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## Freemasonry on the 'Wild Coast': Studying Adriaan Anthony Brown's time in Essequibo 1773-1781.

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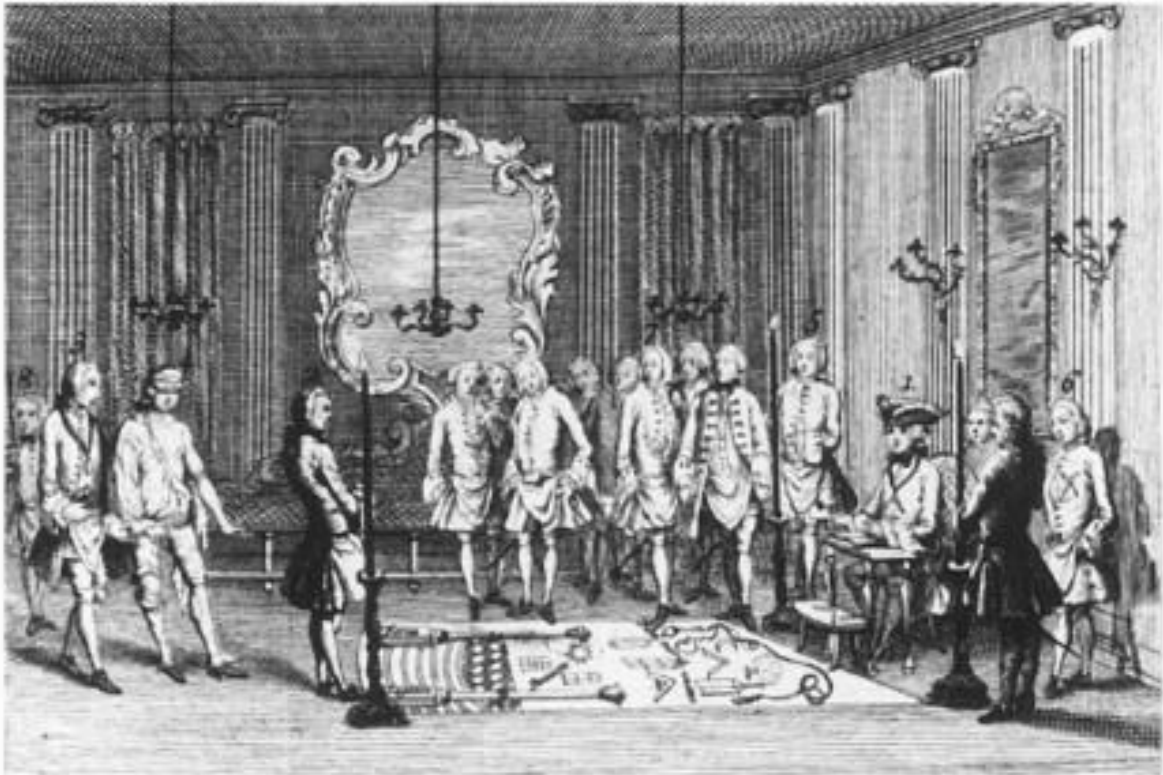
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Freemasonry on the 'Wild Coast':

Studying Adriaan Anthony Brown's time in Essequibo 1773-1781



Fraser Grant Noble

MA Colonial and Global History Thesis at Universiteit Leiden

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Supervisor: Professor Dr. Michiel van Groesen

Second reader: Dr. Bram Hoonhout

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I am also very grateful to Peter Blom from the Zeeuws Archief who has been unofficially supervising me throughout this project. I am indebted to him for introducing me not only to the historic relationship between Veere and Scotland but the Zeeuws Archief itself. He helped me immensely when I began researching in Middelburg. On a similar note, I would like to thank all the staff at the Zeeuws Archief who enthusiastically helped me with finding source material and for making me feel so welcome. As I only have a rudimentary grasp of the Dutch language, I would also like to acknowledge the help Dr. Karel Noorlander offered me in translating difficult Dutch script.

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## **Author's Note**

All quotations from primary material have retained original spelling. Where sources have been in a foreign language, particularly Dutch, translation has been undertaken with the advice of a translator. All other errors are my own.

In terms of the language used, where applicable, the term 'Local Guyanese' will be used to refer to the people native to the former Dutch colonies of Essequibo and Demerara, now known as Guyana. The present author does not feel 'Amerindian' is appropriate given the geographical distance between Essequibo and Demerara and India. For the same reason, I will refrain from using the term 'West Indies' or 'Dutch West Indies' as it does not seem appropriate as we move away towards a less European-centralised world. That is not to say that studies that use these terms are inherently wrong, it is the personal preference of the present author to refrain from using them.

I also feel it is important to position myself in relation to this thesis.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, as a white male from Scotland, I acknowledge the privileged position in society that I have and recognise the impact that it has had not only on my ability to follow a Master's course at Leiden University, but also the ability and opportunity to conduct research in two separate archives, which has ultimately helped me to compile this thesis.

Although this thesis is focussed on freemasonry and I was able to consult the records housed in the CMC, the present author is, to this day, in no way connected to freemasonry and is not a member of the fraternity.

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<sup>1</sup> Positionality refers to the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study, it also creates one's identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. Positionality also refers to the how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society.

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<sup>2</sup> The image on the front page is from an engraving from *De Almanack der Vrye Metzelaaren...1780*, (Amsterdam: Willem Coertze Jr. 1780). Image reproduced from Margaret Jacob, *The origins of freemasonry: facts & fictions*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006), 6.

## Introduction

The innate elusiveness of freemasonry has sparked curiosity and suspicion for generations. Bound together by secret oaths and ritualistic practice, freemasonry, and freemasons themselves, have been the subject of various conspiracy theories. The fraternal organisation has also received scholarly attention and has been studied through a variety of lenses by historians and freemasons themselves.<sup>3</sup> This thesis will explore the relationship between freemasonry and Dutch colonialism. The relevance of freemasonry to western expansion and its inherent connection to both British and French colonialism has been widely studied by scholars.<sup>4</sup> However, there is very little literature on Dutch freemasonry vis-à-vis imperialism. The one in-depth study we do have is Angela Andrea Kroon's Ph.D. thesis.<sup>5</sup> Kroon's study is a tremendous resource, it offers a solid introduction to the study of freemasonry itself, a succinct summary of early Dutch masonic activity and several useful appendices. However, Kroon focuses on the masonic material culture that was created along trading routes

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<sup>3</sup> For the classical historical overviews by Dutch freemasons themselves see, Charles Richard Hake, *Nederlandsche vrij-metselaars almanac*, (Rotterdam: C.R. Hake 1814); D. de Visser Smits, *Vrijmetselarij. Geschiedenis, maatschappelijke betekenis en doel*, (The Hague: De Provinciale Grootloge van Nederlandsch Oost Indië 1931).

<sup>4</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs is the leading scholar of British freemasonry and its relationship to British colonialism. See for example: Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717-1927*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 2007); Jessica Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism' in: Henrik Bogdan and Jan A.M. Snoek eds., *Handbook of Freemasonry*, (Leiden: Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, Vol. 8 2014), 439-460; Jessica Harland-Jacobs, "'Hands Across the Sea': The Masonic Network, British Imperialism, and the North Atlantic World", *Geographical review* 89 (1999) 237-253; Jessica Harland-Jacobs, 'All in the Family: Freemasonry and the British Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of British studies* Vol. 42, No.4 (2003) 448-482.

For the French case see : Cécile Révauger and Éric Saunier, *La Franc-maçonnerie dans les ports*, (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux 2012); Charles Porset and Cécile Révauger, *Le Monde Maconnique des Lumières: Europe- Amériques, Colonies*, (Paris: Honoré Champion 2013); Cécile Révauger, *Noirs et francs-maçons: Comment la ségrégation raciale s'est installée chez les frères américains*, (Paris: Dervy 2016); Simon Deschamps, 'Masonic Ritual and the Display of Empire in 19th-century India and Beyond', *Cahiers victoriens & édouardiens vol.93* (2021) 1-12.

<sup>5</sup> A.A. Kroon, *Masonic networks, material culture and international trade: the participation of Dutch Freemasons in the commercial and cultural exchange with Southeast Asia (1735- 1853)*, (PhD thesis, Leiden Universiteit, Leiden 2015). Other studies that reference freemasonry in former Dutch colonies in Asia are Theo Stevens, *Vrijmetselarij en samenleving in Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië 1764-1962*, (Hilversum: Verloren b.v. 1994) and P.W.J. Van der Veur, *Freemasonry in Indonesia from Radermacher to Soekanto, 1762-1961*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International studies 1976).

throughout south-east Asia. By contrast, the role of Dutch lodges within the Atlantic world remains relatively unexplored.

However, before exploring this relationship, it is important to have some understanding of what freemasonry is and how the brotherhood has developed over time. Although there is no universal definition, freemasonry can be generally described as a system of morality, where through allegorical plays, members embark on a journey of spiritual and moral self-improvement, whilst simultaneously, living by and promoting key masonic virtues such as charity, religious tolerance, and fraternity. Freemasons conduct their meetings in 'Lodges', a term given to the physical space but also to the group of members, who are collectively known as the 'Lodge'. Although freemasons themselves trace their origins back to the historic craft of stonemasonry and the building of the Temple of Solomon, the exact historical origins of the fraternal organisation are the subject of scholarly debate, as per Henrik Bogdan and Jan A.M. Snoek when they write: 'it is impossible to say when Freemasonry as we know it was founded'.<sup>6</sup> It is not the aim of this thesis to delve into the intricacies of masonic historical developments. What is important to understand for this thesis, is that freemasonry, in its modern guise, originated in England and Scotland, spread to the European continent, and was then exported across the world, which was facilitated by European colonial expansion.<sup>7</sup>

An important aspect of eighteenth-century freemasonry was the transition from 'operative' (handwork) to 'speculative' (philosophical or symbolic) freemasonry. Put simply, operative masons were literal stonemasons; individuals involved in the construction of literal physical structures, whereas 'speculative' freemasons were attracted to the philosophical side of freemasonry, men who

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<sup>6</sup> Henrik Bogdan and Jan A.M. Snoek eds., *Handbook of Freemasonry*, (Leiden: Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, Vol. 8 2014), 3.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account of the rise of freemasonry in Britain see either David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry. Scotland's Century 1590-1710*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988) or Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991).

had never worked with stone.<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, the eighteenth-century saw the rise of these so-called speculative 'gentlemen masons' and the decline of operative masons. It became rather fashionable for the cultural elite and the wealthy bourgeoisie to become members. By the mid-eighteenth-century masonic membership was dominated by these so-called 'gentleman masons'.

To understand the position of freemasonry in the Dutch Atlantic, we must first look at the rise of freemasonry in the Dutch Republic itself. The origins of freemasonry in the Dutch Republic can be found in the British communities operating in Dutch ports. A letter written by the City of Rotterdam, dated 12<sup>th</sup> January 1736 is evidence of this. When questioned over their masonic activity, five Rotterdam freemasons admitted that:

'[...] more than 14 years ago such a Society of eight persons, all of English and Scottish nationality, had been active here; but that they had ceased to meet almost 12 months ago, when it had already been seven years since their last meeting.'<sup>9</sup>

This letter is important for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that as early as 1722, a masonic lodge was operating in the Dutch Republic. Although experiencing a rather start-stop existence, this letter also reveals that initial masonic activity in the Dutch Republic had a distinctly British flavour. This perhaps comes as no surprise given a substantial British population operated in Rotterdam at the time.<sup>10</sup> Another area of the Dutch Republic with a considerable British population was the southern province of Zeeland and in particular the island of Walcheren. Situated in the north of the island, the town of Veere secured a staple port for certain Scottish commodities in 1541. Trade brought people

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew D.J. Scanlan, 'The mystery of the acception, 1630-1723: A fatal flaw', *Heredom. The transactions of the Scottish Rite research society* II (2003) 55-111; Matthew D.J. Scanlan, 'Operative versus Speculative', *Acta Macionca* 14 (2004), 25-54.

<sup>9</sup> Arno van den Brand, *De Vrijmetselarij in de Republiek der Nederlanden tot 1737 - Vestiging en verbod*, (MA paper, Utrecht University, Utrecht 1993). Van den Brand refers to Netherlands National Archive, archive Staten van Holland en West Friesland 1572-1795, dossier no. 1917 and 1918, computer no. 3.01.04.01 [1452]: '[...] dat al meer dan 14 jaaren geleden een zoodanige Confrerie van agt personen alle van Engelsche en Schotse Natie (waar van zij ook waren) alhier hadde gesubsisteerd: doch dat die nu sederd bijnaa 12 maanden niet bij den anderen gekomen was: zijnde het doenmaals mede wel seven Jaaren geleden, dat niet vergaderd was geweest'.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed study of Scots in Rotterdam see Douglas Catterall, *Community without Borders: Scots Migrants and the changing Face of Power in the Dutch Republic, c.1600-1700*, (Leiden: Brill 2002).



and, as a result, Scots lived and worked continuously in the Zeelandic town for almost two and a half centuries.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, the town of Vlissingen, located in the south of Walcheren, was under England's protection from 1585-1616, under the treaty of Nonsuch. The treaty provided the States General with military assistance in their fight against Spain and led to several English garrisons being established in and around Vlissingen.<sup>12</sup> Trade brought people, and people brought ideas that persisted. One idea was freemasonry. Given its historic relationships with England and Scotland, it is perhaps no surprise freemasonry spread throughout the island of Walcheren.

The first masonic lodge established in Zeeland that we know of was 'La Philantrope' in Middelburg in 1758. The second lodge in Middelburg was formed in 1770 and was called 'La Compagnie Durable'. Another example of masonic activity in Walcheren was the lodge in Veere, named 'L'Enfants de la Vertu'. Established in 1789, the lodge adopted the colours of white and green, which signified affiliation with the Scottish lodges.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the members of the lodge 'L'Enfants de la Vertu' met in the 'Oude Schotsche Huijs'. Built-in 1561 by the City of Veere in the interest of the Scottish trade, it was home to Scottish merchants from 1612. After renting the building between 1792 and 1806, it finally became the property of the Lodge for the sum of 1,800 guilders.<sup>14</sup>

A similar situation can be found in Vlissingen – another major town in Walcheren. A lodge was established there in 1792 and was named 'L'Astre de l'Orient'.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in his book dedicated to the history of freemasonry in Zeeland, J.C. Lagendijk mentions that there was a lodge in operation before the establishment of 'L'Astre de l'Orient'. He writes that as early as 1769 there was a lodge called 'De Zon' which included many English officers, which eventually split and led to the decay of the

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Blom, *Scots Girt about Grits, Gruel and Greens*, translated by James Allan, edited by Christiana N. Polderman, (Veere: Stichting Veere-Scotland 2003).

<sup>12</sup> For the English presence in Vlissingen and the presence of English military see Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: its rise, greatness, and fall, 1477-1806*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), 219-230, 238.

<sup>13</sup> Jan Midavaine, 'De Veerse Vrijmetselaarsloge L'Enfants de La Vertu 1789-1836', Jaargang 2021, nr. 2 Juni 2021 Pagina 1, De Stadsheraut, <https://www.stadspleinveere.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Stadsheraut-juni-2021.pdf> [Accessed 17 November 2021].

<sup>14</sup> M. van Boven, *De Loge 'L'Enfants de la Vertu': Haar bestaan in het O. van Veere 1789-1836*, (Veere: 1896).

<sup>15</sup> J.C. Lagendijk, *Vrijmetselarij in Zeeland. De keerzijde van de medaille verlicht*, (Hulst: van Geyt-Blaeue Acolye, 1992).

lodge.<sup>16</sup> It is perhaps quite fitting that on their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration the members of the Vlissingen lodge 'L'Astre de l'Orient' met in the appropriately named Hotel Britannia.<sup>17</sup> From this, we can see that during the eighteenth-century, the island of Walcheren was a hotbed of Masonic activity. W.W. Mijnhardt recognizes this and comments that 'in the period 1750-1815 more than thirty-five [lodges] were founded in which more than two thousand men took part.'<sup>18</sup> From its conception, Dutch masonic activity, in particular on the island of Walcheren, had a distinctly British flavour which was facilitated by the migration of English and Scots to the Dutch Republic during the eighteenth-century.

A crucial aspect to the economy of Walcheren, and Zeeland more generally, during the eighteenth-century, was trade with the Caribbean colonies of Essequibo and Demerara. Situated on the northern coast of South America, and taking their name from two local rivers, the trading posts were located in modern-day Guyana, often referred to as the 'Wild Coast' by Europeans.<sup>19</sup> Expeditions began at the turn of the seventeenth-century and from 1616 the post on the river Essequibo was permanently manned.<sup>20</sup> Private traders from Zeeland played a crucial role in the colonies' early development and consequently, assumed authority over governance and the exclusive right to trade. Trading activity in this area was monopolized in 1621 with the creation of the West India Company (WIC), however, the newly created Zeeland Chamber was granted administrative control over the

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<sup>16</sup> J.C. Lagendijk, *Vrijmetselarij in Zeeland*.

<sup>17</sup> 'Vrijmetselaars bouwen aan innerlijke tempel', *De Scheldebode*, (30 September 1992). Found online as part of the Krantenbank Zeeland, <https://krantenbankzeeland.nl/issue/scb/1992-09-30/edition/null/page/1?query=>, [Accessed 15 December 2021].

<sup>18</sup> W.W. Mijnhardt, 'Sociability in Walcheren', *Tijdschrift voor de studie van de Verlichting en van het vrije denken*, 12<sup>de</sup> Jaargang (1984), 291.

<sup>19</sup> Dutch historians have tended to focus more on the economic developments of Suriname. Nevertheless, the classic studies on the colonies include Jan Jacob Hartsinck, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de Wilde Kust, in Zuid-America*, (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg 1770); Peter Marinus Netscher, *Geschiedenis van de koloniën Essequibo, Demerary en Berbice, van de vestiging der Nederlanders aldaar tot op onzen tijd*, ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff 1888).

More recent publications include Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum 1985); Bram M. Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire: Dutch Guiana in the Atlantic World, 1750-1800* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press 2020).

<sup>20</sup> P.Blom 'Van het Veerse Gat naar de wilde Kust: Adriaan Anthony Brown, een Veereenaar in Zuid-Amerika' / door Peter Blom', *Nehalennia*, nr 79, (1990), 2-13.

settlement.<sup>21</sup> Despite the settlements proving rather unprofitable, the Zeeland Chamber remained resolute in its defense of the colonies. When the WIC ran into financial difficulty in 1658, the three Zeelandic towns of Middelburg, Veere, and Vlissingen took control of the settlements, renaming the colonies Nova Zeelandia.<sup>22</sup> This transfer ultimately proved unsuccessful as well, and power was transferred back to the Zeeland Chamber in 1670.

