to which Daniel’s son had assimilated onto the Portuguese elite. Another abstract from Bombelles indicates Gildemeester’s embeddedness in the bourgeoisie of important Portuguese merchants:

“I went to see Mrs. Gildemeester who had just returned from Sintra. I found her husband playing *voltrette* with the two richest men of this country, mainly Mr. Quintela. He seeks to get his daughter married with someone of a big [trading] house. It will be difficult to satisfy this desire [...] because the pride of the *fidalgos*<sup>218</sup> has made them prefer until now to let their daughters starve or bury them alive in a cloister, than give them rich men.”<sup>219</sup>

The Quintela family was the most important commercial family in Portugal and the embodiment of Pombal’s nationalist policy. They were always represented in the role of *Caixas* and were the main stakeholder in the Luso-Brazilian trade. Whether Quintela was discussing a potential marriage of his daughter to one of Gildemeester’s sons is not clear, but it could have been the case. Yet the abstract still indicates that Gildemeester was part of this clique of influential traders.

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<sup>217</sup> “Gildemeester le fils, consul general de Hollande et charge des affaires de la Republique en l'absence du ministre de leurs hautes Puissances, m'a fait part du consentement que vient de lui accorder son pere pour epouse Mlle Machado, fille d'une negociant portugais dont les affaires passent pour etre bonnes. Le pere Gildemeester s'etait longtemps refuse a ce mariage tant a cause que Mlle Machado est catholique que parce qu'elle a une mere dont la conduite n'a pas ete et n'est pas encore bonne, mais il a ete vaincu par le chagrin que son refus faisait depuis longtemps a son fils et la certitude que ce jeune homme ne guerirait pas de sa passion.” Marquis de Bombelles, *Journal d'un Ambassadeur de France au Portugal 1786-1788* (Paris 1978) 129-130.

<sup>218</sup> A *Fidalgo* is a Portuguese nobleman or man of means.

<sup>219</sup> J'ai ete voir Mme Gildemeester revenue depuis peu de jours de Sintra. J'ai trouvé son mari jouant au *voltrette* avec les deux richards de ce pays-ci, principalement M. Quintela. Il cherche a se marier sa fille en de quelque grande maison. Des *fidalgos* leur a fait préférer jusqu'à présent de laisser mourir de faim leurs filles ou de les enterrer toutes vivantes dans un cloître, à leur donner pour mari des gens riches. Bombelles, *Journal d'un Ambassadeur de France*, p. 198.

**Picture 4.**



Daniel Gildemeester's Palacio de Seteais, Sintra. Currently a luxurious hotel. [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com), visited on 22-08-2018.

At the Sintra palace, Daniel Gildemeester threw weekly dancing assemblies. These were highly popular outings among Lisbon's elite. An account of William Beckford shows that he was very eager to get an invitation to one of these parties. He was introduced to Daniel and found "Gildemeester and Horne squabbling about insurances, percentages, commissions and other commercial speculations."<sup>220</sup> Beckford receive an invitation to the party, where he was sure to find "a pretty sample of the factory<sup>221</sup> misses, clerks, and apprentices, some underlings of the corps diplomatique, and God knows how many thousand pounds weight of Dutch and Hamburg merchants ." There are rich episodes from Beckford describing these balls and the personalities of Daniel Gildemeester and his wife:

"As for the company, they turned out just what I expected. Madame G, who is a woman of spirit and discernment, did the honours with the greatest ease, and paid her principal guest the most marked attentions. There is a something pointedly original in all her observations, which pleased me very much. [...] This part [the dinner] of the entertainment was magnificent. There was a bright illumination, an immense profusion of plate, a striking breadth of table, every delicacy that could be procured, and a dessert frame fifty or sixty feet in length, gleaming with burnished figures and vases of silver flowers"<sup>222</sup>

Bombelles also attended the weekly party and offers us a similar description:

"I finished the day at the home of Mr. Gildemeester, where the German and Dutch factories came and furnished a large number of rather pretty dancers. Among them were some Portuguese girls. My wife and Mrs. Walpole alone were of the diplomatic corps at this festival because it was one in the middle of the term and was given for us. An immense supper, well lit, well adorned with large platters, well overloaded with food and bad wine,

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<sup>220</sup> William Beckford, *Italy, Spain and Portugal, an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha 1787-1788* (London 1840) 227.

