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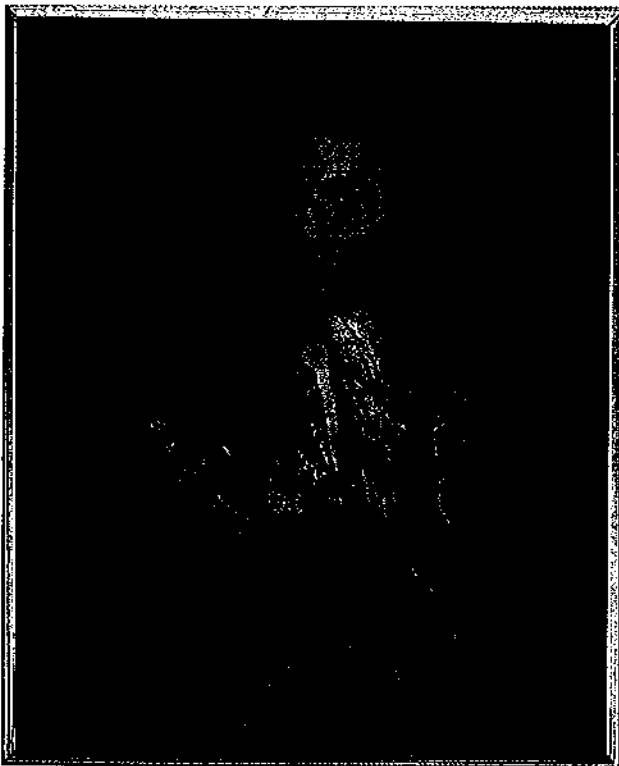
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II Corporate governance

MARJOLEIN 'T HART

The Bank of Amsterdam's commissioners: an extremely strong network

For almost 200 years, up to the 1780s, the Bank of Amsterdam operated to the great satisfaction of the mercantile elite. Its ability to earn and retain the confidence of the financial and commercial elite was highly dependent on its directors, the commissioners. An analysis of their backgrounds shows that many of them once held senior posts in the city council, although the number of political heavyweights decreased over time. The commissioners also took office at an increasingly younger age. After the first 50 years of the bank, they began to stay on in office longer, indicating a certain degree of professionalisation. The commissioners had excellent connections with stock exchange circles. The majority of them were merchants or bankers themselves, and they almost all had accounts with the bank. As a result, the commissioners formed an extremely strong network linking the city with the mercantile community.



François Beeldsnijder, 1688–1765, iron merchant and commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam for 15 years



Jan Baptista Slicher; Amsterdam, 1689–1766, burgomaster, merchant, VOC director and commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam for 16 years