Dutch historian Bram Hoonhout acknowledges this and points out that the transfer of authority was based on 'the informal acquiescence of the other chambers rather than a formal arrangement'.<sup>23</sup> The issue of colonial authority would resurface during the eighteenth-century when the plantation sector started to take off. Key to the economic rejuvenation of the colonies was Commander Laurens Storm van s'Gravesande (1704-1775), who governed Essequibo from 1743 to 1772 and Demerara until 1750.<sup>24</sup> His decision to encourage British planters to settle and develop plantations along the rivers of Essequibo and Demerara proved decisive. The settling of British merchants, enticed by lucrative tax exemptions combined with heavy investment from Amsterdam, propelled Essequibo and Demerara from marginal possessions to important plantation economies.<sup>25</sup> By the 1780s the colonies had a combined European population of 1,434, which oversaw the exploitation of over 350 plantations with roughly 20,000 enslaved Africans.<sup>26</sup> However, conflict between the Zeeland and Amsterdam Chambers of the WIC arose over the issue of who possessed

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<sup>21</sup> Netscher, *Geschiedenis van de kolonien*, 40-43. See also Doeke Roos, *Zeeuwen en de Westindische Compagnie (1621-1674)*, (Hulst: Van Geyt Productions 1992); Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: war, trade, and settlement in the seventeenth-century Atlantic world* (Leiden: Leiden University Press 2016).

<sup>22</sup> E.W. Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies of Essequibo and Demerara, 1700-1814', in: Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven eds., *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Leiden: Brill 2003), 325.

<sup>23</sup> Bram M. Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 49; Netscher, *Geschiedenis*, 14-16; C.A. Harris and J.A.J. de Villiers, *Storm van 's Gravesande, The Rise of British Guiana, Compiled from His Despatches*, Vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society 1911), 8-25.

<sup>24</sup> Due to its rapid growth Demerara became its own district in 1750, eventually becoming independent of Essequibo in 1772. See Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 327.

<sup>25</sup> J. De Vries, 'The Dutch Atlantic Economies', in: Peter A. Coclanis., *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personal* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press 2005) 12-13; Jan P. Van Der Voort, *De Westindische Plantages van 1720 tot 1795 Financien en Handel*, (Eindhoven: Drukkerij de Witte 1973), 201-207; Netscher, *Geschiedenis*, 147-148.

<sup>26</sup> Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 329.

exclusive trading rights. By leading initial expeditions and nursing the colonies through economic hardship during the previous century, the Zeeland chamber claimed these rights, while Amsterdam demanded that the trade be open to all Dutch citizens. This dispute would rage for years, sparking a judicial war of words that was only partially resolved by the intercession of William V in 1772.<sup>27</sup> William's ruling opened trade to all Dutch citizens, which meant Zeeland lost its trading monopoly.

Despite this rich and complex history, the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara have largely been overlooked by historians. This led to Eric van der Oest labelling them 'The Forgotten Colonies' in 2003. However, this was not without reason. The colonies were officially ceded to Great Britain in 1813 and as a result, most of the archival material is currently housed in The National Archives in Kew. Moreover, many of these documents are in Dutch, thus creating a language barrier insurmountable for most British historians.<sup>28</sup> Fortunately, in recent years, renewed academic interest in the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara has helped generate a variety of novel and intriguing publications. Eric van der Oest's study offered an interesting analysis of shipping records which includes several valuable graphs detailing Dutch involvement in the slave trade and colonial exports.<sup>29</sup> Gert Oostindie looks at the business dealings of the British and Dutch in an article from 2012.<sup>30</sup>

A major stakeholder in discussions of the colonies is Bram Hoonhout, who has published a plethora of material on the subject, with his most recent publication titled *Borderless Empire: Dutch Guiana in the Atlantic World, 1750–1800*.<sup>31</sup> Hoonhout argues that rather than being stimulated by the

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<sup>27</sup> The complex division and regulation of shipping to the colonies is explained in Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 343-345.

<sup>28</sup> Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 323-324; Gert Oostindie, "'British Capital, Industry and Perseverance' versus Dutch 'Old School'? The Dutch Atlantic and the Takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, 1750-1815', in: *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 127:4 (2012), 31-33.

<sup>29</sup> Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 334-336, 342, 347, 350-351, 355.

<sup>30</sup> Gert Oostindie, "'British Capital...'", 28-55.

<sup>31</sup> Bram M. Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*; Bram M. Hoonhout and Thomas Mareite, 'Freedom at the fringes? Slave flight and empire-building in the early modern Spanish borderlands of Essequibo–Venezuela and Louisiana–Texas, *Slavery & Abolition A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, (2019), 40:1, 61-86, DOI: 10.1080/0144039X.2018.1447806; B.M. Hoonhout, 'Smuggling for Survival: Self-Organized, Cross-Imperial Colony Building in Essequibo and Demerara, 1746-1796' in: Cátia Antunes and Amelia Polónia eds., *Beyond Empires: Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500-1800*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2016), 212-235; Bram M. Hoonhout, 'De noodzaak van smokkelhandel in Essequibo en Demerary, 1750-1800, *Tijdschrift voor Zeegechiedenis* Vol. 32, No. 2 (2013), 54-70.

metropolis, the expansion of Essequibo and Demerara was a process of improvisation at the colonial level. Hoonhout emphasizes the transnational nature of the colonies with the Dutch relying on local Guyanese populations to capture enslaved runaways, as well as living alongside a considerable British population. In sum, his book transcends the framework of the 'Dutch Atlantic' and argues that the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara were far more Atlantic than they were Dutch.

Furthermore, an unpublished MA-thesis by Sander ten Caat provides an interesting study on the previously overlooked environmental history of the colonies.<sup>32</sup> Another noteworthy study, although not exclusively on Essequibo and Demerara, is a book by Constanze Weiske published in October 2021.<sup>33</sup> Three chapters are dedicated to the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara with a focus on how the Dutch legitimized indigenous land dispossession on the 'Wild Coast'. Additionally, in a collaborative project, the National Archive of the Netherlands and the National Archive of Guyana have recently digitized the remaining administrative archives of the colonies from the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. As part of the Metamorfoze theme project 'Slavernij', over 98,000 scans have been made available, providing key information on daily life in the colonies and potentially opening new research avenues.<sup>34</sup> Overall, the future of historiography on Essequibo and Demerara and Berbice looks bright which makes 'forgetting' these colonies a distant memory. However, there is one area that remains neglected: the role of freemasonry.

In *Borderless Empires* Bram Hoonhout recognizes the lack of social cohesion that existed in both Essequibo and Demerara. He cites the lack of an urban center as a key reason for this. In neighbouring Suriname, many planters had an additional house in the capital of Paramaribo and spent considerable time there, thus creating a central hub.<sup>35</sup> Historian Karwan Fatah-Black has argued that

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<sup>32</sup> S. Ten Caat, *From Swamp to Sugar Dutch adaptations to the natural environment in Essequibo and Demerara at the end of the eighteenth century*, (MA thesis, Leiden Universiteit, Leiden 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Constanze Weiske, *Lawful Conquest? European Colonial Law and Appropriation Practices in northeastern South America, Trinidad, and Tobago, 1498-1817*, (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenburg publishers 2021)

<sup>34</sup> To read more about the project visit: <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/beleven/nieuws/dutch-series-guyana>. [Accessed 8 November 2021].

<sup>35</sup> Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 165.

Paramaribo was crucial in creating trading networks and encouraging social integration in Suriname.<sup>36</sup> Although the town of Stabroek in Demerara grew rapidly, it was only established in the early 1780s, meaning 'local integration did not have deep roots in Essequibo or Demerara.'<sup>37</sup> Moreover, religion also failed to act as social glue in the colonies. Hoonhout outlines the struggle the colonists faced when trying to establish a church, with church buildings either falling into disrepair or proposed building projects being completely abandoned.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, the colonies' geography was not particularly conducive to sociability. Living on plantations dispersed along vast stretches of coastline or on various islands on the Essequibo River, meant that meeting fellow planters was complicated. Also, the mouth of the Essequibo River proved difficult to navigate, treacherous shoals and large sandbanks caused regular shipwrecks. Consequently, social cohesion proved hard to forge in this unforgiving landscape. However, for a plantation society with a distinctly British flavour and influence, there was another source of conviviality available to planters.

In 1772 the masonic lodge 'St. Jean de la Reunion' was established in Demerara, where it remained active until 1779.<sup>39</sup> This thesis will investigate this particular masonic lodge on the 'Wild Coast', and the role of freemasonry vis-à-vis Dutch colonialism more generally. To do so, I will adopt a case-study analysis of Adriaan Anthony Brown (A.A. Brown) during his time spent as *fiscaal* (treasurer) in Essequibo between 1773 and 1781. In recent years, historians have turned their attention to the lives of individuals to delve deeper into the functioning of empires. They may select an individual who held a leading position or an individual who experienced larger developments, or even reveal how one

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<sup>36</sup> Karwan Fatah-Black, 'Slaves and sailors on Suriname's rivers', *Itinerario: bulletin of the Leyden Centre for the History of European Expansion* Vol.36, no.3 (2012), 61-82. Doi:10.1017/S0165115313000053.

<sup>37</sup> Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 165.

<sup>38</sup> Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 163; Harris and Villiers, *Storm van 's Gravesande*, vol. 1: 271, 301, 308; vol. 2: 378.

<sup>39</sup> Lodge activity was reported to have ceased on 15.5.1779. See Beitj Croiset van Uchelen-Brouwer, L.F. Van Dijk, *Overzicht van Loges die onder het Grootoosten der Nederlanden en zijn voorlopers gerwerkt hebben of werken*, (The Hague: Order van loges die onder het Grootoosten der Nederlanden en zijn voorlopers gewerkt hebben of werken 2003), 54.

particular person was representative of a larger group.<sup>40</sup> This thesis does all the above. Brown held a prominent position with the colonial administration, he experienced a decade of political turmoil during his time in Essequibo – with his trade impacted by the American War of Independence - and is a representative of a larger group: freemasons.

Born in Veere on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1732, A.A. Brown was the son of William Brown and Anne Eustich.<sup>41</sup> According to the burgher register, William Brown was born in London and became a burgher of Veere on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1726 at the age of 31, migrating from England around the same time that masonic activity was emerging in the Dutch Republic.<sup>42</sup> It is unclear from the records whether Anne Eustich was of Dutch or British extraction; the only other mention of her in A.A. Brown's archive comes from a letter sent from William Brown to Anne in 1734. It reveals that she went to London and visited her husband's cousin, Peter Banchillon, and the rest of his family, yet the letter fails to offer any clues into her nationality.<sup>43</sup>

However, a year later, William Brown was shipwrecked off the coast of the Republic and perished alongside the VOC vessel *Anna Catharina* he was travelling on.<sup>44</sup> Just nine years later Anne Eustich passed away leaving Brown orphaned at the age of twelve. Despite this, Brown was able to climb the social ladder in Veere and in 1753 is listed as postmaster.<sup>45</sup> This was an important and

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<sup>40</sup> Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2011); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008); C. Schnurmann, 'A Scotsman in Hamburg: John Parish and His Commercial Contribution to the American War of Independence, 1776–1783,' in: Markus A. Denzel, Jan de Vries, and Philipp Robinson Rössner eds., *Small Is Beautiful? Interlopers and Smaller Trading Nations in the Pre-Industrial Period: Proceedings of the XVth World Economic History Congress in Utrecht (Netherlands) 2009*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2011) 157-176; John-Paul A. Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', *Past & present* 242 (2019) 1–22.

<sup>41</sup> Zeeuws Archief (ZA), Archief Adriaan Brown (AAB), inv.nr 16.

<sup>42</sup> ZA, Genealogische Afschriften (GA), inv.nr.965, Alfabetische namenlijst op de poorters van Veere Deel II.

<sup>43</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr 1 - Brief van William Brown te Veere aan zijn vrouw Anne Eustich die op dat moment bij haar neef te Londen verblijft, betreffende familie aangelegenheden, 1734. This particular inventory entry is incorrect as William Brown wrote: 'I'm glad to hear my cousin Banchillon's well'. Consequently, Anne Eustich was staying with William's cousin, not her own.

<sup>44</sup> William Brown was listed as an assistant on the VOC ship '*Anna Catharina*' and was headed for Batavia (Indonesia) before wrecking shortly after leaving the port of Rammekens near Vlissingen. See P. Blom 'Van het Veerse Gat naar de wilde Kust', 3-4; Tine Missiaen, Ine Demerre & Valentine Verrijken, 'Integrated assessment of the buried wreck site of the Dutch East Indiaman t' Vliegent Hart', *Relicta* 9 191-208 (2012), 1.

<sup>45</sup> P. Blom, 'Van het Veerse Gat naar de wilde Kust', 4.

coveted position, the revenue of which could be considerable.<sup>46</sup> As previously noted, Veere was home to a significant Scottish population which was presided over by a high official of State, called the Lord Conservator of Scots Privileges.<sup>47</sup> Although his father was of English extraction, Brown managed to find employment within the Scottish Court in Veere. He was recorded on the list of exemption of excise in the period between 1763 and 1784-1785 as first a secretary (for the years 1763, 1765, 1766) and later as *fiscaal* of the Scottish court.<sup>48</sup>

To date, there has been no in-depth study of Adriaan Anthony Brown. Peter Blom's article in the 1990 edition of *Nehalennia* magazine is the only work that focusses specifically on Brown. It is a good starting point for research, yet published almost thirty years ago, and an update is required. Brown receives a mention in several works consulted for this thesis, yet it is often a passing reference, sometimes in the form of a footnote. In addition, there is no study of Dutch masonic activity within the Atlantic world. Thus, there is a strong impetus to research not only A.A. Brown but also his masonic connections during his time in the Atlantic colony. Consequently, this thesis is the first study that provides crucial insight into an understudied area of the Atlantic world and Dutch masonic activity on the 'Wild Coast'.

For this thesis, I consulted a variety of sources, from two different archives. Firstly, I visited the Zeeuws Archief and consulted a variety of material housed in Adriaan Anthony Brown's personal inventory. Encompassing fifty-eight entries, Brown's archive offers crucial insight into his youth, his career in Veere, and his time as *fiscaal* in Essequibo. From the Zeeuws Archief, this thesis relies on the copies Brown made of the letters he sent home to Walcheren, the letters he received in Essequibo,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>47</sup> For the classic studies of the Scottish staple at Veere see John Davidson and Alexander Gray, *The Scottish staple at Veere: a study in the economic history of Scotland*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1909); Matthijs P. Rooseboom, *The Scottish staple in the Netherlands: an account of the trade relations between Scotland and the Low Countries from 1292 till 1676, with a calendar of illustrative documents*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1910).

<sup>48</sup> ZA (200) Stad Veere 1340-1816, inv.nr. 2015a, 112.



and two of his notebooks. Most of these sources are in Dutch and consequently, I relied on the help of friends and academics in Zeeland to help with translation issues.

However, Brown's masonic connection was not evident in any of the material housed in his archive in Zeeland. Instead, it was found in the Cultural Masonic Centre 'Prins Frederik' in The Hague, CMC for short. The CMC houses the historical archives, library, and object collection of the Order of Freemasons under the Grand East of the Netherlands, and includes a membership card register with the names of members up until 1900.<sup>49</sup> Even though it did not prove that Brown was a member of a Dutch masonic lodge, it revealed two copies of letters sent from the Grand Lodge in The Hague that were addressed to the brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion Lodge' 'and to Mr. Fiscaal Brown' in 1777. These letters will be analysed in the following chapters. What is important to mention here, is that Brown is referred to as 'Broeder Brown' and received an invoice relating to masonic literature he took with him on his departing voyage in 1773. This suggests that, even though his name does not appear in the membership registers, he was closely affiliated – at the very least – to the masonic brotherhood.

The archival material relating to the Middelburg Lodge 'La Philantropie' and the Lodge in Veere, 'L'Enfants de la Vertu' was also consulted for this thesis. Encompassing several boxes of material, the perfectly preserved minute books, personal correspondences, and financial records of the lodges testify to Angela Andrea Kroon's statement that the CMC and its collections are 'one of the best kept 'secrets' in The Hague.'<sup>50</sup> Although these records failed to muster any reference to Brown, the material did provide crucial context and provided me with circumstantial evidence of Brown's masonic affiliation, which will be fully addressed in the second chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> The CMC website has an online search engine which includes the entire Museum collection, Library Catalogue and Archives. It can be accessed here: <https://collecties.vrijmetselarijmuseum.nl/search/simple> Many documents will be made available online in the near future as the CMC participates in the Metamorphoze project of the National Library of the Netherlands.

<sup>50</sup> A.A. Kroon, *Masonic networks*, 9.

However, there is an important point to be made here. Brown had no real overt masonic connection; Brown is not listed as a member of any lodges in Walcheren, as per the CMC's records, and he is not listed as a brother of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge in Demerara. I had to look beyond the traditional methods of proving masonic connection, which perhaps hints at one of the reasons why this topic has been starved of Dutch academic attention for so long. Studying freemasonry is never straightforward, it is a 'secret' society by nature with freemasons guarding their secret oaths for centuries. Perhaps it is the elusive nature of freemasonry that has caused its underrepresentation in Dutch historiography.

Closely related to this idea of elusiveness is that for many, freemasonry and its teachings remain relatively unknown. A society steeped in secrecy and mystery is a double-edged sword; on one hand, it can quite easily be overlooked, but at the same time, the possibilities for future historical inquiry are endless. The sheer amount of unresearched archival sources relating to Dutch masonic lodges housed in the CMC is staggering. In the words of historian Andrew Prescott, a new generation of researchers need to 'get their hands dirty in those unopened boxes.'<sup>51</sup> With this thesis, I hope to demonstrate that with the right tools, studying Freemasonry is relevant and can offer historians a novel way of looking at Dutch imperialism.

Due to the lack of studies that focus on Dutch freemasonry within the Atlantic world, I reference mostly secondary literature on British freemasonry and its role in former British colonies. Though submitting to a different Grand Lodge, the work of Historian Jessica Harland-Jacobs on the British context, for example, indicates several similarities to the Dutch case. The similarities will be discussed later and the transnational nature of Dutch freemasonry in Demerara will be explored. This is an important point that relates to Bram Hoonhout's idea of the Essequibo and Demerara being a 'Borderless Empire'. Hoonhout argues that empire-building in these colonies transcended 'national'

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<sup>51</sup> Andrew Prescott, 'A History of British Freemasonry, 1425-2000', *CRFF Working Papers* (2008), 2, found in A.A. Kroon, *Masonic networks*, 27.

boundaries with his research aligning itself with recent studies that argue against the ‘balkanization’ of the Atlantic history into multiple sub-Atlantics (i.e., British, Dutch, and French).<sup>52</sup> I will argue that the masonic lodge in Demerara was ‘borderless’ and in a similar manner, help counter the ‘balkanization’ of Atlantic freemasonry.

This perhaps brings in another reason why this topic has been neglected by Dutch historians. For too long, studies of freemasonry and colonialism have been constrained by the nation-state. Although, this is not without due reason; the nation-state became the predominant organizational framework of freemasonry with masonic activity being governed by various ‘national’ Grand Lodges, not to mention the fact that it became by far the most important lens through which to observe European colonialism in general.

However, as historian Jan C Jansen has quite rightly pointed out, ‘the activities of these “national” grand lodges exceeded the territories of the nation-states’ themselves.<sup>53</sup> Jansen argues that the Atlantic world was a hotbed of transnational masonic activity and argues that we should study freemasonry from an Atlantic perspective as it helps us ‘to gain a better and more complex image of the Atlantic as a world organized in several overlapping networks, instead of in adjacent, monolithic blocs’.<sup>54</sup> Taken together, the body of sources in this thesis will argue that through Adriaan Anthony Brown, we can better understand not only the interconnected nature of Dutch freemasonry and Dutch imperialism but at the same time acknowledge the transnational nature of Dutch freemasonry in Demerara and its role in facilitating Atlantic sociability.