<sup>221</sup> With the factory he means the foreign merchant communities.

<sup>222</sup> Beckford, *Italy, Spand and Portugal*, 229.

was served three times so that more than one hundred and twenty people would find successively place at a table of forty seats”<sup>223</sup>

Gildemeester invited everyone who mattered in Lisbon to his parties: ambassadors, royalty, noblemen and merchants from Portugal, England, the Dutch Republic and Hamburg. I would argue that this was a strategy to keep belonging to the inner circle of the highest commercial elite in Portugal. One can draw a comparison to royal courts, that overstated every aspect of the household to suggest strength and wealth. The size and splendour of the palace, the number of servants, the artistic treasures and the hospitality of dinners and balls: they all proclaimed the special status of a monarch.<sup>224</sup> For Gildemeester too, these were ways to assert his power and exhibit the fruits of his commercial successes.

### Jan Gildemeester and Jan Janszoon’s activities in Amsterdam

So far, the focus of this chapter has been on Daniel Gildemeester, who’s career seems the most imposing compared to his brothers. His older brother Jan moved to the Netherlands with his family after the earthquake. His personal notes state that he had left the trading activities to his brothers Daniel and Thomas after 1755.<sup>225</sup> Yet from the start of his stay in the Republic, Jan Gildemeester resumed his trading operations. It is quite likely that the profits from the commercial diamond contract, and Jan Gildemeester’s role as agent in the Netherlands were too significant to halt his trading activities. In the latter years of Jan’s career, he introduced his sons Daniel (1738-1790) and Jan Junior (1744-1799) to the world of commerce.

In the first years of the Amsterdam trading firm, Jan Junior had to operate as a full-fledged associate. His older brother Daniel was not as involved in these years. Because Jan Junior was not of age yet, he needed a *Venia Aetatis* which gave him the legal power to close

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<sup>223</sup> “J’ai été finir la journée chez Monsieur Gildemeester ou les factoreries allemande et hollandaise fournissaient un grand nombre d’assez jolies danseuses. On remarquait parmi elles quelques Portugaises et Anglaises. Ma femme et Mme Walpole ont seuls été du corps diplomatique à cette fête car c’en était une dans toute la force du terme et qu’on donnait pour nous. Un immense souper, bien éclairé, bien orné de grands plateaux bien surchargés d’aliments et de mauvais vins, a été servi à trois reprises pour que plus de cent vingt personnes trouvassent successivement place à une table de quarante couverts.” Bombelles, *Journal d’un Ambassadeur de France*, 56.

<sup>224</sup> Jeroen Duindam, ‘The Court as a meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control’, in: Maaïke Berkel and Jeroen Duindam, *Prince, Pen and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives* (Leiden 2018), pp. 32-128.

<sup>225</sup> Here I base my statements on the diary of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

commercial deals. This was granted to him on April 30, 1765 by the *Provinces of Holland and Westfriesland*. The family moved to a house on the *Keizersgracht*, between the *Leidsegracht* and the *Leidsestraat*, which became property of Jan Gildemeester in November 1766. Jan senior and Jan junior were ship owners, trading mostly in bulk goods.<sup>226</sup> While they were involved in trade with the Iberian Peninsula, they also freighted ships to Greenland for whaling. They had four warehouses on the *Nieuwe Keizersgracht* near the *Weesperveld* named *Goliat*, *Samson*, *Atlas* and *Hercules*.<sup>227</sup>