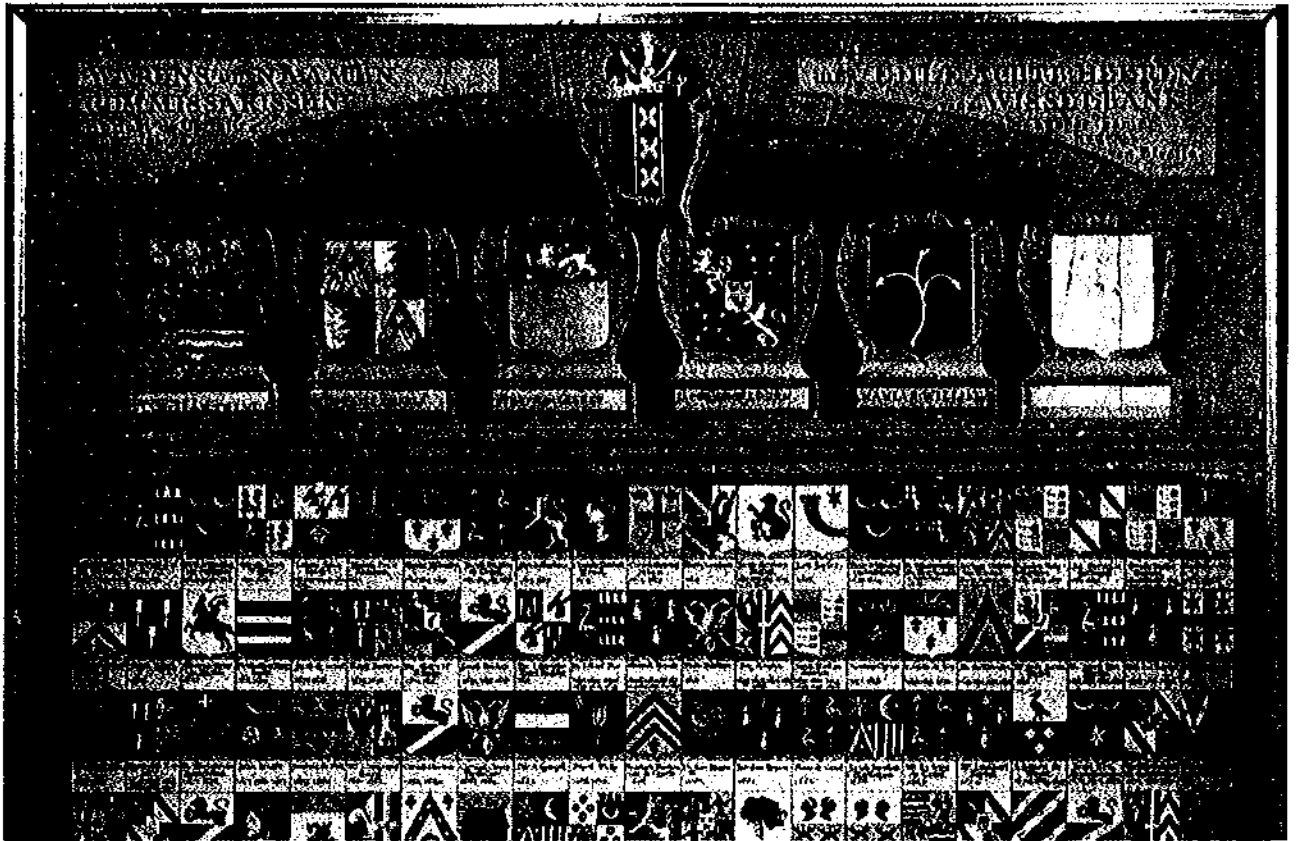
A REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSAL

On 6 June 1797, in the wake of revolutionary upheaval, Amsterdam's city council, which had itself undergone radical change, decided on a revolutionary proposal put forward by the district assemblies, Amsterdam's new system of political representation. The bank was in a difficult situation that called for action. The solution, according to most members of the assemblies, was to hold the commissioners of the bank responsible for their policy. The commissioners had primarily failed in their duties by continuing to extend loans to the VOC in the 1780s. In exchange for these loans, the VOC had deposited worthless 'papers' at the bank. This had led to the revolutionary proposal that the commissioners in office during that period should repay the loans out of their own pockets. As compensation, they could have the 'papers'.¹

This was the first time that the commissioners of the Bank of Amsterdam had come in for such sharp criticism. Of course, some aspects of the bank had been commented on before. A short time before the decision on the proposal, it had been suggested that the bank's accountholders should elect a new commissioner whenever a vacancy arose.² Yet the bank had operated to the general satisfaction of the commercial elite for almost 200 years, from the time of its creation in 1609 up until the 1780s.³ How was this possible? How was the bank managed, and who exactly were its commissioners?

CONNECTION WITH THE CITY

First and foremost, the Bank of Amsterdam was a municipal institution. The city council was ultimately responsible for the bank's policy. The four annually-elected burgomasters stood surety for the bank. Enjoying the support of the city council, the burgomasters



Detail of a panel showing the escutcheons of commissioners of the Bank of Amsterdam

Frame by Jacobus Versteegen

regarded themselves as the bank's 'supreme commissioners' and were even referred to as such on occasion. The bank's profits and losses were profits and losses for the city. The city council appointed commissioners to oversee the bank's day-to-day operations, and in the event of doubts about the way it was being run, the city council would intervene. All important decisions were taken by the city council, including decisions to lend to the VOC. Unsurprisingly, the city council rejected the proposal put forward by the district assemblies in 1797, since the commissioners had acted on the instructions of the city council. It may not have been sensible to lend to the VOC, but it was a policy that had been in place for a long time and for which the city council bore ultimate responsibility. Moreover, the 'papers' deposited by the VOC were not worthless at all – they were bonds on which the VOC paid interest and from which the Bank of Amsterdam had earned income.⁴