This thesis adopts a thematic approach and is set out in three chapters. Each chapter examines a different way in which freemasonry impacted Adriaan Anthony Brown’s life during his time in

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<sup>52</sup> For those studies see Alison Games, ‘Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities’, *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006); Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005); Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press 1991).

<sup>53</sup> Jan C. Jansen, ‘In search of Atlantic Sociability: Freemasons, Empires, and Atlantic History’, *Schriftenreihe Bulletin of the German Historical Institute Washington, D.C.*, Band 57 (Fall 2015), 82.

<sup>54</sup> Jan C. Jansen, ‘In search of Atlantic Sociability’, 94.

Essequibo. The following chapters focus on the following areas: governance, trade, and survival. These areas have been chosen because they encapsulate the key activities Brown engaged in during his time in Essequibo and follow a chronological order. Brown was sent to Essequibo to become part of the local governance, he began trading almost immediately after arriving in 1773, all the while he had to work hard to survive and negotiate life in a foreign world. It was only after several bouts of ill-health that he was forced to return to Veere in 1781.

Chapter 1 begins by exploring how foreign masonic lodges were governed from the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands, and in doing so helps answer the following key questions: to what extent was there a transnational element to Dutch masonic activity in the Atlantic world; and how did masonic governance operate in practice, in relation to the universal cosmopolitan doctrine its members supposedly subscribed to?

Chapter 2 is guided by the central question: to what extent did masonic membership aid the business dealings of Brown? Again, due to the understudied nature of Dutch masonic activity in the Atlantic world, the present author relies on similar studies of masonic trading networks. While most research on this topic assumes that some innate inclination to trust each other existed between freemasons, this chapter challenges that assumption and demonstrates the relationship was not so straightforward. The chapter begins by examining whether Brown was able to conduct business with members of the Demerara lodge with the second half analysing Brown's transatlantic trade with three European traders. Accordingly, it assesses whether masonic membership facilitated business cooperation.

In Chapter 3, the focus is on the idea of survival, both in a literal and a more metaphorical sense. The first half of this chapter addresses Brown's literal bid to survive by examining whether he was able to take advantage of key benefits the brotherhood offered members, with the second half addressing the more metaphorical sense of the word. This includes a discussion on the degree of conviviality the brotherhood offered and how it provided men with a space for self-learning. In this way, I hope to

reveal the important role of freemasonry to late eighteenth-century Dutch colonialism, with a particular focus on the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara, using Adriaan Anthony Brown's time as *fiscaal* from 1773-1781 as a case study.

## Chapter 1: Masonic Governance: Masonic ideology in theory and in practice

Expanding European colonial conquest catalysed freemasonry's global expansion. Historian Jessica Harland-Jacobs argues that, in the context of the British Empire, freemasonry was a colonial institution par excellence with the brotherhood lubricating the wheels of imperialism.<sup>55</sup> The following chapter aims to explore whether such a statement can be applied to Dutch masonic activity in the Atlantic, with a specific focus on the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara. To do so, this chapter will focus on masonic governance and rely on the archival material that relates to the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge and Adriaan Anthony Brown. To explore the connection between freemasonry and Dutch imperialism, this chapter will be split into two sections; the first section reviews how lodges were governed in both the Dutch Republic and abroad, and the second studies how the masonic ideology operated in practice on the 'Wild Coast.'

However, before doing so, it is important to understand masonic ideology, in theory. In 1723 James Anderson, Scottish clergyman, and freemason, compiled *The Constitutions of the Free-masons. Containing the History, Charges, Regulations, &c. of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity For Use of the Lodges*.<sup>56</sup> It laid out rules and duties of freemasons and claimed that freemasons were 'of all Nations, Tongues, Kindreds, and Languages.'<sup>57</sup> In 1736 Anderson's *Constitutions* was translated into Dutch by the Deputy Grand Master Johan Kuenen<sup>58</sup> and in 1761 a new book of constitutions, specifically for the Dutch lodges, was compiled by the Grand Secretary Jean Pierre Isaaq Dubois.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, "'Hands Across the Sea'", 246.

<sup>56</sup> James Anderson, *The Charges of a Free-Mason Extracted from the Ancient Records of Lodges beyond the Sea, and of Those in England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1723), reprinted as an appendix to Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1981), 279–85. (hereafter cited as Anderson's Constitutions).

<sup>57</sup> Anderson's Constitutions.

<sup>58</sup> Johan Kuenen's translation of Anderson's constitutions was the first book of masonic laws and regulations to be published in the Dutch Republic, titled *De Instellingen, historien, wetten, ampten, orders, reglementen en gewoontens van de zeer voortreffelijke broederschap der aengenomene vrye metselaers*, ('s-Gravenhage 1736).

<sup>59</sup> It became known as the Dubois constitutions (Wetboek Dubois) and was titled *De Pligten, Wetten, of Algemene Reglementen der Vrye Metzelaaren in een nieuwe order geschikt, en goedgekeurd bij de Groote Loge der Zeeven Verenigde Nederlanden*, ('s-Gravenhage 1761).

Although the new constitution helped create distance between the two Grand Lodges, the rules and regulations remained largely the same. For instance, Dubois states that:

‘no hatred or enmity should be brought into the door of the Lodge, much less any disputes about religion or politics, which can be only very pernicious to a Brotherhood consisting of all Religions, Nations, and Languages.’<sup>60</sup>

While the constitutions adopted by both the English and Dutch Grand lodges may have been worded slightly differently, their foundational values were consistent. On paper, the masonic ideology transcends the differences that divide men, with lodges acting as arenas of cultural exchange. However, how did a society that preached universal cosmopolitanism come to fruition during the age of Dutch imperialism?

In order to understand how this worked, we must first understand how lodges were governed in the Dutch Republic itself. Freemasonry was banned in the Dutch Republic between 1735-1744, but quickly re-established itself in the country upon the end of this injunction.<sup>61</sup> Dutch freemasons reorganised themselves and established the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands in The Hague in 1756. The creation of a Grand Lodge not only regularised Dutch freemasonry but also fuelled the establishment of new lodges throughout the Republic.<sup>62</sup> To become lawful a newly established lodge had to receive a formal letter of constitution and had to pay yearly dues to the Grand Lodge. As a result, from its conception, the Grand Lodge enacted strict measures of control.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, Original Dutch reads: dierhalven mag men geen haat of vyandschap binnen de deur van de Loge brengen, veel min eenige twisten over Godsdienst of Staatskunde, welke niet dan zeer verderflijk kunnen zyn voor eene Broederschap, bestaande de uit alle Geloofsgenooten, Volkeren, en Taalen’, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Freemasonry was banned in the Dutch Republic between 1735-1744. For a discussion on the motives behind the ban see A. Van den Brand, *De Vrijmetselarij in de Republiek der Nederlanden tot 1737. Vestiging en verbod*, (MA Paper, Utrecht University, Utrecht 1993); A. van den Brand, ‘De werkers van het eerste uur: 1734-1756’, in: A.W.F.M. van de Sande en M.J.M. de Haan, *Vrijmetselaren: 250 jaar en meer*, Vol.2, (The Hague: De Vrije Metselaar 2007), 25-82.

<sup>62</sup> Between 1750 and 1800 at least 78 lodges were created see W.W. Mijnhardt, ‘Socialbility in Walcheren 1750-1815’, *Tijdschrift voor de studie van de Verlichting en van het vrije denken*. Vols 3 and 4., (1984) 289-310.

The first meeting of the Grand Lodge recognized only eleven lodges under its jurisdiction, with at least six other Dutch lodges not represented.<sup>63</sup> Members of these recognized lodges were warned about visiting unrecognised lodges with the Grand Lodge even making 'inspection visits' to individual lodges.<sup>64</sup> Concerns over unsolicited lodges and membership intensified in the early 1770s when the English Grand Lodge acknowledged the Dutch Grand Lodge as a sovereign body. In 1771 both organisations agreed not to found lodges on each other's territories which marked the beginning of a more rapid expansion of Dutch freemasonry in its overseas colonies.

However, this flurry of overseas masonic activity was a source of concern for both the British and Dutch Grand lodges. To help curb unlawful masonic activity in British colonies, the English Grand Lodge implemented a system of local representation and began appointing Provincial Grand Masters. These men were appointed to oversee expanding masonic activity in Dutch colonies and were assisted by various Provincial Grand Officers. These officers had the power to establish lodges and collect contributions.<sup>65</sup> Due to the slow nature of mail via ships in the eighteenth-century, Provincial Grand Masters proved crucial in regulating masonic activity abroad.

The Dutch Grand Lodge followed suit and adopted a similar system. A list housed in the CMC offers crucial insight into this overseas organisational structure. Titled 'Acts and Commissions for Foreign Deputy and Provincial Grand Masters' the list demonstrates that from as early as 1757 the Dutch Grand Lodge were appointing Provincial Grand Masters.<sup>66</sup> December 1757 saw the first Provincial Grand Master appointed in the Dutch Atlantic world; Captain Henrik Rietveld was allowed to found lodges in Curaçao and St. Thomas. It is interesting to note that after 1771 - when the Dutch Grand Lodge gained sovereignty from the English Grand Lodge - the colonies in the Dutch Atlantic

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<sup>63</sup> For example, the Lodge La Vertu in Leiden had not been invited to the meeting and had only received a formal letter of constitution. See A.A. Kroon, *Masonic networks*, 48.

<sup>64</sup> Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, pg 101

<sup>65</sup> A.A. Kroon, *Masonic networks*, 188.

<sup>66</sup> Cultural Masonic Centre 'Prins Frederik' in The Hague (CMC), Box 2004, Bij de Groote Loge in het jaar 1778 ingekomen stukken 1771-1781, no. 749-1: 'Acten en Commissien voor Buitenlandse Gedeputeerde en Provinciale Grootmeesters'.



world were no longer grouped together, with Suriname and St. Eustatius receiving their own Provincial Grand Masters.<sup>67</sup> This new regionalised form of governance was a direct consequence of the explosion of Dutch masonic activity that took place in Dutch Atlantic colonies, during the late-eighteenth century. In a similar vein to domestic masonic governance, Charles Chabert was appointed 'as an inspector' to the masonic lodges in St. Eustatius in 1773.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, we can see that in both the Republic itself, and in Atlantic colonies, the Dutch Grand Lodge implemented strict forms of control. Every lodge required a formal letter of constitution, they had to pay yearly dues to the Grand Lodge, they faced potential inspection visits and foreign masonic activity was regulated by Provincial Grand Masters.

However, how did this masonic governance operate in practice? To answer this question, the following section will use Adriaan Anthony Brown's time in Essequibo to offer a snapshot into Dutch masonic activity in the Atlantic world: namely on the Wild Coast. On September 28, 1773, the ship '*d' Eensgezinde*' sailed along the Guyanese coast. After three months at sea, Essequibo's new *fiscaal*, Adriaan Anthony Brown, came ashore. As an official employee of the West India Company (WIC), Brown had sworn an oath to protect and defend the rights and authority of the company.<sup>69</sup> Brown received strict instructions from the WIC's governing board (Heren X or Gentlemen Ten) for his role as *fiscaal*. To offer a brief summary, Brown was allowed to thoroughly inspect ships and confiscate the merchandise of those individuals infringing the company's rights; he was to safeguard against illicit trade to the Dutch Republic and had to ensure that criminal sentences, passed by the respective councils, were properly executed.<sup>70</sup> Simultaneously, if Brown was to deviate from said duties and 'employ the Company's effects, slaves, watercraft, goods, ammunition or any other materials

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<sup>67</sup> Johan Balthazar Van Vheelen was appointed as Provincial Grand Master over the colony of Suriname 14-08-1773, with Huet Duplessis appointed Provincial Grand Master over St. Eustatius the following month. CMC, Box 2004, Bij de Groote Loge in het jaar 1778 ingekomen stukken 1771-1781, no. 749-1: 'Acten en Commissien voor Buitenlandse Gedeputeerde en Provinciale Grootmeesters'.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Original Dutch reads: 'Als Inspecteur'.

<sup>69</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 28, Eedsformulier voor personeelsleden van de West Indische Compagnie, [1773-1781].

<sup>70</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 30, Instucties voor diverse dienaren te Essequibo en Demerarij opgesteld door de Heren X Amsterdam, 1773.

whatsoever for his own private trade', he would 'be punished rigorously with cassation'. Another noteworthy instruction was Article 11 which read:

'He will make copies of all inventories, information, records, declarations, verdict and other documents used in indictment and send authorised as stipulated in art.3'<sup>71</sup>

Although it was common practice to make copies of letters, due to the slow transport of mail over sea in the eighteenth-century, Brown was meticulous in his record keeping. There are several inventories in his archive relating to the copies of letters he sent.<sup>72</sup> From these, we can see that he was in regular communication with the Gentlemen Ten in Amsterdam. However, due to Zeeland's historic connection with Essequibo, as discussed in the introduction, Brown also sent regular updates to the directors of the Zeeland chamber of the WIC.<sup>73</sup> In response to the conflict between the two chambers of the WIC, a number of merchants from Zeeland took it upon themselves in 1771 to establish 'The Society for Navigation on Essequibo and annexed Rivers' (SvE).<sup>74</sup> This society was located in Middelburg and worked as a small trading company within the WIC. Its primary purpose was to trade and govern the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara. Brown was appointed as official correspondent for the Essequibo colony in 1775. From this we can see Brown had various layers of allegiance; firstly, to the Gentleman Ten of the WIC, secondly to the different chambers of the WIC, and thirdly to the SvE. However, Brown also received communication from another governing body: The Grand Lodge of the Netherlands.

To obtain a clear understanding of how masonic governance operated in practice, we can rely on a letter sent by the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands to the brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge in 1777. The letter was written by Rutgerus van Laak (1723-1788), a publisher and merchant in

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<sup>71</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 30, Artikel 11.

<sup>72</sup> ZA, AAB inv.nr. 20, Brieven van Adriaan Anthony Brown aan de Heren X, bewindhebbers van de West-Indische Compagnie betreffende Essequibo, afschritten, 1773-1774.

<sup>73</sup> ZA, AAB inv.nr. 15-17, Registers met afschriften van door Adriaan Anthony Brown te Cowes (Engeland) en Essequibo aan diverse personen verzonden brieven, met indexen op naam van geadresseerden, 1773-1781.

<sup>74</sup> Ruud Paesie provides an important study into this society in his book *Societiet van Essequibo, Op- en ondergang van een cooperatieve scheepvaartonderneming, 1771-1788*, (Vlissingen: Den Boer De Ruiters 2017).

The Hague who was the official bookseller of the Order. The letter not only demonstrates Adriaan Anthony Brown's masonic connection but also the Grand Lodge's desire to control masonic activity abroad. Van Laak wrote that the Grand Lodge had been waiting, for quite some time, for a response from the brothers indicating the safe arrival of 'Brother Brown' who 'at that time left for Essequibo in the quality of Fiscaal.'<sup>75</sup> Van Laak added that Brown was also carrying a package containing '24 Code Maçonne and Muse Maçonne, as well as 20 Sealed Parchment Sheets for certificates.'<sup>76</sup> This is important as it reveals Brown's masonic credentials as he is referred to as 'Brother' which was, and still is, common practice between members of the brotherhood.

The package of masonic literature he was carrying is also of importance. During the eighteenth-century, masonic literature was being exported on a mass scale, a process aided by international couriers. Angela Kroon acknowledges this and refers to an example from 1773, when the lodge 'La Fidèle Sincérité' in Batavia, received 50 copies of 'La code maçonne et la muse maçonne...', the same text Brown was carrying.<sup>77</sup> The brothers in Batavia received these publications from the 'brother Johannes Sneijders.'<sup>78</sup> Little is known about Sneijders other than that he was a sea captain for the VOC. Nevertheless, we can see that whether distributed to the East or the West, significant amounts of masonic literature were distributed to foreign lodges via the help of brothers themselves. This is important as it indicates that Brown was a freemason, he acted as a masonic intermediary and was clearly trusted to deliver said package.

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<sup>75</sup> CMC, box 2004-2, Bij de Groote Loge in het jaar 1777 ingekomen stukken nrs. 735: 1-2: Van Broeder R. Van Laak te 's-Gravenhage aan de leden van de Loge St. Jean de la Reunion te Rio Demerarij en aan de Heer fiscaal Brown gezonden missiven. Original Dutch reads: 'Van tijd tot tijd gewacht hebbende op Uwer Agtbaarheeren missieves en wel in zonderheid op de resecpetie van de Brieven aan uwer Edeler gezonden in Juli 1773 door den Broeder Brown, de welke te dien tijd van hier Essequibo in qualiteit als fiscaal is vertrokken en zig geschargeert heeft met een pakje inhoudede: 24 Code Maçon en Muse Maçonne, als mede, 20 Gezegeld vellen Parchementen voor certificate'.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta (ANRI), letter by R. van Laak to lodge La Fidèle Sincerite in Batavia, 18-9-1773. This archive was not visited by the author. The document was made available and transcribed by Diederik Kortlang (National Archive of the Netherlands) and was found in A.A. Kroon, Masonic networks, 414-415.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

The subsequent section will discuss the package and how it serves as further evidence of the strict measures of control the Grand Lodge enacted and the global extent of Dutch freemasonry. The first item refers to the 1773 publication *La code maçonne et la muse maçonne. The duties, laws or general rules of freemasons, ordained and approved by the Grand lodge of the Seven United Netherlands*.<sup>79</sup> As per the title, this publication contained the laws and rules of freemasonry. This is important as it shows the Grand Lodges' desire to spread the correct codes and regulations of freemasonry. Aside from the masonic codes, the text also contained the '*Muse Maçonne*', which was a collection of various masonic poems, speeches and songs. Songbooks were essential to daily lodge life with music and singing helping to entertain and build comradery between members.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, Brown was also charged with '20 Sealed Parchment Sheets for certificates.' This is significant as the brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' would have used these parchment sheets to create membership certificates. As freemasonry proliferated through Europe, different rites and degrees were being practised by different masonic bodies. These certificates took on a dual purpose; firstly, they allowed lodges to monitor and allowed individual members to demonstrate one's masonic affiliation. The Grand Lodge of Ireland was the first national body to use certificates, with other European Grand Lodges adopting the same system.<sup>81</sup> From 1763 onwards the Dutch Grand Lodge allowed its lodges to produce formal membership certificates. These certificates were crucial in gaining access to lodges as stipulated by the book of law of the Dutch Grand Lodge in 1761:

'A visitor, however educated in Masonry he might be, will not be received in any Lodge, unless he is personally known there, proposed by a known Brother, or lastly on a good reference by his Lodge. Therefore, the Grand Lodge in these Lands has allowed, that every special Lodge,

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<sup>79</sup> Jean Pierre Isaaq Dubois, *La code maçonne et la muse maçonne. De pligten wetten of algemeene reglementen der vrije metzelaaren; in een nieuwe order geschikt en goedgekeurt bij de Groote loge der zeeven Vereenigde Neder-landen*, ('s-Gravenhage 1773).

<sup>80</sup> For more on music and freemasonry see M. Davies, 'Freemasonry and Music', in: Hendrik Bogdan and Jan A. Snoek eds., *Handbook of Freemasonry*, (Leiden: Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion Vol.8 2014) 495-522; Malcom Davies, *The masonic Muse, Songs, music and muscians associated with Dutch Freemasonry, 1730-1806*, (The Hague: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis 2005).