A strong connection with Portugal remained: they regularly sent ships to Lisbon chartered with goods.<sup>228</sup> Next to that, Jan Junior was named agent and consul-general of Portugal to the Dutch Republic in 1778, which indicates the continued relations with Lisbon. His activities in this regard unfortunately remain unclear. Notarial documents show that Jan Senior was active in trade until at least 1778, one year before his death on December 27, 1779. Jan Junior inherited the four warehouses and one of the houses on the *Keizersgracht*.<sup>229</sup>

Jan Junior was also a member of the prestigious *Felix Meritis*,<sup>230</sup> a society of elite inhabitants of Amsterdam that developed activities from economic to cultural areas. The purpose of the society was the improvement of Amsterdam's position. By promoting activities such as commerce in goods and seafaring, Amsterdam would become the prosperous city it once was. Jan Junior was one of the founding members of *Felix Meritis* in 1777 and donated the society a large amount of money for the construction of its building on the *Keizersgracht* 324.<sup>231</sup> The fact that Jan Junior was co-founder of this association, tells us a lot about his network: he was part of Amsterdam's most wealthy men. Gildemeester took his tasks in *Felix Meritis* very seriously, as he functioned as *Commissioner for Trade* from 1789-1794.<sup>232</sup> This also shows his continuing involvement in trade.

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<sup>226</sup> De Bruyn Kops, 'De Amsterdamse verzamelaar Jan Gildemeester'.

<sup>227</sup> Here I base my statements on the testament of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>228</sup> GAS, Notarieel Archief, 77377, 10-12-1784

<sup>229</sup> Here I base my statements on the testament of Jan Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr. Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>230</sup> Full name: *De Maatschappij van Verdiensten onder de zinspreuk Felix Meritis*.

<sup>231</sup> GAS, Archief van de Maatschappij van Verdiensten onder de Zinspreuk Felix Meritis.

<sup>232</sup> GAS, Archief van de Maatschappij van Verdiensten onder de Zinspreuk Felix Meritis, Commissie van Negotiatie, 372.



## Epilogue

In 1802, Daniel Gildemeester Junior was removed from the office of Consul General to the Dutch Nation in Portugal.<sup>233</sup> For a period of more than sixty years, a Gildemeester had performed in the role of Consul in Lisbon. Why Daniel Gildemeester was dismissed from this position is unclear, but the son of the old diamond contractor did not seem to have the entrepreneurial talents of his father. Daniel Junior cooperated with his father in the profitable diamond trade,<sup>234</sup> but entered some unprofitable and uncanny businesses while his father was still alive. The old Gildemeester's testament states that his trading house Gildemeester&Co. would be terminated upon his own death, so the troubles that his son had created would end as well.<sup>235</sup> Apparently the misfortune had started when Daniel Junior associated himself with George Dohrman, who was a friend of the family. Together, they had amassed huge debts with several creditors. This was a running gossip in the travel journals too. Beckford wrote that the Gildemeester youth, together with his friend Dohrman, spent money without ever paying his bills. Bombelles writes about the magnitude of these debts:

“Far from the fact that the presence of a beautiful girl moves this house, it brings on a bad mood that its inhabitants cannot hide from the foreigners. The indebted son [Daniel Gildemeester] owes more than five hundred thousand lires to be given to the speculations of his cousin Dohrman, who is on the verge of bankruptcy because his father does not want to come to his rescue. As you can see, when pulling a little corner of the curtain of each interior, we discover ugly things that are the result of the turpitude of humanity.”<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> NA, Legatie Portugal, 119, *Stukken betreffende het ontslag van Daniel Gildemeester Dzn., consul-generaal in Lissabon, en de benoeming van Jakob Dohrman in die functie*, 1802.

<sup>234</sup> *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, 213, Gildemeester names his two sons Daniel and Hendrik as his associates

<sup>235</sup> Testament of Daniel Gildemeester, 1788, *Gildemeester Personal Family Archive*.