The commissioners could issue advice on these and other matters, both on request and on their own

initiative. They were expected to be present at the bank at certain set times and to supervise its staff. Moreover, they were responsible for the half-yearly stock count and the annual balance sheet, they had to answer questions from accountholders, they had to try to keep the agio (the price difference between bank money and current money) at about 4%-5%, they had to consult the assay master (who checked metal contents) on the purchase and sale of gold and silver, they had to supervise the receipt and issue of coinage, and they had to renew receipts (for coins given as backing for advances) at the request of accountholders.⁵ The president of the bank kept in contact with the city council. In effect, the commissioners were really the bank's managers. Clearly, the position of commissioner was not an easy one.

Who were these commissioners? The idea one obtains from the literature is one of former members of the city council – former burgomasters, former magistrates and councillors – which creates the impression that they were

mostly senior citizens who wanted to take on a position once they had retired from their 'real' work, who would stay until they died of old age or accepted another official post.⁶ But is this picture accurate? And, if they were really political administrators, did they have enough of an affinity for commerce to do their work well? Exactly how long did commissioners stay in office? While it is true the composition of the board of commissioners was re-evaluated every year, some commissioners were re-appointed time and time again.

In order to answer these questions, an analysis has been made of the commissioners who served at the Bank of Amsterdam in the periods 1610-1630, 1690-1710 and 1770-1790. This yielded a total of 81 individuals.⁷ In the first period, the city council appointed three commissioners each year. This figure increased to four in 1686, then five in 1715, and after 1716 there were usually six. The results of this analysis are summarised in table 1. All of the commissioners had close social ties with Amsterdam, in the sense that they were almost all born there or owned (or managed) a business in the city. Interestingly, the number of political heavyweights among the commissioners fell. Between 1610 and 1630, no less than one third of commissioners were former burgomasters. Moreover, an additional 37% would go on to become burgomasters after their first term as commissioner. All but one of the commissioners had previously held the post of magistrate – a judicial position that enjoyed the highest status in the city after the offices of burgomaster and sheriff. Many commissioners (63%) also held political office at the level of provincial or central government. A few were so prominent that they even took part in foreign missions, such as Reynier Adriaenszoon Pauw, commissioner in 1612, 1613 and 1615, who was knighted by the kings of both England and France. Other commissioners who received foreign knighthoods were Volkert Overlander, Anthony Oetgens van Waveren and Dirck Jacobsz. Bas (see page 151). In addition to this, a large number of them could also call themselves 'Lord of ...', an indication of an aristocratic lifestyle.

Just 60 years later, the bank's commissioners no longer included such political heavyweights. From 1690 to 1710, a mere 17% of them ever held the political office of burgomaster. Remarkably, none of them were former

TABLE 1

Breakdown of commissioners of the Bank of Amsterdam, categorised by period

	1610-1630	1690-1710	1770-1790
Former burgomasters ¹	33%	0%	0%
Burgomasters ²	70%	17%	6%
Former magistrates ¹	96%	83%	39%
Former city councillors ¹	81%	52%	19%
Holders of political office at provincial/Generality level ²	63%	26%	10%
Former officers ¹ of city institutions ³	100%	87%	87%
- financial institutions	89%	61%	68%
- social institutions	74%	61%	48%
- economic institutions	33%	65%	29%
- urban planning institutions	37%	35%	39%
Holders of titles (Lord, Knight, etc.) ²	37%	9%	19%
Holders of masters degree in law	4%	39%	32%
Merchants/bankers	67%	61%	65%
Average age (median)	46 years	41 years	33 years
Average term in office	2.8 years	6.1 years	6.0 years
Uninterrupted terms in office	74%	92%	92%
N=	27	23	31