<sup>81</sup> J. Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism' 441.

will give to its Members a Note, signed by one of the Attending Officers, including the Name of the Lodge, that of the Brother, and the Steps, into which he has been lifted, marked by Numbers 1, 2 or 3, to be shown by the Brother Visitor at his questioning'<sup>82</sup>

From this, we can see a 'members note' proved decisive for masons to gain acceptance and admission and were vital for brethren employed by Dutch colonial companies. Jessica Harland-Jacobs explains how certificates were utilised abroad:

'Certificates essentially acted as passports, which individual brethren could use—along with their knowledge of masonic passwords, grips, and rituals—to prove their membership in the brotherhood when they ventured abroad.'<sup>83</sup>

Masonic 'passports' had the same function of domestic membership 'notes'. By showing their certificate, freemasons could rely on the support and assistance of local brethren when entering unfamiliar foreign territory. The latter section of the letter serves as further evidence of the Grand Lodge's desire to control masonic activity abroad. Van Laak wrote that; 'I am astonished to the utmost that I have not received the slightest news'<sup>84</sup> and wished the brothers of 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge to honour him with a prompt reply. Van Laak added that he will not send more masonic literature

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<sup>82</sup> Jean Pierre Isaaq Dubois, *'De Pligten, Wetten, of Algemene Reglementen der Vrye Metzelaaren in een nieuwe order geschikt, en goedgekeurd bij de Grootte Loge der Zeeven Verenigde Nederlanden'*, ('s-Gravenhage 1761). Chapter 5 article VIII, resp. IX, here quoted from D.C.J. van Peype, "'Iedere Broeder moet tot een loge behoorden...". Het lidmaatschap van Orde en Loge', *Thoth* 31 III, (1980) 78. Original Dutch reads: 'Een bezoeker, hoe onderweezen hy in de Metzelaye ook zy, zal in geen Loge ontfangen werden, ten zy derzelven daar persoonlyk bekend, of door een bekenden Broeder voorgedragen was, ofte eyndelyk op goede getuigenis van zyn Loge. Daarom heeft de Grote Loge deezer Landen goedgevonden, dat ieder byzondere Loge, aan deszelfs Leeden, zal geeven een Briefje, door een der Officiers in Bediening zynde, onderteekent, inhoudende de Naam der Loge, die van den Broeder, en de Trappen, tot welke hy verheeven is, gemerkt met Cyffergetallen, 1,2, of 3, om door den Broeder Bezoeker, by zyn ondervraaginge, vertoon te worden'.

<sup>83</sup> J. Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism', 441.

<sup>84</sup> CMC, box 2004-2, Bij de Grootte Loge in het jaar 1777 ingekomen stukken nrs. 735: 1-2: Van Broeder R. Van Laak te 's-Gravenhage aan de leden van de Loge St. Jean de la Reunion te Rio Demerarij en aan de Heer fiscaal Brown gezonden missiven. Original Dutch reads: 'ben ik den uitersten verwondered, geen het minste berigt ontvragen te hebben'.

unless 'a regular and annual correspondence can be maintained'<sup>85</sup> and that failing to do so, would result in the brothers drifting from the Grand Lodge and becoming like 'thin sheep.'<sup>86</sup>

A final element of control can be found in the second page of the letter. Van Laak commented that if the brothers wanted to receive ornaments for their masonic rituals, 'of which I have already served a good number of Lodges here as well as in the East and West Indies', the lodge had to send a list of members, detailing their qualification.<sup>87</sup> Domestically, membership certificates handed out to brethren in the Dutch Republic were sent to the Grand Secretary, who signed them to ensure authenticity.<sup>88</sup> This allowed the Grand Lodge to monitor and regulate domestic membership. However, such a process was an impossible task for those initiated in Dutch lodges in the colonies. Consequently, lodges operating in Dutch colonies were given parchment paper to create certificates themselves. As a result, we can see that the Grand Lodge was eager to enact any form of regulation it could to compensate for the power it ultimately lost with members being initiated abroad. There was a real concern over *who* was being initiated in Dutch lodges overseas. Whether demanding a list of members or reluctant to send masonic literature and ornaments for rituals, the Grand Lodge sought to implement stringent governance.

This initial discussion on masonic governance was important to understand that although built on cosmopolitan principles, in reality, masonic membership was tightly guarded and highly exclusive. The following pages will delve deeper into this inherent ambiguity and assess to what extent universal cosmopolitanism was achieved by the brothers of 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge. To do so, copies of the original membership lists from the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge will be used as evidence. There are three in total which are dated 28 September 1772, 18 February 1778 and 8 August 1778 (Appendix

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<sup>85</sup> CMC, box 2004-2, Bij de Groote Loge in het jaar 1777 ingekomen stukken nrs. 735: 1-2: Van Broeder R. Van Laak te 's-Gravenhage aan de leden van de Loge St. Jean de la Reunion te Rio Demerarij en aan de Heer fiscaal Brown gezonden missiven. Original Dutch reads: '...op een jereguleerde jaartysen correspondantie kan staat maken'.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, Original Dutch reads: '...niet als verdunde schapen'.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, Original Dutch reads: '...waar van reeds een goed aantal Loges zo hier als elders in Oost en West indien bediend heb'.

<sup>88</sup> D.C.J. van Peype, "'Iedere Broeder'", 79.

l). The lists offer crucial insight into how the lodge developed over time and how the lodge was governed. For instance, in 1772 the lodge boasted twenty-three members, in February 1778 it had dropped to sixteen, yet by August 1778 it had risen again to twenty-six in total, with this last list containing the names of twelve new 'Apprentices', men newly recruited to the brotherhood. The lists themselves also reveal the names of the officers, the brothers who held prominent roles in masonic rituals and ceremonies. By applying some additional research, the lists can also examine whether the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge was truly 'of all Religions, Nations and Languages'.

Due to the fragmentary nature of eighteenth-century sources, it has not been possible to identify the nationality of each and every member. Nevertheless, from the preliminary research conducted for this thesis, the lists' reveal the lodge was transnational by nature. For instance, the petitioners of the lodge had a preference for affiliation to the Grand Lodge of England, as the principal petitioner, Antonio Rigano, was an English mason.<sup>89</sup> Hermanus Jonas, listed as 'Junior Warden' in 1772 and as the Worshipful Master of the Lodge in August 1778, was an influential Dutch planter.<sup>90</sup> James Sutherland, another member, was almost certainly of British origin.<sup>91</sup> To add to this melting pot of nationalities, Louis Chollet, an influential member by 1778, was a Swiss cartographer.<sup>92</sup> This is important in relation to Bram Hoonhout's recent book *Borderless Empire*. Hoonhout argues that the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara were far more Atlantic than they were Dutch, with transnational and trans-imperial sociability central to colonial expansion. With this in mind, we can extend Hoonhout's idea of a 'Borderless Empire' to masonic activity in Demerara, with the 'St. Jean de la

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<sup>89</sup> Harold B Davis, 'The Development of Freemasonry in the Caribbean with special reference to Guyana', *The Almoner The Quarterly Newsletter of the Glenlyon Lodge No. 346 SC*, volume 1 issue 1, [https://educationdocbox.com/78583777-Private\\_School/The-almoner-the-quarterly-newsletter-of-the-glenlyon-lodge-no-346-s-c-w-bro-lloyd-r-moore-p-s-d-g-m-was.html](https://educationdocbox.com/78583777-Private_School/The-almoner-the-quarterly-newsletter-of-the-glenlyon-lodge-no-346-s-c-w-bro-lloyd-r-moore-p-s-d-g-m-was.html), [Accessed 7 December 2021].

<sup>90</sup> For more on Hermanus Jonas and the tense political climate in Demerara in 1785 see Bram Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 59-64.

<sup>91</sup> Although not providing biographical details a 'James Sutherland' of British Guiana was awarded 126 0s 2d in compensation on 14 December 1835 for two enslaved people. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/7424>, [Accessed 18 January 2022].

<sup>92</sup> For details on Louis Chollet see H. Jordaan and V. Wilson, 'The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and Change', in: Gert Oostindie, J. Roitman and Aviva Ben-Ur, *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800* 29, (Leiden: Brill 2014) 273–308.

Reunion' Lodge being a 'Borderless' lodge and in many ways paradigmatic of the masonic cosmopolitanism set out in the fraternity's constitutional document.

However, there were limitations to this masonic cosmos. As demonstrated earlier, the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands sought to regulate and control membership, both domestically and abroad. Historian Jan Jansen has commented that exclusionary policies typified European freemasonry in general, with European masonic cosmopolitanism remaining closed to women; 'in many countries Jews, in some cases Catholics, and almost everywhere the lower classes were excluded as well.'<sup>93</sup> Although the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge admitted men of different nationalities, it could be argued that like their European counterparts they too enacted exclusionary policies. The clearest way to demonstrate this is by looking at the population of the colonies. According to Van der Oest, by the 1780s the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara had a combined European population of 1,434.<sup>94</sup> This is important in relation to the membership lists discussed earlier. By August 1778 the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge had twenty-six members. Although the available data force us to compare a single year to an entire decade, it can be tentatively concluded that the brothers of the Demerara lodge constituted a minority of the overall European population.

Moreover, of the sixty-five names that are listed in total, twenty-three of those reappear in future lists' (Appendix II), which means during its existence, and as far as we know, the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge only ever had forty-two members in total. Consequently, by comparing the number of members against the overall European population, we can see that it was an exclusive group of men who became members.

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<sup>93</sup> J.C. Jansen, 'Becoming imperial citizens: Jews and freemasonry', in: Sina Rauschenbach and Jonathan Schorsch, *The Sephardic Atlantic Colonial Histories and Postcolonial Perspectives*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2018), 215-244. On women and Jews, see especially Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 120-42; Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723-1939* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1970).

<sup>94</sup> E.W. Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 329.



Furthermore, during the 1780s, this European population oversaw the exploitation of over 350 plantations with roughly 20,000 enslaved Africans.<sup>95</sup> Although the present author cannot be certain there were no black men amongst the members of the Demerara Lodge, it does seem highly unlikely, given the exclusive nature of membership in the Demerara Lodge, that any non-Europeans were admitted. The non-admission of enslaved can be traced back to a passage in the founding document of English freemasonry, which defined the freemason as a 'free-born man'. The colonial context transformed this into the exclusion of all people of African descent, regardless of their individual legal status, with skin colour becoming a central criterion of admission.<sup>96</sup> In fact, it was only during the late nineteenth-century that non-European men even began entering lodges in significant numbers.<sup>97</sup> Van der Veur's study of freemasonry in Indonesia supports this. He notes that it was only during the 1870s that Dutch lodges began opening their doors to non-Europeans, even then it was only Chinese and Indonesian elites that were initiated.<sup>98</sup> In general, enslaved populations and free men of colour remained systematically excluded from European masonic activity in the Atlantic world.<sup>99</sup>

However, that is not to say that black men were totally absent from late eighteenth-century freemasonry. As French historian Cécile Révauger has commented 'the early days of black Freemasonry in America are closely related to the general context of slavery and abolitionism.'<sup>100</sup> For instance, in 1775 an Irish military lodge admitted fifteen African Americans into freemasonry in Boston and in 1784, Prince Hall, a skilled craftsman and African American community leader in Boston,

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<sup>95</sup> E.W. Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 329.

<sup>96</sup> J.C. Jansen, 'Becoming imperial citizens', 240.

<sup>97</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism', 454.

<sup>98</sup> P.W.J. Van der Veur, *Freemasonry in Indonesia*, 15-16.

<sup>99</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire*, 215-20; C. Révauger, 'Freemasonry in Barbados, Trinidad and Grenada: British or Homemade?', *Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism* 1 (2010), 79-91, esp. 85-86.

<sup>100</sup> Cécile Révauger, 'Freemasonry and Blacks', in: Hendrik Bogdan and Jan A. Snoek eds., *Handbook of Freemasonry*, (Leiden: Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, Vol.8 2014) 424.

founded the first African American Lodge.<sup>101</sup> Yet, historian Jan Jansen has argued that, in the context of the British Caribbean, racialized admission policies hardened rather than softened, in response to the growing masonic involvement and socio-economic success among free men of colour in the United States.<sup>102</sup> However, in regard to Demerara, the research compiled for this thesis revealed no evidence to suggest that either enslaved people or freed black men were members of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge between 1772 and 1779. Consequently, it can be argued that masonic activity on the 'Wild Coast' helped bolster Dutch imperialism, as both perpetuated racialized policies of exclusion.

Again, that is not to say freemasonry was completely unknown to the enslaved populations of the 'Wild Coast'. There were events in 1814 which were interpreted as a plot for an enslaved uprising stretching from Berbice (the colony adjacent to Demerara) to the east coast of Demerara. Some of the enslaved, who later spoke with British missionary John Wray, explained that they had organised themselves in 'imitation of the Freemasons.'<sup>103</sup> Granted these events fall outside the time period of this thesis, it nonetheless offers an interesting reflection of how enslaved people might have seen and interacted with freemasonry and its ideals. Future research into this area of freemasonry and colonialism could offer interesting studies, exploring whether masonic ideals proliferated into the abolitionist movement. However, in respect to this current study and given the context of late eighteenth-century freemasonry, it can be reasonably assumed that the Demerara lodge did not admit black men, notwithstanding their individual legal status. As a result, there were clear limitations to the masonic cosmopolitan ideology in operation on the 'Wild Coast'.

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<sup>101</sup> The 'African Lodge No.459' received its charter from the Grand Lodge of England and is one of the only few eighteenth-century charters still in existence today. Jessica Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism', 454.

<sup>102</sup> Jansen points to the case of Lovelace Overton (Ovitor), a Barbadian soldier in the British cavalry, who after being initiated in Brighton, England, 1805, was denied access to the British lodge in Barbados in 1823, upon his return to the colony. His plan to establish his own coloured lodge was venomously attacked by the lodges of the island. See J.C. Jansen, 'Becoming imperial citizens', 240-241. For more on Overton, see J. Harland-Jacobs, C. Révauger, and S. Snell, 'Ovitor [Overton], Lovelace', in *Le monde maçonnique des lumières (Europe-Amérique et colonies): Dictionnaire prosopographique*, eds. Charles Porset and Cécile Révauger (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013), vol. 3, 2137-39.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Rain, *Life and Labours of John Wray*, (London, 1892), 122.

To conclude this chapter, despite claiming to be ‘all Religions, Nations and Languages’, masonic activity on the ‘Wild Coast’, between 1772 and 1779, was an exclusively European phenomenon. There is no evidence to suggest the ‘St. Jean de la Reunion’ Lodge admitted non-European men, never mind enslaved or freed blackmen; the initiation of indigenous men into Dutch freemasonry, remained an exception until the late nineteenth-century. Having said that, the specific form of masonic sociability that existed in Demerara was transnational. The lodge facilitated the congregation of Dutch, British and Swiss freemasons, quite a remarkable achievement given the stormy political waters of the late eighteenth-century. Although the ‘St. Jean de la Reunion’ Lodge demonstrated a certain, albeit extremely limited, degree of inclusiveness, the universal masonic cosmopolitanism, as set out on paper, was never fully achieved on the ‘Wild Coast’. It remained constrained by contemporary attitudes to race. A sentiment encapsulated by French historian Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire when he characterises freemasonry as:

‘a mirror through which a group of chosen ones observes itself and tries to appear in its best light, by emphasising the traits of its cohesion, in order to distinguish itself from the average of profane people; this mirror cannot, however, prevent their fears and the force of their social and cultural a priori from showing through.’<sup>104</sup>

The masonic gaze could not break the contemporary social and racial policies of exclusion that characterised the late eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Adriaan Anthony Brown is a perfect case of this; although subscribing to an ostensibly inclusive masonic ideology, he himself was a slave owner, his sugar plantation, called ‘De Philantropia’, was ‘550 acres of land with buildings, slaves and other dependencies.’<sup>105</sup> Overall, although a relative degree of transnational sociability existed within the

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<sup>104</sup> Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, ‘Fraternité universelle et pratiques discriminatoire dans la Francmaçonnerie des Lumières’, *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 44 (1997): 195, doi : <https://doi.org/10.3406/rhmc.1997.1866> [https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhmc\\_0048-8003\\_1997\\_num\\_44\\_2\\_1866](https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhmc_0048-8003_1997_num_44_2_1866) Original French reads: ‘Il fonctionne comme un miroir où un groupe d’élus s’observe, s’efforce de paraître sous son meilleur jour, soulignant les traits de sa cohésion, pour se distinguer du commun des profanes, mais ne peut éviter de laisser transparaître ses craintes, la prégnance de ses a priori sociaux et culturels’.

<sup>105</sup> GAV. Oud Stads Archief Veere (OSAV), inv.nr 731 VII, akte 25-9-1785

walls of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge, it ultimately lubricated the wheels of Dutch imperialism by enacting similar racial and social exclusionary policies.

## **Chapter 2: Trading and Masonic Membership**

At its core, freemasonry is a network; the brotherhood helped men settle into foreign lands, it offered them assistance in times of need, and it allowed them to make friends and create connections. Freemasonry also offered men material benefits. This chapter seeks to address issues such as trust and long-distance trading and in doing so it deciphers whether Brown was able to take advantage of his masonic connections to aid his business dealings.

However, before doing so, it is important to understand how trust was built or how comparable lines of trust were established during the eighteenth-century. Traditional studies of this topic point to kinship, shared religion or a shared region of origin as the primary drivers of trust between historical actors.<sup>106</sup> For example, J.F. Boshier argues that it was ‘personal trust based on a common religion and carefully fostered relations of scattered families’ that facilitated the flourishing of Huguenot business ventures in the Atlantic world.<sup>107</sup> However, as Francesca Trivellato has noted, such studies have oversimplified this correlation.<sup>108</sup> Trivellato’s in-depth study of Sephardic Jews based in Livorno, Tuscany, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, provides an intriguing study of cross-cultural trade which contradicts and challenges the aforementioned assumptions on trading networks and modes of exchange. She argues that although a shared religious or ethnic identity could be advantageous, cross-cultural trade, ‘familiarity among strangers’ as she labels it, was predicated on customary norms and a shared language of business correspondence, which could simultaneously exist with religious prejudice. Trivellato adds that historians of cross-cultural trade

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<sup>106</sup> Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, 1750–1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2010); Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal’s Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007); Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and Their Overseas Networks* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press 2010); C. Antunes, ‘Cross-Cultural Business Cooperation in the Dutch Trading World, 1580–1776: A View from Amsterdam’s Notarial Contracts,’ in: Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi, and Cátia Antunes eds., *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000–1900*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2014).

<sup>107</sup> John Francis Boshier, ‘Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century.’ *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1995) 77–102. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2946888>

<sup>108</sup> Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2009).

tend to assume rather than demonstrate that some intrinsic inclination guided business dealings within kinship and religious networks.<sup>109</sup> In fact, and as certain cases illustrate, membership within a specific diaspora or group did not always breed business cooperation. David Hancock has revealed that even brotherly love failed to conduce trade amongst the Quaker community, operating throughout the Atlantic world during the eighteenth-century.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, Trivellato does not regard 'trustworthiness as a stable attribute of an individual or a group' and instead evaluates the choices made by Ergas and Silvera, the two Sephardic Jews based in Livorno she uses as case studies, on 'the result of their strategic and calculative interactions with other actors.'<sup>111</sup> I share Trivellato's views on trustworthiness and hope to build on her work by exploring Adriaan Anthony Brown's 'strategic and calculative interactions with other actors', and in doing so, inject some much needed nuance to the oversimplistic conflation of masonic membership, trust and trade.