<sup>236</sup> Loin que la presence d'une belle fille egaye cette maison, elle y porte au contraire une humeur que ses habitants n'ont pas l'art de cacher aux etrangers. Le fils endette de plus de cinq cent mille livres tournois pour 'etre livre aux speculations de son cousin Dohrman est a la veille de faire banqueroute parce que son pere ne veut pas venir a son secours.. Comme en levent, meme malgre soi, un petit coin du rideau de chaque interieur, on decouvre de vilaines choses qui tiennent a la turpitude d'lhumanite. Bombelles, *Journal d'un Ambassadeur de France*, 240.

Daniel Junior had indebted himself so much, that the amount would be subtracted from his portion of his father's inheritance.<sup>237</sup> Daniel Junior lived in Lisbon until his death in 1814, and was supposedly involved in the contraband trade in diamonds. He must have operated together with his brother Hendrik Gildemeester, who lived in Amsterdam and got his hands on 20.000 carats of diamonds in 1804.<sup>238</sup> Hendrik Gildemeester was involved in the Levant trade and married a girl from the van Gheel family, a noble lineage from the province of Utrecht. The sons of the old diamond contractor would never regain the family's fortune and Portuguese fame.

Jan Gildemeester Junior was quite well-known among contemporaries because of his art collection. Two rooms in his house at *Herengracht* 475 were arranged as art galleries, which housed paintings and sketches from (among others) Jan Steen, Gerard Dou, Jacob van Ruisdael, Rubens, Gabriel Metsu and Rembrandt. There is also a painting currently housed in the Rijksmuseum, showing Jan Gildemeester himself, displaying his collection to friends and art critics. A catalogue from an auction house shows that he owned around 300 pieces. Gildemeester possessed paintings from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painters – a taste that prevailed within Amsterdam's upper society. De Bruyn Kops argues that Gildemeester's art collection testifies of a very personal and deep interest in art: the size of his collection, and the fact that Gildemeester started buying paintings from a very young age sustain her argument. Gildemeester also liked to draw himself.<sup>239</sup> I think Gildemeester was an avid art lover, but his hobby was only possible because of the fruits of his commercial successes. Some of his paintings are now in the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam and the National Art Gallery in London. The wealth of the Gildemeesters, based on the diamond trade and many of the other commercial activities, lives on in world-famous works of art to be admired by the public.

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<sup>237</sup> Here I base my statements on the testament of Daniel Gildemeester, shared for this research by Dr Tijn Vanneste.

<sup>238</sup> Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond*, 72-73.

<sup>239</sup> De Bruyn-Kops, 'De Amsterdamse Verzamelaar'.

Picture 5.



De kunstgalerij van Jan Gildemeester Jansz, *Adriaan de Lelie*, 1794-1795, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

## CONCLUSION

This research has contributed to current scholarly debates in economic history by applying four different theoretical approaches: the *Theory of Entrepreneurship*, *New Diplomatic History*, the concept of *Portfolio Capitalists* and the *Biographical turn*. The four theories have different focusses but share at least one important similarity: the emphasis on agency perspective. The *Theory of Entrepreneurship*, *New Diplomatic History* and the concept of *Portfolio Capitalists* are connected to the entrepreneurial strategies the Gildemeesters employed, as identified in this thesis. These frameworks have been used individually in the three chapters of this thesis, but I have also regarded their cross-points in order to understand the combination of strategies the Gildemeesters employed.

At the outset of this research I discovered that the mercantile activities and social surroundings of individual Gildemeesters were interconnected with their kin group generally and direct family members specifically. To give this aspect ample consideration, this thesis assesses the lives of several Gildemeesters as a family biography. Applying the *Biographical turn* for this research, I have tried to incorporate the Gildemeesters' agency, while also respecting the larger narratives and settings they were part of. Structuring this thesis as a family biography also does justice to the trajectory of the family's long-term strategies for social upward mobility. As was the case for most mercantile families, the Gildemeester family's trajectory of commercial success and upward social mobility did not occur within one single generation, nor because of the actions of one individual.