Few historians have looked at how freemasonry could aid commercial connections. Jessica Harland-Jacobs recognises this and comments that the fraternity's role 'in lubricating merchant networks, for example, is a crucial, though understudied, topic.'<sup>112</sup> Perhaps rather surprising considering the society's global expansion is the direct consequence of the actions of colonial officials and merchants who brought it with them. The brotherhood even entered the Dutch Republic through the port city of Rotterdam. By studying this topic, we can not only shed light on an understudied aspect of masonic sociability but also explore the social considerations behind Brown's late eighteenth-century transatlantic trade.

Although this area of masonic research is still in its infancy, there are a few preliminary studies. Simon Deschamps has explored the role Masonic lodges played in lubricating mercantile networks in

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<sup>109</sup> F. Trivellato, 'The Sephardic Merchants in the Early Modern Atlantic and Beyond: Toward a Comparative Historical Approach to Business Cooperation', in: Richard L. Kagan and Philip D Morgan eds., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500-1800*, (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press 2009), 99-120.

<sup>110</sup> David Hancock, *Oceans of wine: Madeira and the emergence of American trade and taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2009), 148.

<sup>111</sup> Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 16.

<sup>112</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism', 451.

colonial India during the eighteenth-century. He notes that Freemasonry was popular among the merchant classes operating in India, with lodges acting as an informal social venue in which merchants could meet and build new business contracts.<sup>113</sup> A similar conclusion is offered by Kevin Nichols in his unpublished PhD thesis titled 'Frontier Freemasons: Masonic Networks Linking The Great Lakes To The Atlantic World, 1750-1820.' Nichols studies the importance of masonic commercial networks in facilitating the successful long-distance trade in fur.<sup>114</sup> His research demonstrates that furs 'from western Lake Superior and south of Illinois would make their way through a vast trading and transportation web that flowed through Mackinaw, Detroit, Montreal and New York' with Masons at these hubs often the principal traders.<sup>115</sup> A crucial conclusion within both of these studies is that masonic membership offered an added dimension of trust to business dealings. Deschamps argues that Masonic affiliation membership 'could quite easily operate as a form of trust guarantee between the partners of a business venture and therefore limit the risk involved.'<sup>116</sup> Nicholas offers a similar argument when he writes that 'through their shared initiation rituals and obligations of mutual assistance [Freemasons] created an extra layer of mutual trust.'<sup>117</sup>

However, trust, as discussed earlier, is a loaded term. Nichols adds that where possible Freemasons 'would often choose to work with other Freemasons.'<sup>118</sup> Although his research reveals some examples of masonic membership aiding long-distance trading, within the confines of the 'Great Lakes' area, such sweeping generalisations seem to neglect the intricacies such a topic demands. Studying Freemasonry is never quite so monocausal. Deschamps acknowledges this and does well to admit that 'it is difficult to prove that Masonic membership was actually directly put to contribution

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<sup>113</sup> Simon Deschamps, 'Merchant and Masonic Networks in Eighteenth-Century Colonial India', 17-18 74 (2018). Doi: <http://journals.openedition.org/1718/828> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/1718.828>

<sup>114</sup> The Great Lakes Region is an area comprising of Lakes Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie and Ontario, which lies between Canada and the United States. It includes portions of eight U.S states as well as the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

<sup>115</sup> K.H. Nicholas, 'Frontier Freemasons: Masonic Networks Linking the Great Lakes To The Atlantic World, 1750-1820', (PhD thesis, Wayne State University, Detroit 2020), 145.

<sup>116</sup> Simon Deschamps, 'Merchant and Masonic Networks', 15.

<sup>117</sup> K.H. Nicholas, 'Frontier Freemasons', 306.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 85.

in any business venture whatsoever.<sup>119</sup> In order to understand the complexities of how masonic membership could have aided mercantile trading relationships, this chapter will adopt two layers of analysis. First, and on a more local scale, I will investigate whether Brown was able to create business connections within the Demerara Lodge itself, and secondly, and casting a larger net, the second half will address whether Brown's long-distance trade was aided by masonic membership. This latter section will analyse the business dealings Brown had with three other European merchants.

As well as offering a degree of conviviality, masonic lodges played a central role in facilitating transatlantic sociability. In his study of French emigrant culture in Philadelphia, historian François Furstenberg argues that a 'well-integrated transatlantic salon culture' allowed Philadelphia's merchant elite to mix with French expatriate elites and integrate into local social and political and economic life.<sup>120</sup> The masonic lodge was no different. In a similar vein, and according to Magee and Thompson, masonic lodges offered men 'bridging opportunities' as it allowed members to interact with a variety of other professions.<sup>121</sup> Historian Jan C Jansen goes further and suggests that even more so than Philadelphian salons, Masonic lodges 'served to facilitate bonds and male friendship across political, religious, social, and national boundaries among men who would have otherwise remained strangers.'<sup>122</sup> In theory, the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge of Demerara should have offered the same level of sociability; a milieu of merchants, colonial officials, sailors, and planters coming together to create a bustling hive of commercial activity, reminiscent of a Philadelphia salon.

The only evidence of Brown conducting business with a member of the lodge was in 1780, when he sold his estate before heading home to Veere. The sales catalogue housed in Brown's archive

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<sup>119</sup> Simon Deschamps, 'Merchant and Masonic Networks', 14.

<sup>120</sup> François Furstenberg, *When the United States Spoke French: Five Refugees Who Shaped a Nation*, (New York, NY: Penguin 2014), 177.

<sup>121</sup> Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010), 47.

<sup>122</sup> Jan C. Jansen, 'Brothers in exile: Masonic lodges and the refugees of the Haitian Revolution, 1790s-1820', *Atlantic studies (Abingdon, England)* 16 (2019) 341–363.



reveals he was interested in legal, historical and poetic works.<sup>123</sup> The list also reveals that he sold four masonic publications; one being *'La Code Maçon et la Muse Maçonne'*, the very text, along with twenty-three other copies, Brown took with him to Essequibo.<sup>124</sup> Although, the name of the buyer of the masonic publications is not listed, we know that Hermanus Jonas bought several historical works from Brown which amounted to a total of 432 guilders.<sup>125</sup> From the membership lists of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge (Appendix I), we see that in 1772 Hermanus Jonas was the 'tweede opzitter' or junior warden and by August 1778, he was the Worshipful Master of the Lodge.<sup>126</sup> Perhaps the pair discussed literature when they met in the lodge in 1778. This would certainly support Magee and Thompson's argument that the power of gossip, word of mouth and personal experience should receive greater attention when studying trade networks.<sup>127</sup>

Moreover, Freemasons consider themselves to be part of a worldwide family; they adopt family idioms by referring to each other as 'Brothers' and subscribe to their national 'Mother Lodge'. Harland-Jacobs et al. have argued that this 'cultivated kinship-like bonds among their members was – a form of "symbolic" or "fictive kinship," as cultural anthropologists and social scientists have come to call it.<sup>128</sup> Thus it could be argued that it was the 'fictive kinship', facilitated by shared masonic membership, that led to Brown's 'familiarity' with Hermanus Jonas, which in turn helps explain this particular transaction. Although it is difficult to prove whether masonic membership drove this

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<sup>123</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 8, Stukken betreffende de verkoop van de boedel van Adriaan Anthony Brown te Essequibo, 1780.

<sup>124</sup> The other masonic publications were listed as: *Wetten en Reglementen der Vrye Metzlerlaaren; in Hollandsen en Frans quatro met het tytel plaatsen, La Lire Maçonne* and *The Freemasons Pocket Companion*. They were sold for sixteen guilders. ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 8.

<sup>125</sup> 21 volumes of Wagenaar's *'Vaderlandsche Historie'* yielded 100 guilders alone. ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 8.

<sup>126</sup> In terms of rank, in 1772 Hermanus Jonas was fourth in command behind the Worshipful Master, the substitute Master and senior warden. See Appendix I for more details.

<sup>127</sup> Gary B. Magee, and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, 205.

<sup>128</sup> Harland-Jacobs, J.C. Jansen and E. Mancke, 'The fraternal Atlantic: An introduction', *Atlantic studies* (Abingdon, England) 16 (2019) 283–293, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2019.1596705>; N.Terpstra, 'Deinstitutionalizing Confraternity Studies: Fraternalism and Social Capital in Cross-Cultural Contexts', in: Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock eds., *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2006) 264–283; Mary Ann Clawson, 'Fraternal Orders and Class Formation in the Nineteenth-Century United States', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 4 (1985) 672–695; Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire*, 17–20.

relationship, the fact that it was a small-scale deal is important. There was no great risk factor involved; Brown was auctioning off moveable property on his plantation in March 1780, and Jonas attended. It seems logical to assume that it was down to a 'familiarity' established within the walls of the Demerara Lodge that led to Jonas buying literature from Brown. Additionally, the lodge was transnational by nature, future research would hopefully uncover more members interacting and establishing new trading partners, evocative of a Philadelphia salon.

To understand whether masonic membership aided Brown's long-distance trade, this chapter will turn its focus to the business dealings Brown had with three different merchants in Europe: John Gregorie, David Gregorie and James Turing. Six months after his arrival, Brown set out in securing land for a plantation. The West India Company originally offered Brown 500 acres of land for a coffee plantation, but after hearing the ground was not best suited for coffee, he requested 1,000 acres to build a sugar plantation instead. His eventual plantation situated on the east side of the Hog Island – the largest island in the Essequibo River – was '550 acres of land with buildings, slaves and other dependencies' and was named 'De Philantropia.'<sup>129</sup> To help him understand the financial implications of starting a plantation, Brown sought the help of Veere merchant John Gregorie. Brown noted that forty to fifty thousand guilders was required within the first four years of constructing a plantation and sent a 'plan and conditions' to John Gregorie for him to look over.<sup>130</sup> It is certainly plausible that Brown chose to interact with Gregorie due to his financial expertise. Gregorie was of Scottish origin, he was a prominent merchant and dominated the local economy in Veere. After studying the convoy and licence money registers from the year 1772, historian Victor Enthoven concluded that:

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<sup>129</sup> GAV. Oud Stads Archief Veere (OSAV), inv.nr 731 VII, akte 25-9-1785.

<sup>130</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to M. Haringman, 28-1-1774, Original Dutch reads: 'Ik een plans en conditien aan Heer J. Gregorie a Veere heb gezonden'.

‘Ninety per cent of all overseas trade was in the hands of the Scottish merchants, of whom John Gregorie was by far the most important. Between 50% and 75% of all overseas trade belonged to him.’<sup>131</sup>

Consequently, a figure like John Gregorie was certainly not a bad connection to rely on for financial guidance. Yet, Gregorie was also closely connected to freemasonry. We learn of Gregorie’s masonic affiliation in the minute book of the Middelburg lodge ‘La Philantropie’. The entry dated 21 December 1759 reveals that John Gregorie was proposed by the brothers as an honorary member of the lodge.<sup>132</sup> Although he was unable to attend the meeting to accept his honorary membership, Gregorie is referred to as an ‘Apprentif, Compagnon Maitre Macon’, which means he was a Master Mason and therefore a well-established brother. As a result, it could be argued that a shared understanding of masonic virtues acted as the catalyst in Brown’s interaction with John Gregorie. Since they were both members of a fraternal family, they were ‘connected to one another on the basis of their shared values, interests, and ideology, rather than on the basis of shared blood.’<sup>133</sup>

However, and although not necessarily sharing blood, concrete kinship ties did exist between the pair. The subsequent section will explore their trading relationship and assess what role their ‘fictive kinship’ played in relation to Trivellato’s *The Familiarity of Strangers*. The family connection ran through the D’Assonville family. In 1760 Brown married Sophia d’Assonville from Middelburg. Sophia was the sister of Nicolaas Mathaus, who was the late husband of Elisabeth Offenhaus. After Nicolaas Mathaus died, Elisabeth Offenhaus married John Gregorie.<sup>134</sup> The pair were not connected

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<sup>131</sup> V. Enthoven, ‘The last straw trade contacts along the North Sea coast: the Scottish staple at Veere’, in: Juliette Roding and Lex Heerma Van Voss eds., *The North Sea and culture (1550-1800)*, (Hilversum: Verloren 1996), 219.

<sup>132</sup> CMC, box 4040-1 (23-1) Archief van de Loge La Philantropie te Middelburg: Boek, bevattende ‘Memories, Status et Resolutions’ van de Loge La Philantropie erigee et ouverte a Middelburg Anno 5758’ Tome I, 1758-1770.

<sup>133</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, ‘All in the Family’, 456.

<sup>134</sup> Oral communication with Zeeuws Archivist Peter Blom.

by blood or by birth but through their marriages, they became connected – ‘step-brothers-in-law’, if you will.

Nevertheless, Brown refers to Gregorie as his brother-in-law and out of all of his correspondences it was John Gregorie whom Brown wrote to the most during his time in Essequibo, even more frequently than his own wife Sophia D’Assonville. In a later correspondence, Brown wrote to Gregorie informing him that he had sent two chests full of colonial products with one chest containing ‘18 rolls of Spanish tobacco’.<sup>135</sup> Brown also mentions that ‘In the same chest there is also a case of 12 chocolate cookies, 6 for you and 6 for my wife’.<sup>136</sup> This is important as although not writing to her directly, or regularly, Brown made use of his trading connection with John Gregorie to furnish his wife with colonial goods. In addition, Brown is listed as being exempt from excise in Veere, even when he is in Essequibo. As he was a major player in the local Veere economy and a Factor within the Scottish Court, perhaps John Gregorie had a say in this.

Brown would again rely on his brother-in-law when the American War of Independence broke out. Tension between the thirteen colonies and Great Britain had been building since the early 1760s, with open warfare eventually erupting in early 1775. This halted the supply of goods and foodstuffs to the Caribbean colonies from Europe. In May 1775, Brown ordered from Gregorie, amongst other things: ‘2000 copper bells, like the ones that are used on the sleigh carriages; 1000 ditto smaller, 1000 copper clocks as they are customarily used on a toilet, 12 dozen lice combs, 100 mean axes’<sup>137</sup> On the surface, these items seem rather trivial and random, yet when one considers other primary source evidence, it becomes clear that Brown engaged in trade with local populations. For example, when reporting on ‘Trading with Indians’ British traveler Henry Bolingbroke wrote that ‘The expense of

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<sup>135</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to John Gregorie, 2 February 1774, Original Dutch reads: ‘18 rollen Spanze taback’.

<sup>136</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Original Dutch reads: ‘In die zelve kist is ook casje met 12 koekjes chocolaat 6 voor jou en 6 voor mijn vrouw’.

<sup>137</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to John Gregorie, 17 May 1775. Original Dutch reads: ‘2000 kopere bellen, zoals op de arresleetuigen gebruikt; worden, 1000 dito kleinere, 1000 kopere klokjes zoals er ordinair een aan een kakstoel hangt, 12 dozijn luijsekammen, 100 gemeene bijlen’.

maintaining a good understanding with our Indian allies, is very trifling' with 'a few hundred pounds in the course of a year, invested in fowling pieces, gun powder, knives, hatches, felling axes [...]'.<sup>138</sup> Bolingbroke adds that the local Guyanese population also received 'hooks, knives, hatchets, fire arms, combs, looking glasses, beads of glass and coral.'<sup>139</sup> Although Bolingbroke published his travel account in 1807, he arrived in the Demerara in 1799. Granted, this is almost twenty years after Brown departed, this information hints that by ordering similar items, Brown was doing the same and engaged in local forms of trade. Having reviewed Brown's 'strategic and calculated interaction' with John Gregorie, it can be concluded that the clear kinship ties between them meant they were not strangers, with their 'familiarity' of masonic ideals and 'fictive kinship' bolstering their connection.

Another example of 'fictive kinship' aiding Brown's transatlantic trade was with his dealings with Dunkirk merchant David Gregorie. David was the brother of John Gregorie and like his brother he was also connected to the brotherhood.<sup>140</sup> The website of the Dunkirk Masonic Lodge 'L'Amitie et Fraternite', lists David Gregorie as their 17<sup>th</sup> venerable Master of the lodge in 1764.<sup>141</sup> Thus, all three – Brown and the Gregorie brothers – were intimately connected to freemasonry and were not strangers as kinship ties existed between them. Brown's business dealings with David Gregorie are interesting as it demonstrates Brown tapping into global trade network. Brown wrote to David Gregorie in February 1774 and enquires:

'If amongst your great quantity of eastern goods you generally have on hand any course chintz with large flowers should stick by you & you would send them to me I think I could sell them sell them to great advance here to the negro girls [...]'<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Henry Bolingbroke, *A Voyage to Demerary, Containing a Statistical Account of the Settlement There, and of Those on the Essequibo, the Berbice, and Other Contiguous Rivers of Guyana* (London: M. Carey 1807), 191.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 147.

<sup>140</sup> Philip Spencer Gregory, *Records of the Family Gregory*, (Norderstedt: Hansebooks, 2017), 43.

<sup>141</sup> For David Gregorie's masonic connection see the Website of the Dunkirk Masonic Lodge 'L'Amitie et Fraternite', <https://www.amitiefaternite.com/2019/12/07/david-gregorie/>, [Accessed 03/06/2021]

<sup>142</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to David Gregorie, 8 February 1774.

This is important for the argument for several reasons, however, to fully understand said importance, some context on chintz is first required. Chintz or hand-painted Indian calico (Figure 1) was a type of multicoloured or painted cloth. Originating in India, the product dominated the European market during the seventeenth-century and proliferated into the Atlantic world economy by the eighteenth-century. The immense popularity of the garments was partly due to the unrivalled quality and their colourful, vibrant prints. Intent on imitating the beauty of the imported garments, calico printing reached enormous heights not only in Britain and France, but throughout the rest of Europe.<sup>143</sup> Fearing the mass importation of chintz and calico would infringe local textile production, the governments of Britain and France sought to restrict this by introducing a series of protectionist policies throughout the eighteenth-century.<sup>144</sup> However, given the stringent measures that were in place in France, it seems odd that Brown would select a merchant in Dunkirk to provide him with such goods. A potential reason for this is that during this period the Dutch cotton industry remained rather small. Although the Dutch authorities allowed the domestic market to remain relatively open, by 1774, England and France were producing their own chintzes with Dutch manufactures simply unable to match the quality and speed their European counterparts were achieving with their industrialized techniques of production.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello, 'East & West: Textiles and Fashion in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of social history* 41 (2008) 887–916.

<sup>144</sup> G. Crosby, 'First Impressions: The Prohibition on Printed Calicoes in France, 1686–1759' (PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham 2015); Ariane Fennetaux, 'Indian Gowns Small and Great': Chintz Banyans Ready Made in the Coromandel, c. 1680- c.1780', *Costume*, Volume 54 Issue 1, (2021), 49-73. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3366/cost.2021.0182>

<sup>145</sup> J. Gommans, 'For the Home and Body: Dutch and Indian Ways of Early Modern Consumption', in: Maxine Berg, *Goods from the East, 1600-1800*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 331-349; 'Chintz, new in the 17th century' Gieneke Arnolli Former curator Fashion and textiles, Fries Museum Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. <https://costume.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/08/Gieneke-Arnolli-Chintz-new-in-the-17th-century.pdf> [Accessed 28 January 2022].



Figure 1- An example of Chintz with large flowers, circa 1750. Reproduced from the Rijksmuseum collection.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Rijksmuseum, 'Fragment sits met kolibri's., anoniem, ca. 1750', BK-KOG-2609-A <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.307712>

However, the reasoning behind Brown's strategic interaction with Gregorie can be found elsewhere. Historians such as Giorgio Riello and Michael Kwass have suggested that the ban on textiles, in Britain and France, was widely broken in both countries.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, by the late eighteenth-century, Dunkirk was widely regarded as France's most important smuggling centre. It is estimated that during the 1770s and 1780s, Dunkirk boasted a population of around 1000 people engaged in smuggling with Dunkirk's mayor estimating that by the mid-1770s, illegal commerce generated 15 million livres annually.<sup>148</sup> It is perhaps important to note that David Gregorie can be included within this group of Dunkirk smugglers. When exploring the development of trade opportunities in the port of Ostend during the eighteenth-century, historian Jan Parmentier includes an analysis of the Gregorie, Benquet et Cie firm. He writes that:

'The founder of the company, George Gregorie, was of Scottish origin but had built his career on the European continent. His father, David, had migrated about 1774 to Dunkirk from the Zeeland town of Veere to enlarge his involvement in the contraband trade.'<sup>149</sup>

Thus, it could be argued that one of the reasons Brown sought to trade with Gregorie was because he was a skilled smuggler who was capable of securing the chintz he required. However, the crucial point here is that Brown knew this, he was 'familiar' with David Gregorie before going to Essequibo and was part of Brown's pre-existing extended kinship network. Moreover, they also shared a degree of 'fictive kinship' as they were both freemasons. As a result, we can conclude that Brown's strategic and calculated interaction with David Gregorie was initiated by kinship ties and strengthened by a shared masonic affiliation.

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<sup>147</sup> Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013), 121–24; Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2014), esp. chaps. 2 and 4.

<sup>148</sup> Jeff Horn, *Economic development in early modern France: the privilege of liberty, 1650-1820* (Cambridge University Press 2015), 109-110.

<sup>149</sup> J. Parmentier, 'In the Eye of the Storm: The Influence of Maritime and Trade Networks on the Development of Ostend and Vice Versa during the Eighteenth Century', in: Adrian Jarvis and Robert Lee, *Trade, Migration and Urban Networks in port cities c. 1640-1940*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2008).



However, Brown's trade with James Turing contradicts this argument. The following section will use Brown's business with Turing to highlight the dangers of conflating masonic membership, trust and trade. Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, James Turing became factor at Veere and later moved to Middelburg, where he would establish a firm with his son that specialised in procuring fine wines. Cognisant of this Brown wrote to Turing in 1774, informing him that 'Mr. Croydon' had complained about the quality of wine available in the colony. Brown continues and writes:

'I told him I would order one hogshead for him from you but that if he wanted good claret he must pay a price for it. I therefore beg you to send him one hogshead very good wine in bottles. One half hogshead of the same for me but if you please in pint bottles being for my own...By which means I shall be able to drink always a glass of cold wine which is very necessary here.'<sup>150</sup>

Turing eventually wrote back to Brown in 1777 and supplied him with a cask of madeira wine which, including freight costs, amounted to 31 guilders.<sup>151</sup> In his response Turing also mentioned that 'The Rebellion in America puts a stop to all the Irish Trade also to the tobacco & Rice which used to be considerable & many other branches.'<sup>152</sup> It is very plausible that one of these 'many other branches' was indeed wine. This is supported by historian David Hancock's study of madeira wine within the Atlantic world between 1650 and 1815. He argues that America's separation from Britain wreaked havoc on the product's economic integration with 'interruptions in communication and hazards to shipping' severely reducing the importation of wine not only to America but the Caribbean as well.<sup>153</sup> Shipping wine during the late 1770s was challenging. James Turing even appealed to Benjamin Franklin

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<sup>150</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to James Turing, 8-2-1774.

<sup>151</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 14, James Turing to Brown, 19-11-1777.

<sup>152</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 14, James Turing to Brown, 19-11-1777.

<sup>153</sup> David Hancock, *Oceans of wine*, 120-121.

(who was also a freemason) in 1779 to address the fact that one of his ships was captured by American privateers.<sup>154</sup>

Given the risks in trading wine, caused by the disruption to transatlantic trade by the American War of Independence, what then explains Turing's willingness and determination in servicing Brown with Madeira wine, three years after Brown's initial request? A potential reason is masonic membership. Like the Gregorie brothers, James Turing was also tied to the fraternity and was connected to the same lodge John Gregorie was, the Middelburg Lodge 'La Philantropie'. The minute book of the Middelburg Lodge reveals that Turing was installed as a member on 21 November 1774.<sup>155</sup> However, timeline wise, Turing became a member of the lodge one year after Brown sailed for Essequibo. There is no mention of freemasonry in the correspondence between the pair which means it is quite possible that Brown in fact had no idea Turing was even a brother. As a result, it can be concluded that the trading relationship between them was not based on a masonic foundation; rather it was a shared place of origin – Veere – that perhaps better explains their commercial cooperation. Subsequently, Brown's 'strategic and calculative interactions' with James Turing was not based on a shared understanding of masonic values. That is not to say freemasonry did not matter altogether, it clearly did, as they had masonic connections. Yet the point is, in relation to his trade with Turing, masonic membership was not the primary driver of trade.

To offer a brief conclusion, this chapter has explored the relationship between masonic membership and trade. Brown's 'strategic and calculative interactions' with both John and David Gregorie was founded by kinship as both were part of Brown's pre-existing network, meaning they were not strangers. Moreover, the fact that they were all intimately connected to freemasonry meant

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<sup>154</sup> 'To Benjamin Franklin from James Turing and Son, 2 October 1779', *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-30-02-0362>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 30, *July 1 through October 31, 1779*, ed, Barbara B. Ober. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, pp. 437-438].

<sup>155</sup> CMC, box 4040-1 (23-1) Archief van de Loge La Philantropie te Middelburg: Boek, bevattende 'Memories, Status et Resolutions' van de Loge La Philantropie erigee et ouverte a Middelburg Anno 5758' Tome I, 1758-1770, 195.

that their 'familiarity' of masonic ideals and 'fictive kinship' served to bolster their connection. However, an important point here is that although connected, there is no way of truly understanding just how personally attached each individual was to the brotherhood. We will never know why they joined the fraternity, what they sought from the brotherhood or how they benefitted from it. As a result, one must be careful not to overestimate the importance of their own personal attachment. The evidence presented in this chapter revealed a spectrum of masonic involvement; John Gregorie was an honorary member of the Middelburg Lodge, David Gregorie was a Master Mason in Dunkirk and James Turing was initiated in the first degree of freemasonry. Nevertheless, the fact they were all connected to freemasonry in some way meant the fraternity did play a role in their lives, regardless of how strong their personal attachment was. This chapter also added some nuance to the oversimplistic conflation of masonic membership, trust and trade by examining Brown's interaction with James Turing. Brown would have not known Turing was a freemason as he had left for Essequibo before Turing was even initiated. Although clearly important to them, freemasonry cannot explain this particular example. As a result, to understand the relationship between masonic membership and trade, one must consider all avenues of trust when studying a freemasons 'strategic and calculative interactions with other actors'.

### **Chapter 3: Survival on the 'Wild Coast': Literally and Metaphorically**

During the eighteenth-century, overseas travel was treacherous; shipwrecks were a regular occurrence with disease rife on Atlantic crossings. Adriaan Anthony Brown's life and voyage to Essequibo is testament of this. Brown survived the Atlantic crossing, however not everyone on board the *Eensgezindeid* was as lucky. In a letter dated 2 October 1773, sent to the directors of the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC, Brown notes that during the journey '16 of the 46 soldiers on board died of rotten fever.'<sup>156</sup> Rutgerus van Laak, the official bookseller of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands who sent the letter to the brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge, as discussed in the previous chapter, was also aware of such dangers. As well as checking if the brothers received the package of masonic literature Brown was carrying, Van Laak asked if 'Br. Fiscaal Brown arrived safely and is still alive.'<sup>157</sup> If an individual survived the journey to the other side of the world, even more dangers awaited them in the colony.

This chapter will explore the benefits freemasonry offered colonial officials and in doing so answer the following question: to what extent did freemasonry help Adriaan Anthony Brown survive during his time in Essequibo, in both the literal and metaphorical sense of the word? The first half of the chapter will look at how freemasonry could help members survive in a literal sense by reviewing how the brotherhood could act as a support system, with the second half exploring how freemasonry could help men survive in a metaphorical sense by looking at how the fraternity offered men a space for conviviality, self-learning and spiritual development.

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<sup>156</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to Directors of the directors of the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC, 2-10-1773, [Brown to Original Dutch reads: '16 van de 46 soldaten gestorven an rotkoorts'.

<sup>157</sup> CMC, box 2004-2, Bij de Groote Loge in het jaar 1777 ingekomen stukken nrs. 735: 1-2: Van Broeder R. Van Laak te 's-Gravenhage aan de leden van de Loge St. Jean de la Reunion te Rio Demerarij en aan de Heer fiscaal Brown gezonden missiven'. Original Dutch reads: '...en of de gemeld en Br. Fiscaal Brown behouden aangekomen en nog in leven is'.

## I Literal Survival

To begin, I will address whether Brown was able to take advantage of this masonic support system during his time on the 'Wild Coast'. A central component of eighteenth-century freemasonry was mutual assistance. On paper, masonic membership gave men 'access to a global network of brethren pledged to offer fraternal love, spiritual fellowship, conviviality, and even financial support.'<sup>158</sup> The 'fictive kinship' generated by freemasonry, as discussed in the previous chapter, meant members were obligated to support fellow brothers and help each other to withstand life's vicissitudes.

Upon their arrival, travelling masons, provided they could prove their masonic credentials, could receive help from local brothers. This idea is supported by Harland-Jacobs et al. when they point out that within the dynamic Atlantic world, 'freemasonry offered men a way to belong, to find "brothers" in strange port towns.'<sup>159</sup> In Brown's case, the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge was established in Demerara a year before his arrival. Moreover, from the initial letters Brown sent back to the Republic, we know that, although being sent to Essequibo, he arrived in Demerara – the neighbouring colony. With this in mind, it would be natural for Brown to seek and receive help from the brothers of Demerara. However, the brotherly love does not appear to have immediately translated into practice.

A letter dated 28 January 1774 acts as evidence of the initial support Brown received as he arrived in the colony. Addressed to 'M. Haringman of Vlissingen', Brown writes that he has seen much of the Demerara river, that it has 'a very pleasant appearance' with planters living on both sides.<sup>160</sup> Brown added that after recovering from his long journey he 'was collected from Mr. Bogman, by Mr. Boddaert, the brother of the Mayor Boddaert' where he stayed for three weeks.<sup>161</sup> Neither Bogman

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<sup>158</sup> J. Harland-Jacobs, 'All in the Family', 449.

<sup>159</sup> J. Harland-Jacobs, J.C. Jansen and E. Mancke, 'The fraternal Atlantic: An introduction', 284.

<sup>160</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to M. Haringman, 28-1-1774, Original Dutch reads: 'Die rivier heeft een zeer aangename aan zien, aan beide zijden vandu zelve zijn plantagiers [...]'.

<sup>161</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to M. Haringman, 28-1-1774, Original Dutch reads: 'ik wiend van de Heer Bogman afgehaald, door de Heer Boddaert, broeder van de Heer Burgmeester Boddaert alwaar ik drie weken heb gelogeert.'

or Boddaert are listed as members of the Demerara Lodge and preliminary research has failed to uncover any other masonic connection. Little is known about Mr. Bogman, however, the fact he lodged with Mr. Boddaert for three weeks is interesting. Jan Willem Boddaert owned a plantation in Demerara, was the original correspondent for the 'Society for Navigation on Essequibo and annexed Rivers' and held a position in the local council. Brown would eventually take both positions in 1775, after the untimely death of Boddaert, who perished when the ship he was travelling on was lost at sea.<sup>162</sup>

Nevertheless, Jan Willem Boddaert's brother was indeed the Mayor of Middelburg - Kornelius van den Helm Boddaert. He was an important figure in the local Walcheren economy and financed a number of large negotiation funds for plantations in Essequibo and Demerara.<sup>163</sup> However, like his half-brother, Kornelius Van der Helm Boddaert is also not mentioned as a member of the Middelburg Masonic Lodge 'La Philantropie'. This is surprising given the elitist nature of the lodge; the activities of the lodge were conducted in French with the cost of matriculation exceptionally high. To be initiated into the three grades of freemasonry and for one year membership, 155 guilders was required, more than half an annual income for an average Middelburg workman.<sup>164</sup> Expensive, but an investment one would expect the Mayor of Middelburg to have been able to cover. Yet the lodge had two categories of membership; ordinary members who paid fees and met regularly, and honorary members who did not pay, but had access to the meetings. Given his elite status and role as Mayor of Middelburg, it is possible Van der Helm Boddaert was an honorary member, yet the research conducted for this thesis has failed to find evidence of this. Nevertheless, despite no concrete masonic connection, Kornelius van den Helm Boddaert was one of the first people Brown wrote to after arriving in Demerara. In a letter dated 22 October 1773, only a few weeks after his arrival, Brown writes to thank him for the

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<sup>162</sup> Ruud Paesie, *Societiet van Essequibo*, 84-85.

<sup>163</sup> Gerhard de Kok, *Walcherse Ketens de trans-Atlantische slavenhandel en de economie van Walcheren 1755-1780*, (Zutphen: WalburgPers 2020), 191.

<sup>164</sup> CMC, box 4040-1 (23-1) Archief van de Loge La Philantropie te Middelburg: Boek, bevattende 'Memories, Status et Resolutions' van de Loge La Philantropie erigee et ouverte a Middelburg Anno 5758' Tome I, 1758-1770; W.W. Mijnhardt, 'Sociability in Walcheren', 294-295.

wine he sent him for his journey and asks him to send more.<sup>165</sup> Consequently, Brown did not receive support from the Demerara masons, rather the Boddaerts, who held high positions in both Zeeland and the colony itself. Being supported by men in high up places is a common theme in A.A. Brown's life. For example, 'M. Haringman of Vlissingen', the recipient of the letter discussed earlier, was a decorated naval hero and was appointed rear admiral in 1764.<sup>166</sup>

Furthermore, it was the patronage of Johan Marinus Chalmers that helped Brown climb the social ladder in Veere. Chalmers was the Grand Pensionary of Zeeland and the son of John Chalmers, minister of the Scottish Church in Veere.<sup>167</sup> A letter housed in the National Records of Scotland serves as evidence of the close relationship between the pair. Dated July 3, 1764, J.M. Chalmers of Veere wrote to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, George Drummond, for his intercession with the new Lord Conservator, Mr. Hume, in favour of appointing 'Mr. And. Anth. Brouwn', secretary of the Scottish court, as his deputy.<sup>168</sup> This is important as not only was Brown secretary of the Scottish court in 1764, but he was also even recommended by Chalmers to become the deputy of the new Lord Conservator. This close connection is evident in Brown's letters as Brown wrote several times to Chalmers during his time in Essequibo. In one letter Brown wrote: 'I was obliged, because of the state of my finances, to constantly bother your honourable with solicitations until finally, with much heartache, I noticed the pain it brought your honour'.<sup>169</sup> From the evidence presented above, it could be argued that the

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<sup>165</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to Kornelius van den Helm Boddaert, 22-10-1773.

<sup>166</sup> Kon. Zeeland Society of Sciences, Encyclopaedia of Zeeland: Everything about Zeeland, (Den Boer: 1982), <https://www.ensie.nl/encyclopedie-van-zeeland/maarten-haringman> [Accessed 18/01/2022]

<sup>167</sup> John Yair, *An Account of the Scotch Trade in the Netherlands: And of the Staple Port in Campvere* (London: 1776), 284.

<sup>168</sup> National Records of Scotland (NRS), GD24/1/833 Accounts and business correspondence of George Drummond (several times Lord Provost of Edinburgh) and James Nimmo, both merchants, Edinburgh, 1715-1763, Digitised section of the National Records of Scotland, '49. 1763 July 3. Letter from J M Chalmers, Veere, asking for Drummond's intercession with the new Lord Conservator, Mr Hume, in favour of appointing 'Mr Adn. Anth. Brouwn, Secretary of the Scotsch Court' as his deputy'.

<sup>169</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 15, Brown to J.M. Chalmers, 29-6-1774. Original Dutch reads: 'Ik was egter verpligt, uit hoofde van de toestand mijner finanties Uwedele geduuriglijk met sollicitatien lastig te vallen tot dat ik eijndelijk met veel hartzeer bemerkte dat het Uwedele smerte deed'.

initial support Brown received was not particularly masonic, and in fact, he relied on support from Walcheren's elite, during his time in Veere and Essequibo.

The other side to the masonic support system was that brothers would assist you if you fell on hard times. Jessica Harland-Jacobs writes that:

'by attending to the needs of sick brethren and members' dependents, Masonic lodges actually started taking over some of the functions typically fulfilled by families in earlier times. This Masonic benefit was especially important for Masons who lived and worked in the empire, far from their blood relations in the metropole.'<sup>170</sup>

Brown's health suffered greatly during his time in the tropical rainforests of South America and as a result suffered several bouts of ill-health; one such recurring illness which plagued Brown from 1778 onwards would go on to prompt his return to Veere in 1781. The next section will explore whether freemasonry helped Brown to literally survive.

From his correspondences, we learn that in October 1779, and at the age of 47, Brown was recovering from serious illness. He wrote to his wife and informed her that he had been at 'the gate of death' and that he had spent some time on the island of Barbados to recover.<sup>171</sup> In the same letter, Brown informed his wife that their son, Nicholaas Brown, had arrived safely in Essequibo. Brown offers a scathing report of his son's recent unruly behaviour. He commented that whilst he was away in Barbados recovering from illness, their son 'has squandered in that short time more than I can garner in two years' with Brown labelling him the 'most ignorant young man who is skilled at nothing.'<sup>172</sup> He continues describing the trouble he had with his son and writes that while their son was causing havoc

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<sup>170</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, 'All in the Family', 454.

<sup>171</sup> ZA, AAB inv.nr. 17, Brown to his wife 6-10-1779. Original Dutch reads: 'weeder tot de poort, des doods'.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. Original Dutch reads: 'Zo bevind ik hem te zijn een ongelukkigst, onbedagtigst, lustelooste en orn niets slimmer te zeggen een aller onkundigste jonkman die tot niets bekwaam is en zo als ik vreeze tot niets bekwaam zal worden'.



in the colony, he 'was sick with Mr. Croydon'.<sup>173</sup> Three questions arise: Who was Mr. Croydon? How was he able to help Brown? And crucially, was he a freemason?