I have selected three aspects of Mark Casson's extensive theory of entrepreneurship in order to assess the Gildemeesters' entrepreneurial activities and opportunities: networks, partnerships and the institutional context. I would argue that entering, maintaining and extending networks was one of the family's most important and fruitful strategies for commercial success. The first chapter has demonstrated that the right network – in this case of Daniel de la Court – enabled Jan Gildemeester and his younger brothers to enter trade in Amsterdam and Lisbon. At the outset of the brothers' careers, commercial networks were intertwined with personal connections. Together they formed a high-trust intimate network that laid the foundations for their mercantile careers. The consular office consolidated their

place as prominent merchants in the network of Dutch-Portuguese trade. This connected the Gildemeesters to Portuguese and Dutch state officials and other important business connections. The third chapter explains that Daniel's affiliation with members of Pombal's Portuguese bourgeoisie was very important for his participation in the Luso Brazilian trade. The many parties at his Sintra palace, socializing with Lisbon's mercantile elite, and the fact that Daniel Junior married a Portuguese woman, support this argument. Jan Gildemeester Junior employed similar strategies in Amsterdam. He was part of the network of Amsterdam's most affluent merchants and was one of Felix Meritis' founders. He stayed connected to Portugal by acting as Portugal's representative in the Republic. Throughout their careers, the Gildemeester brothers, and later their sons, maintained the strong connection with family members in Lisbon and Amsterdam. It was the high-trust family network in Northern Europe and Portugal, which enabled Daniel to successfully participate in the Luso-Brazilian diamond trade. Business partnership was highly connected to the networks: long-lasting partners of *Gildemeester&Co.* were only sought within the network of the (extended) family.

An analysis of Jan Gildemeester's correspondence as consul has demonstrated that he functioned as an intermediary figure between different groups of interests: the States General, the Dutch Nation and the Portuguese Crown. The processes depended on qualitative personal relationships with the Republic's representative and prominent figures of Portugal's government. The consular office belonged to the family's set of strategies, because it enabled the Gildemeesters to influence diplomatic processes at the highest levels. The outcomes of these processes impacted the economic conditions for their mercantile activities, and that of their merchant communities. The fact that the Gildemeesters regarded the position of consul as a hereditary office demonstrates that it lent them prestige as well as that it belonged to the set of long-term tactics for upwards social mobility.

At the cross-point of categorizing the diplomatic and mercantile activities of the Gildemeesters lies the concept of *Portfolio Capitalists*. The (Early Modern Indian) *Portfolio Capitalist* was an entrepreneur that combined a portfolio of different commercial activities such as investing in forms of less mobile capital, with state offices. I would argue that the Gildemeesters employed similar strategies. They diversified their portfolio of mercantile activities: they were active as diamond merchants, but also traded in bulk goods and acted as financiers and insurers. They also managed to infiltrate into the Dutch and Portuguese

states: by being the Dutch consul in Portugal (Jan Gildemeester, Daniel Gildemeester and Daniel Gildemeester Junior), The Portuguese representative in the Netherlands (Jan Gildemeester Junior) and by acting as the diamond contractor (Daniel Gildemeester). This resulted in a continued dynamic of their roles in trade and stately affairs: the combined strategy of investing in trade and financial services and utilising their political positions to further their commercial interests.

At the end of their lives, Jan, Daniel, Thomas and Jan Gildemeester junior had amassed great wealth. The observable results of their commercial successes were the palace in Sintra, the Frankendael estate in and the Amsterdam townhouse at Herengracht 475, boasting an impressive art collection. These were the outcomes of the Gildemeesters' specific trajectory of entrepreneurial strategies and upwards social mobility.

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