William Croydon was one of the earliest British planters to migrate from Barbados to Essequibo and take advantage of the lucrative tax exemptions that were made available to British planters, by the then Director-General Laurens Storm van s'Gravesande (1704-1775).<sup>174</sup> By 1777 Croydon owned two plantations: the 'Friendship' and the 'Schoonhoven'.<sup>175</sup> Croydon features in the 'Borderless Businessmen' chapter of Bram Hoonhout's *Borderless Empire*. Hoonhout argues that Croydon 'represented the three elements that characterized successful businessmen' as he:

'...operated across imperial borders (including smuggling), combined different activities (trading and cash crop production), and employed large amounts of capital (from Dutch as well as other sources) to exploit large estates (relying on the work of hundreds of enslaved laborers).'<sup>176</sup>

Although skilled in cross-cultural trading, Croydon 'remained strongly attached to his British and Barbadian networks.'<sup>177</sup> This is an important point in respect to Adriaan Anthony Brown. From this, it can be safely assumed that it was through his relationship with William Croydon (and his Barbadian network) that Brown was able to receive treatment for this illness in 1779. However, there is no evidence of Croydon's masonic connection, and his name does not appear in any of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' membership lists (Appendix I). However, they both had plantations on the 'Hog Island', the largest island in the Essequibo River, which suggests that perhaps their friendship was based on geographic proximity rather than masonic affiliation. Brown received initial support from the Boddaert brothers, rather than his masonic brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge and when his health

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<sup>173</sup> ZA, AAB inv.nr. 17, Brown to his wife 6-10-1779. Original Dutch reads: 'ten tijden als ik bij d'heer Croydon ziek lag'.

<sup>174</sup> E.W. Van der Oest, 'The Forgotten Colonies', 327.

<sup>175</sup> Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 171-172.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

<sup>177</sup> Hoonhout points to Croydon's will as evidence of this as 'he donated money to the free coloured Belgrave family in Barbados', *Borderless Empire*, 173.

deteriorated, it was through his friendship with William Croydon, an English planter, with no obvious connection to freemasonry, that he was able to receive healthcare in Barbados. Subsequently, it could be inferred that Brown's masonic connections were of little distinct benefit to his survival in the literal sense of the word.

On the other hand, a single piece of paper housed in an inventory of Brown's archive dedicated to his journey home to Veere could contradict this argument. Dated 27 June 1781 and signed by 'Paterson & Buckley', the note reads that if: 'A. Brown esquire, being bound from this place to Holland by way of England, should be by any unexpected occurrence put into any of your ports by have to recommend him to your friendships [...]'<sup>178</sup> 'Paterson & Buckley', those vouching for Brown's character, were most likely John Paterson and William Buckley, North-American merchants who were based in Demerara.<sup>179</sup> Upon any 'unexpected occurrence' Brown could draw on the support of people based in no less than seven different American ports.<sup>180</sup> The following pages will discuss some of the names listed, explore whether they had masonic connections and in doing so, test the argument of Harland-Jacobs et al. that 'freemasonry offered men a way to belong, to find "brothers" in strange port towns.'<sup>181</sup>

One of the people Brown could potentially rely on was 'Mrs Meredith Clymer' from Philadelphia. This is significant as after spreading throughout Europe, the fraternity crossed the Atlantic with Philadelphia's 'St. John Lodge', almost certainly being America's first organised Masonic

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<sup>178</sup> ZA, AAB inv.nr 9, Stukken betreffende de terugreis van Essequibo naar Veere in het najaar van 1781 en de voorbereiding hiervan, 1780-1781.

<sup>179</sup> Burke, Natalie, "Ms. Coll. 762: Rebecca Buckley Ferguson letters, 1747-1819" (2017). Transcription Collection. 2. [https://repository.upenn.edu/manuscript\\_collective\\_transcription/2](https://repository.upenn.edu/manuscript_collective_transcription/2). One of these is a Slave Sale Contract involving Rebecca Buckley Ferguson, signed by 'Patterson & Buckley Essequibo June 17<sup>th</sup> 1783.' These transcribed letters indicate that Rebecca Buckley Ferguson (born in Philadelphia) was the sister of William Buckley (b. 1745) a Demerara Merchant. Moreover, Scottish historian David Alston includes an entry on Patterson & Parkinson, merchants from Delaware and active in Demerara during the time in question - <https://www.spanglefish.com/slavesandhighlanders/index.asp?pageid=369199>

<sup>180</sup> ZA, AAB inv.nr 9, Stukken betreffende de terugreis van Essequibo naar Veere in het najaar van 1781 en de voorbereiding hiervan, 1780-1781.

<sup>181</sup> J. Harland-Jacobs, J.C. Jansen and E. Mancke, 'The fraternal Atlantic: An introduction', 284.

group.<sup>182</sup> However, given the fraternity was a male dominated institution during the eighteenth-century, Mrs. Clymer was not a freemason. However, it is possible her husband, George Clymer was.<sup>183</sup> Clymer was a Philadelphian merchant and one of only six men who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.<sup>184</sup> This could indicate some form of masonic affiliation as it is estimated that twenty-nine percent of the:

‘241 men who signed either the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Association, the Articles of Confederation, or the Constitution, or who served as generals in the Continental Army or as George Washington’s aides or military secretaries, were Freemasons.’<sup>185</sup>

However, the research undertaken for this thesis has failed to identify George Clymer as a freemason. Although he did have a close relationship with George Washington. Introduced by his father-in-law, Reese Meredith, Clymer became good friends with Washington and maintained a correspondence for many years.<sup>186</sup> Another person on Brown’s list who also had a connection to George Washington, was ‘William Hartshorne’ of Alexandria. Coincidentally, it was Reese Meredith, George Clymer’s father-in-law, who introduced Washington to William Hartshorne.<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>182</sup> For the rise of freemasonry in America see Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press 2011).

<sup>183</sup> Harry Clinton Green and Mary Wolcott Green, *Wives of the Signers: The Women Behind the Declaration of Independence*, (Aledo, TX: Wallbuilder Press 1997) Originally published in 1912 as volume 3 of *The Pioneer Mothers of America: A Record of the More Notable Women of the Early Days of the Country, and Particularly of the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons 1912). 195-197.

<sup>184</sup> For more on George Clymer and his political career see Jerry Grundfest, *George Clymer, Philadelphia revolutionary, 1739-1813*, (New York: Arno Press 1982); B.J. Losser, *Biographical Sketches of the Signers of the American Declaration of Independence*, (New York, NY: Derby & Jackson 1858), 115.

<sup>185</sup> Bonnie Huskins, ‘From a cosmopolitan fraternity to a loyalist institution: Freemasonry in British North America in the 1780s-1790s’, *Atlantic studies* (Abingdon, England) 16 (2019) 296; David G. Hackett, *That Religion in Which All Men Agree: Freemasonry in American Culture*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2015), 60.

<sup>186</sup> This letter and six others can be found: “From George Washington to George Clymer, 17 June 1776,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0010> [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 5, 16 June 1776–12 August 1776, ed. Philander D. Chase. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993, pp. 19–20.]

<sup>187</sup> Reese Meredith wrote to George Washington recommending ‘the Bearer Capt. John Harper who is in partnership with William Hartshorne’ and commented that ‘they are Men that have a very pretty Interest – Wm [William] Hartshorne lived with me some Time – They are Industrious, Careful, Sober Men’ ‘To George Washington from Reese Meredith, 5 May 1773,’ *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0168>. [Original source: *The Papers of George*

the pair also had a lively correspondence and had frequent business dealings after the Revolutionary War. However, friendship with Washington, one of America's most famous freemasons, does not necessarily indicate masonic sympathies. In fact, William Hartshorne was an influential figure within the Quaker movement and assumed the presidency of the Alexandria Society for the Relief and Protection of Persons Illegally Held in Bondage in 1796.<sup>188</sup> 'Edward Stabler' from Virginia, another contact available to Brown, was also a member of this society. Membership of this society could indicate masonic affiliation as the society's constitution had distinct masonic undertones. For example, the constitution began with 'Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' and in response to the enslavement of their 'African Brethren', the society claimed that regardless of skin colour, everyone was 'members of the same universal family.'<sup>189</sup> The American historian Steven Bullock has revealed that some Quakers were members of the 'St. John' Lodge in Philadelphia, meaning the two societies were not entirely inconsistent.<sup>190</sup> Yet, the fact some Philadelphian Quakers were freemasons does not prove the pair of Virginian Quakers were also brothers.

That being said, absence of proof does not necessarily mean proof of absence. In order to give a conclusive answer to this hypothesis, a trip to the United States would have been necessary to consult membership lists and conduct research in various American Masonic Lodge archives. However, if this thesis has proved anything, it is that relying solely on membership lists as evidence of masonic membership is not the most bullet-proof method. Brown was a perfect example of this as he was not a member of any of the lodges in Walcheren, as far as we know, and was not a brother of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge. In response to the argument of Harland-Jacobs et al. that 'freemasonry offered men a way to belong, to find "brothers" in strange port towns', it can be concluded that, on paper, it would make sense. However, as this section has demonstrated, proving an individual's connection to

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*Washington, Colonial Series, vol. 9, 8 January 1772–18 March 1774*, ed. W. W. Abbot and Dorothy Twohig. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp. 228–229.]

<sup>188</sup> A. Glenn Crothers, 'Quaker Merchants and Slavery in Early National Alexandria, Virginia: The Ordeal of William Hartshorne', *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no.1 (2005), 61.

<sup>189</sup> *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, Apr. 16, 12, 1796, found in A. Glenn Crothers, 'Quaker Merchants and Slavery', 63.

<sup>190</sup> Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 59.

a discreet society is never an easy task. Consequently, however likely it may seem, the masonic connection of those discussed earlier is speculative at best with the present author unable to conclude with any great confidence that any of them were indeed freemasons.

## **II Metaphorical survival on the 'Wild Coast'**

The first half of this chapter has demonstrated that there is no concrete evidence of Brown's survival, in the literal sense of the word, being aided by his masonic affiliation. Nonetheless, the next section will argue that, in the more metaphorical sense of the word, freemasonry did play a significant role in Brown's 'survival'. Conviviality is among fraternalism's most appealing benefits. Jessica Harland-Jacobs has argued that masonic conviviality came in two forms: private and public. In the privacy of their lodges, freemasons performed rituals that 'provided relief from the often-dull routines of life and labour in the colonies', and in public, masonic conviviality took the form of public ceremonies and marches.<sup>191</sup> Harland-Jacobs argues that this public form of masonic conviviality provided a forum for men of various European empires to associate, even in times of intense European rivalry. She points to the fact that during the 1770s, English and Dutch Freemasons based in Bengal would attend each other's lodges and march in public processions together.<sup>192</sup> It is not known whether the brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge in Demerara engaged in such public displays of masonic conviviality, however, the privacy of the lodge did facilitate a degree of transnational Atlantic sociability, as discussed in the previous chapter.

However, to understand private masonic conviviality and how it could benefit colonial officials like Brown, it is first important to understand masonic rituals themselves. The image on the front page of this thesis is a perfect example of what a hopeful candidate would have gone through during his masonic initiation. Originally published in *De Almanack der Vrye Metzelaaren*, in 1780, the image itself

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<sup>191</sup> Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire*, 51-58.

<sup>192</sup> Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism', 451.

is reproduced from Margaret Jacob's, *The origins of freemasonry: facts & fictions*.<sup>193</sup> Blindfolded and stripped of his personal belongings, the candidate would undertake a symbolic journey through the lodge. At the prompting of the Grand Master, the individual swears an oath of allegiance to the brotherhood with his hand on the bible. After doing so, his blindfold is whipped off and he is told that there are three emblematical lights in freemasonry. The first light is the bible with the second and third being the insignia of freemasonry: the Square, for rectitude, and the Compass, an image of self-control.<sup>194</sup> As the candidate moved up within the order, the rituals would get progressively more complex with more aspects to learn.

However, the crucial point here is that the execution of a masonic ritual requires time and organisation. Performing rituals would have no doubt forged a sense of community between the brothers and allowed members to establish and nurture friendships. In a colony with no central hub, the conviviality offered within the privacy of masonic lodges provided men with social relief, comradery, and entertainment which ultimately helped them navigate their lives in foreign lands. However, was Brown able to take advantage of this masonic conviviality even though he was not a member of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge? A letter sent from G. J. Riem, the secretary of the Demerara lodge, to the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands certainly indicates that he did. Dated 10 August 1778, Riem writes to Van Laak informing him that: 'We have had the pleasure of having Brother Brown as Chairman in the Lodge for a few days.'<sup>195</sup> This is important as not only did Brown participate in masonic rituals, but he would also have played a crucial role in them through his role as chairman of the lodge. Moreover, only a Master Mason could act as 'Voorzitter' or Chairman in the lodge, which

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<sup>193</sup> A list of lodges presiding under the Grand Lodge was published yearly in the Almanach der Vrije Metselaren between 1780 and 1843. Image found in Margaret Jacob, *The origins of freemasonry: facts & fictions*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006) 6.

<sup>194</sup> John Dickie, *The Craft: How the Freemasons made the modern world*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton 2020), 16-17.

<sup>195</sup> CMC, box 2004-2, 'Bij de Groote Loge in het jaar 1778 ingekomen stukken nrs. 768: 1: Een van de Loge St. Jean de la Réunion te Demerarie ontvangen missive betreffende de staat van deze loge (768: 1) ontbreekt. Original Dutch reads: 'Wij hebbe voor weinige daagen het genoeg gehad den broeder Brown als voorzitter in het loge.'

means that Brown was at least a Master Mason by 1778, the third and most prestigious rank in the regular trigradal masonic degree system.<sup>196</sup>

The fact he is not listed as a member, yet participated in masonic conviviality, is an interesting point and serves as evidence of one of the crucial findings not only of this chapter but the thesis itself. Just because there was a lodge in close proximity does not necessarily mean a brother would become a member. Regardless of how great their involvement was with the brotherhood, it could be argued that freemasonry and its ideological underpinnings offered men a way to 'belong' in hostile environments, with the boundary between insiders and outsiders more fluid in a colonial setting. Freemasonry was important to other Dutch colonial officials on the 'Wild Coast'. A membership card stored in the archives of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands reveals that George Hendrik Trotz, who succeeded Storm van 's Gravesande as Director-General of Essequibo and Demerara in 1772, was initiated in the first and second degrees in 1772 as a passing brother ('passant') in the 'La Bien Aimée' Lodge in Amsterdam.<sup>197</sup> This is important in relation to Angela Kroon's study of Dutch masonic activity in Asia. Her study reveals that Lodges in Batavia would quickly initiate men in the brotherhood before they travelled further into Asia with some of the East India Company ships operating as 'floating lodges'.<sup>198</sup> The potential benefits the brotherhood offered, as discussed earlier in this chapter, meant being part of the fraternity, regardless of how attached the individual was, could prove crucial for life in the colony.

However, like Brown, Trotz is also not listed as a member of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge. The *fiscaal* of Demerara at the time, Christian Augustus Kloekhoff, was listed as a 'visiting brother' at the Middelburg Lodge 'La Philantropie', but he is also not listed as a brother of the lodge in

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<sup>196</sup> This meant Brown was already initiated in the first degree (Apprentice) and the second (Fellowcraft) before he entered the third degree (Master Mason).

<sup>197</sup> CMC membership card register reveals George Hendrik Trotz was initiated in the first and second degree in 1772, as passing brother ('passant') in 'La Bien Aimee' Lodge in Amsterdam.

<sup>198</sup> Kroon, *Masonic Networks*, 64.

Demerara.<sup>199</sup> Freemasonry was important for colonial officials living in Essequibo and Demerara, that much is clear; Brown, Trotz and Kloekhoff would not have masonic connections otherwise. It is plausible that for freemasons involved in the colonial setup, regularly attending meetings and becoming fully-fledged members was simply not an option. Although freemasonry was important to them, it could be argued that they were simply too preoccupied with their daily colonial duties to attend the lodge, or perhaps in Brown's case, too senior. Masonic membership was a commitment, and as Riem noted, it was a rare, but pleasant, occasion that such an esteemed brother was able to join lodge meetings, even if it was only for a few days.

In addition, there was another form of private masonic conviviality that Brown was able to take advantage of, namely that the brotherhood provided men with space for self-learning. Jessica Harland-Jacobs has argued that 'the cult of improvement was a defining aspect of the era that gave birth to speculative Freemasonry.'<sup>200</sup> She argues that freemasonry provided members with opportunities for self-improvement and 'exposed many brethren- many of whom had only the rudiments of an education -to ancient languages, texts, and mysteries.'<sup>201</sup> A notebook written in English housed in Brown's archive in the Zeeuws Archief serves as evidence of Brown's intellectual pursuits and how his own thoughts on self-improvement have masonic connotations. Brown wrote about the power of meditation. He labelled it a 'noble entertainment of the mind', one that helped him to arrange his ideas in proper order.<sup>202</sup> Upon reflection he wrote that;

'I have often in the course of my life been in doubt whether or not I was really the better of (from) the bookish education which I had in my youth...But now I find the advantage of the

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<sup>199</sup> CMC, box 4040-1 (23-1) Archief van de Loge La Philantropie te Middelburg: Boek, bevattende 'Memories, Status et Resolutions' van de Loge La Philantropie erigee et ouverte a Middelburg Anno 5758' Tome I, 1758-1770.

<sup>200</sup> Harland-Jacobs, 'Freemasonry and Colonialism', 448.

<sup>201</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, "'Hands across the sea'", 245.

<sup>202</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 6 Aantenboekje van Adriaan Anthony Brown met wetenswaardigheden over Londen en klassieke literaturr, [1750-1775].



little store of learning which I laid up, as it furnishes me with the matter not only for meditation but for discourse, the two chief instruments for improving the mind.'<sup>203</sup>

This is important for two reasons. Firstly, the fact Brown received a 'bookish education' suggests freemasonry did not introduce Brown to scholarly pursuits, like it did for some British freemasons, as Harland-Jacobs suggests. It is reasonable to assume that the lodge in Demerara opened the door for some men to hone their intellect, yet for Brown, the door had already been opened. Secondly, this passage is important as it reveals that Brown believed meditation and discourse were 'two chief instruments for improving the mind.' Although meditation is not strictly masonic, it could be argued discourse was. Through allegorical plays and ritualistic practice, freemasons embark on a journey of spiritual and moral self-improvement, with discourse playing a crucial role in progressing through the masonic degrees. Harland-Jacobs commented that 'participating in Masonic rituals and learning the various signs, passwords, and handgrips demanded that a brother learn to exercise and develop his skills of memorization.'<sup>204</sup> Memory and being able to remember specific gestures, movements or phrases, was, and still is, crucial to either become a brother or simply to progress further into freemasonry; something Brown was already familiar with. As discussed in the previous chapter, Brown had built an impressive library during his time on the 'Wild Coast'. He had several masonic publications and thus it can be argued that Brown subscribed to the more intellectual side of freemasonry and engaged with his masonic literature in the solace of his estate.

Another key benefit that freemasonry offered colonial officials was that it afforded members an opportunity to nurture their spirituality. Jessica Harland-Jacobs writes that;

'The fraternity also offered the accoutrements of religion: symbolism, rituals, vestments, rites, sermons, and the celebration of feast days. Freemasonry's contribution to the spiritual needs of its members was especially critical on the empire's frontiers, where evangelical

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<sup>203</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 6 Aantenboekje van Adriaan Anthony Brown met wetenswaardigheden over Londen en klassieke literaturr, [1750-1775].

<sup>204</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, "'Hands across the sea', 245.

missionaries had yet to plant churches and where a Masonic lodge was sometimes the only religious space available'<sup>205</sup>

This is an important point in relation to the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara. Bram Hoonhout notes that religion 'was far from prominent in Essequibo and Demerara' with the colonies failing to construct and maintain a functioning church.<sup>206</sup> That is not to say religion was entirely absent from the 'Wild Coast'. Hoonhout adds that ministers conducted certain services remotely with administrative buildings doubling up as places of worship.<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, with religion not having deep roots in the colonies, having access to a quasi-religious society was surely a blessing for certain members of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge.

However, a crucial part of this masonic spirituality was that, on paper, it was open to European men of 'all Religions'. Brothers were not allowed to discuss or dispute religion within the walls of the lodge. From Brown's notebook, it is clear he was not entirely supportive of this. When discussing religion, Brown laments that:

'I have often thought it great pity that religious matters cannot be introduced into polite conversation as the importance of religion; there is great delight in mediating upon its rational truths which would be a most agreeable subject of discourse if the fashion of the world would permit'<sup>208</sup>

Here we can clearly see the important role religion played in Brown's life. There was a Scottish Church in Veere with an article of the staple contract of 1697 guaranteeing the Scottish Nation the right to its own church with its own confession of faith.<sup>209</sup> It would have been useful to study the records of the

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<sup>205</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, "'Hands Across the Sea'", 244-245.

<sup>206</sup> Plans to construct a church either failed or were abandoned with a reliable minister hard to come by. See Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 163-164; Netscher, *History of the Colonies*, 85.

<sup>207</sup> Essequibo had a church on Fort Island, while church services were conducted in one of the buildings on Borselen Island in Demerara. See Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*, 55.

<sup>208</sup> ZA, AAB, inv.nr. 6 Aantenboekje van Adriaan Anthony Brown met wetenswaardigheden over Londen en klassieke literatuur, [1750-1775].

<sup>209</sup> ZA, ASV, inv.nr. 2088, stapel contract 1697-1698, article 6.

Scottish Church, as Brown's name may have appeared, however the records were moved to Middelburg and unfortunately did not survive the bombing the city sustained during the second World War.<sup>210</sup> Nonetheless, the fact that religion was important to Brown, we can safely assume that he would have appreciated the opportunity to nurture his spirituality through freemasonry during his time in Essequibo, albeit not subscribing to the fact that discussions on the matter were not permitted within the walls of the Lodge.

To offer a brief conclusion, Brown's survival in the literal sense of the word, was not particularly masonic. He received help from the Boddaert brothers and his good friend and fellow Atlantic businessman William Croydon. The research compiled for the thesis failed to uncover any concrete evidence of their masonic membership. However, this chapter argued that in the metaphorical sense of the word, freemasonry and its teachings did help Brown to 'survive' his time in Essequibo. Due to the impressive library he amassed in the colony it is safe to assume that Brown sought solace in reading masonic publications on his estate, which would have certainly eased his time in a foreign world.

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<sup>210</sup> Oral communication with Zeeuws Archivist Peter Blom.

## Conclusion

The front page of this thesis shows an engraving from *De Almanack der Vrye Metzelaaren* originally published in 1780. It depicts a man being initiated in the first degree of freemasonry. Once the candidate's blindfold is removed and he has completed his initiation, he is part of a society steeped in secrecy, bound together by oaths and ritualistic practice. However, as this thesis has demonstrated, despite its innate elusiveness, freemasonry is a viable scholarly topic and deserves serious academic attention. Although never straightforward, with the right tools, freemasonry can offer historians a novel way of looking at colonialism.

The relationship between freemasonry and Dutch imperialism in Asia has received scholarly interest, but the role of Dutch lodges within the Atlantic world has remained relatively unexplored. To remedy this, this thesis adopted a case-study analysis of Adriaan Anthony Brown and the eight years he spent as *fiscaal* in Essequibo. Yet, like the topic itself, Brown has also been starved of academic attention. Moreover, the colonies where Brown was sent to, Essequibo and Demerara, have largely been overlooked by historians, with Eric van der Oest labelling them 'forgotten' in 2003. Consequently, this thesis has explored the 'forgotten man', who was sent to the 'forgotten colonies', who had clear connections to an all but 'forgotten fraternity'. However, all three areas deserve to be remembered.

In recent years, historians have turned their attention to the lives of individuals to delve deeper into the functioning of empires. They may select an individual who held a prominent position, or an individual who experienced larger developments, or even reveal how one particular person was representative of a larger group.<sup>211</sup> Brown did all of the above; he held a prominent position with the

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<sup>211</sup> Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2011); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008); C. Schnurmann, 'A Scotsman in Hamburg: John Parish and His Commercial Contribution to the American War of Independence, 1776–1783,' in: Markus A. Denzel, Jan de Vries, and Philipp Robinson Rössner eds., *Small Is Beautiful? Interlopers and Smaller Trading Nations in the Pre-Industrial Period: Proceedings of the XVth World Economic History Congress in Utrecht (Netherlands) 2009*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011); John-Paul A. Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', *Past & present* 242 (2019) 1–22.

colonial administration, he experienced a decade of political turmoil during his time in Essequibo – with his trade impacted by the American War of Independence - and is a representative of a larger group: freemasons. This thesis has demonstrated that the relationship between freemasonry and Dutch colonialism, specifically on the ‘Wild Coast’, was very much interconnected, with the fraternity playing important roles in both Brown’s trade and his bid to survive.

Masonic governance was used as a framework to investigate how the brotherhood supported Dutch imperialism. By studying how lodges were governed in both the Dutch Republic and abroad, it was revealed that the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands enacted strict forms of control. To become recognised, regardless of location, every lodge had to receive a formal constitution and pay membership fees. The Grand Lodge regulated masonic activity abroad by demanding membership lists, alongside the creation of provincial Grand Masters to oversee lodges. Despite being open to ‘all Religions, Nations and Languages’, on paper, there was a real concern over *who* was becoming a member, with exclusionary policies typifying late eighteenth-century Dutch freemasonry. The universal cosmopolitan masonic ideology was simply not flexible enough to dissolve the contemporary racialised policies of exclusion. By focussing on governance, we can better understand the fundamental ambiguity of late eighteenth-century freemasonry: how a supposedly inclusive masonic ideology, in reality, helped support and bolster Dutch colonialism, by enacting similar exclusionary policies.

That being said, freemasonry did play a crucial role in facilitating a degree of transnational sociability, especially in a colony where social cohesion was hard won. Some of the members of the ‘St. Jean de la Reunion’ Lodge were either from or had connections to Britain, the Dutch Republic and Switzerland. This was important in relation to Bram Hoonhout’s *Borderless Empire*, when he argued that the colonies of Essequibo and Demerara were far more Atlantic than they were Dutch, with transnational and trans-imperial sociability central to colonial expansion.<sup>212</sup> With this in mind,

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<sup>212</sup> Hoonhout, *Borderless Empire*.

Hoonhout's idea of a 'Borderless Empire' was extended to masonic activity in Demerara. This helped to counter the 'balkanization' of Atlantic freemasonry as it demonstrated the transnational nature of masonic sociability on the 'Wild Coast'. However, under closer inspection, it was revealed that the 'Borderless Lodge' was limited to white Europeans, with the contemporary social and racial policies of exclusion that characterized the late eighteenth-century Atlantic world, proving an insurmountable challenge for enslaved and free black men becoming brothers. Thus, the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge was paradigmatic of a very limited version of the masonic cosmopolitanism set out in the fraternity's constitutional document.

Nevertheless, the transnational sociability was explored further by investigating whether it impacted Brown's business dealings and trading network. Freemasons consider themselves to be part of a worldwide family, something Harland-Jacobs et al. have referred to as 'fictive kinship.'<sup>213</sup> Previous studies of masonic trading networks have been marred by the oversimplistic conflation of masonic membership, trust and trade. Inspired by Francesca Trivellato's *The Familiarity of Strangers*, Brown's 'strategic and calculative interactions with other actors' were explored to inject some much needed nuance into this area of historiography enquiry. Simultaneously, the relationship between *The Familiarity of Strangers* and 'fictive kinship' was also investigated. On a local level, the only evidence of Brown trading with members of the Demerara lodge was in 1780 when he sold a considerable amount of literature to Hermanus Jonas, an influential member of the lodge. It was argued that it was the 'fictive kinship', facilitated by shared masonic membership, that led to Brown's 'familiarity' with Hermanus Jonas, which in turn helped explain this particular transaction.

However, on a wider scale, the situation was more complex. Brown relied heavily on his pre-existing kinship network to conduct trade. He relied on his brother-in-law John Gregorie, a skilled merchant who dominated the local economy in Veere, for financial counsel and for the supply of

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<sup>213</sup> Harland-Jacobs, Jessica L, Jan C Jansen en Elizabeth Mancke, 'The fraternal Atlantic: An introduction', 264; Mary Ann Clawson, "Fraternal Orders," 689; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 39, 74; Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire*, 17–20.

certain goods to engage in trade with local populations. He entrusted David Gregorie, Dunkirk merchant and brother of John Gregorie, to furnish him with Chintz to sell in Essequibo. He relied on James Turing, a merchant of British extraction, based in Middelburg, to supply him with wine. Yet Brown's 'strategic and calculative interaction' with James Turing added some nuance to the oversimplistic conflation of masonic membership, trust and trade. Timeline wise, Brown would have not known Turing was a freemason when writing to him in 1774. It was concluded that when studying a freemason's trade, one must examine all avenues of trust. Nonetheless, in relation to Brown's trade with the Gregorie's, it was argued that the kinship ties between them meant they were not strangers, with the 'fictive kinship' that also existed, serving to strengthen their connection.

This thesis also explored how freemasonry acted as a support system and how it could help colonial officials navigate life in foreign lands. The 'fictive kinship' generated by freemasonry, meant members were obligated to support fellow brothers and help each other to withstand life's vicissitudes. In the case of Brown, it was argued that in the literal sense of the word, Brown's bid to survive was not particularly masonic. He received initial support from the Boddaert brothers, rather than his masonic brothers of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge and when his health deteriorated, it was through his friendship with William Croydon, an English planter, with no obvious connection to freemasonry, that he was able to receive healthcare in Barbados. However, it was argued that in the more metaphorical sense of the word, freemasonry did play a significant role in Brown's 'survival'. Although he was only present in the lodge for a few days in 1778, the private masonic conviviality facilitated by the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge, would have surely offered Brown much needed social relief and entertainment.

Moreover, freemasonry provided the necessary tools Brown needed to continue his path of intellectual and spiritual growth, which would have helped him 'survive' his time on the 'Wild Coast', in the more metaphorical sense of the word. However, a crucial finding from this chapter was that a spectrum of masonic involvement existed in Demerara. For instance, several other key colonial

officials in Essequibo and Demerara were freemasons, yet, like Brown, were also not listed as members of the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge. This was important in demonstrating that colonial officials were perhaps too preoccupied with their duties or were too senior to devote time to the 'St. Jean de la Reunion' Lodge. Although unable to fully participate in masonic conviviality, they were smart enough to realise the potential benefits the society could offer them, which only serves to reinforce the argument that freemasonry and Dutch imperialism, specifically in Essequibo and Demerara, were very much interconnected.

In this thesis, I limited myself to the experiences of a single freemason during the late eighteenth-century. The eight years Brown spent on the 'Wild Coast' provided this thesis with the necessary focus to offer readers a snippet into what studying this topic can offer. Cognizant of the limitations of doing so, the conclusions drawn here are by no means conclusive. Follow-up studies will be required to verify and cross-examine the key findings drawn here. Moving forward, it would be interesting to compare different lodges in operation across former Dutch colonies in the Atlantic world and create an overview of freemasonry throughout the Atlantic world region more generally.

The bar has been set. With this thesis, the baton has been passed. It is now up to future historians to engage meaningfully and widely with masonic history. Future researchers will, perhaps to their displeasure, discover there are no hidden secrets in freemasonry and that there are no masonic plots for world domination. Instead, once they have removed their blindfolds, they will find troves of immaculately preserved source material. The tools are hidden in plain sight. The only plotting that should be taking place is how to engage effectively and meaningfully with these sources. This will help historians to understand the interconnected nature of Dutch colonialism and freemasonry and to view the Atlantic world as a hotbed of masonic activity, with transnational sociability a key product of this.



## Appendix I – Membership lists’ of the St. Jean de la Reunion Lodge<sup>214</sup>

### List 1 - July 24 1772

Extract from the Lodge Book

or

Name and Rank List of Members

Of the Honourable Lodge

St. Jean de la Réunion

As it has progressed since the 24th June 1772/5772

until the present, holding

its Meetings the First Sunday of all Months

early and late afternoon

in

Rio Demerary

The [distinguishing] colour being Blue Ponceau [Blue with bright red]

Names	Offices	Degrees <sup>215</sup>
Ant[oni]o Rigano	– continued as Worshipful Master	– Scots Master <sup>216</sup>
Adriaan Loncq	– Substitute [Worshipful] Master	
Jean Henry Siegmann	– First Officer [Senior Warden]	
Hermanus Jonas	– Second ditto [Junior Warden]	
Pieter Simon	– Treasurer	
G.J. Riem	– Secretary	
L[ouis] I[dzard] Douwe van Grovestins	– Orator	
N. Macard	– Master of Ceremonies	
O. Robert Le Grand	– Architect	
Cornelius van Vieland	- Hofmeester / Dinner Master	

[Meesters/Masters:]

N.J. Van Rim

T. Van Helsdingen

Aegidius de Scharden

J. N. Rousselet de la Jorie

Samuel Sponert

Philip Barry

James Sutherland

T.Th de Breiers

[Gezellen/Fellow Craft:]

J.W. Boedbug

Louis Chollet`

[Leerlingen/Apprentices:]

Herm[an] Tonnermann

Francois Claude Didens

... Collin

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<sup>214</sup> The copies of the original membership lists are reproduced and translated as best as possible. I am indebted to Dr. Angela Andrea Kroon for her help with this.

<sup>215</sup> Only Masters [third degree] were appointed Officers.

<sup>216</sup> He is the only one with a so-called ‘higher’ degree, and was a ‘Scots Master’.

According to the Register of the Lodge Book  
As far as the extracted concerning  
Rio Demararie 28 September 1772/5772<sup>217</sup>

List 2 - 18 Feb 1778

Extract from the Lodge Book  
or  
Name list of the State of the Lodge St. Jean de la Réunion  
As it finds itself on the 18th February 1778  
Holding its Meetings in Rio Demerary  
The [distinguishing] colour being Blue with Ponceau

Names of Officers

Baron van Grovestins – Worshipful Master  
C. De Scharden – First Officer/Senior Warden  
O. Robert Le Grand – Second Officer/Junior Warden  
G.J. Riem – Treasurer & Secretary  
H. Jonas – Orator ad interim  
Louis Chollet – Architect ad interim  
J.J. Windhuysen – Hofmeester/Dinner master ad interim

Names of Masters

C Teuffer - out of the country  
G.L. Toppin

Names of Apprentices

H.M.G. Collin  
T. Lespinasse - out of the country  
M. Chapmann  
G. Brotherson  
W. Ramaeckers  
Jacob Bogaerd  
D.H. Macaré

Adress for letters and Documents to Mr. L.I.D. baron van Grovestin & Hermannus Jonas.

List 3 - 8 August 1778

Extract from the Lodge Book  
or  
Name list of the State of the Lodge St. Jean de la Réunion  
As it finds itself on the 8th August 1778  
Holding its Meetings in Rio Demerary  
The [distinguishing] colour being Blue with Ponceau

Names of Officers

Hermanus Jonas – Worshipful Master

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<sup>217</sup> The list of August was made in September and extracted from earlier notes

L.J. D[ouwe] van Grovestins	– Passé Maitre ]Past Master]
Adriaan Loncq	- First Officer/Senior Warden
O. Robert le Grand	- Second Officer/Junior Warden
G.J. Riem -	- Treasurer & Secretary
Jan Haly	– Orator & [Tyler?]
Louis Chollet	- Architect
J.J. Windhuysen	- Hofmaster/Dinner master

#### Names of Masters

H. De Scharden  
Samuel Sponers  
G.L. Toppin  
C. Teuffer out of the country  
M. Chapman  
G. Brotherson

#### Names of Fellow Craft & Apprentices

H.M.G. Collin  
J. Lespinasses  
W. Ramaekers  
Jacob Bogaerd  
D.H. Macaré  
J.G. Pingel  
Adolph Bakker  
P. Cordes  
Alexander Bernard  
H.M. Knolman  
M. van den Heuvell  
A. de Raeff

According to the Lodge Book  
In Rio Demararie 8 August 1778  
[signature] Secretary

Adress for letters and Documents to Mr. L.I.D. baron van Grovestin & Hermannus Jonas.

**Appendix II – Names of members and when their name appears on the membership lists'**

<b>Name of member</b>	<b>Listed as member on July 24 1772</b>	<b>Listed as member on 18 Feb 1778</b>	<b>Listed as member on 8 August 1778</b>
Ant[oni]o Rigano	July 24 1772	-	-
Adriaan Loncq	July 24 1772	-	8 August 1778
Jean Henry Siegmann	July 24 1772	-	-
Hermanus Jonas	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
Pieter Simon	July 24 1772	-	-
G.J. Riem	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
L[ouis] I[dzard] Douwe van Grovestins	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
N. Macard	July 24 1772	-	-
O. Robert Le Grand	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
Cornelius van Vieland	July 24 1772	-	-
N.J. Van Rim	July 24 1772	-	-
T. Van Helsdingen	July 24 1772	-	-
Aegidius de Scharden	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
J. N. Rousselet de la Jorie	July 24 1772	-	-
Samuel Sponert	July 24 1772	-	8 August 1778
Philip Barry	July 24 1772	-	-
James Sutherland	July 24 1772	-	-
T.Th de Breiers	July 24 1772	-	-
J.W. Boedbug	July 24 1772	-	-
Louis Chollet	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
Herm[an] Tonnermann	July 24 1772	-	-
Francois Claude Didens	July 24 1772	-	-
... Collin	July 24 1772	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
J.J. Windhuysen	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
C Teuffer	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
G.L. Toppin	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
T. Lespinasse	-	18 Feb 1778	-
M. Chapmann	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
G. Brotherson	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
W. Ramaeckers	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
Jacob Bogaerd	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
D.H. Macaré	-	18 Feb 1778	8 August 1778
Jan Haly	-	-	8 August 1778
J. Lespinasses	-	-	8 August 1778
J.G. Pingel	-	-	8 August 1778
Adolph Bakker	-	-	8 August 1778
P. Cordes	-	-	8 August 1778
Alexander Bernard	-	-	8 August 1778
H.M. Knolman	-	-	8 August 1778
M. van den Heuvell	-	-	8 August 1778
A. de Raeff	-	-	8 August 1778

## List of Figures

Front page     *De Almanack der Vrye Metzelaaren...1780*, (Amsterdam: Willem Coertze Jr. 1780).  
Image reproduced from Margaret Jacob, *The origins of freemasonry: facts & fictions*,  
(Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006), 6.

Figure 1        Rijksmuseum, 'Fragment sits met kolibri's., anoniem, ca.1750', BK-KOG-2609-A  
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## Other archival material

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Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta (ANRI), letter by R. van Laak to lodge La Fidèle Sincerite in Batavia, 18-9-1773. This archive was not visited by the author. The document was made available and transcribed by Diederik Kortlang (National Archive of the Netherlands) and was found in A.A. Kroon, *Masonic networks*, 414-415.

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