1 based on first year serving as commissioner

2 before or after serving as commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam

3 note: *Financial positions*: ordinary city treasurer (Thesaurier Ordinaris), city treasurer extraordinaire (Thesaurier Extraordinaris), commissioner of the Amsterdam Bank van Lening (Lombard or lending bank), commissioner or director of the City Chamber of Loans (Stadsbeleningskamer), commissioner of the Bankruptcy Chamber (Desolate Boedelkamer, where bankrupts made arrangements with creditors), accountant, commissioner of the Grote Excijns (which was responsible for certain excise taxes), bursar, customs officer, master of orphans (primarily investing funds for orphans), etc.; *Social positions*: church warden, trustee of insane asylum / poorhouse / orphanage / lepers, commissioner for matrimonial affairs, commissioner for minor affairs, commissioner for city schools for the poor and other education, commissioner for Hortus, etc.; *economic positions*: director or officer of the VOC or WIC, inspector, mint-master, commissioner for maritime affairs, master of insurance, director of Levant trade, director of oriental trade, director of the society/colony of Suriname, etc.; *urban planning positions*: master of factories, member of polder board, member of water control board, chairman of water control board, commissioner for towpaths and trails, forestry overseer, etc.

Sources: Wagenaar, III (402-407), IV (578-579), Amsterdam; the biographical details of each commissioner can be found in Elias, *Vroedschap, sub nomine*

Family ties on the board

Many commissioners of the Bank of Amsterdam were connected not just through politics or the economy, but also through family ties. One family that stood out in this respect was the Calkoens. The first member of the family to serve as commissioner was Cornelis Calkoen (1639–1710), a merchant and director of the Society of Surinam. Cornelis probably became a commissioner thanks to his brother-in-law, Cornelis Munter, who had already been a bank commissioner and – no doubt not entirely coincidentally – a director of the Society of Surinam. Another link was through his son-in-law, the merchant Lucas Trip, who had served as commissioner the previous year. There was yet another link through his son's brother-in-law, Cornelis Bors van Waveren, who had also occupied the same office. Cornelis Calkoen was rich, and arranged the settlement of an amount of 1.1 million guilders through the Bank of Amsterdam in 1695. However it was his son, Nicolaas Calkoen (1666–1738), a merchant trading with France and the Levant and a gunpowder manufacturer, who would go on to establish the Calkoen dynasty. Nicolaas himself was a commissioner almost continuously between 1710 and 1722. His oldest son, Jan Calkoen (1694–1768), a textile merchant and dyer, was a commissioner for eight years in total; his third son, Nicolaas Calkoen the Younger (1698–1744), a merchant trading with Italy and the Levant, was a commissioner for five years; his youngest son, Pieter Calkoen (1705–1747), became a commissioner in 1739 and would keep his seat on the board until he died. The power of the Calkoens was so strong that a member of the family served as commissioner virtually every year during the period 1710–1747, although there were never two brothers holding office at the same time. After 1747 their influence came to an end, although Nicolaas Calkoen (1753–1817), Lord of Kortenhoef (a title bought by his father) served as commissioner in 1785–1786. He was a grandson of Nicolaas Calkoen the Younger. Interestingly, he, like his great-great-grandfather, was also closely involved with Surinam, and had been director of the colony of Surinam in 1784. He would go on to be a member of the States General, and in 1816 he was granted the noble title *Jonkbeer* by William I, King of the Netherlands.

burgomasters; instead they would hold that office after serving as commissioners. However, a massive 83% had been magistrates. In this period commissioners were managers who, although probably talented directors, were still starting their careers. The decline continued during the 18th century. Between 1770 and 1790, only 6% of commissioners held the office of burgomaster of Amsterdam and again they only did so after serving as commissioner. Some 39% had been magistrates, while another 26% would hold that office later. There was an even sharper decrease in the percentage of commissioners who moved in political circles in provincial or central government: this was a mere 10% at the end of the 18th century as opposed to 63% in the first decades of the bank's existence. This was a sign that the political orientation of the commissioners had clearly narrowed over time to focus more on Amsterdam's immediate economic interests.

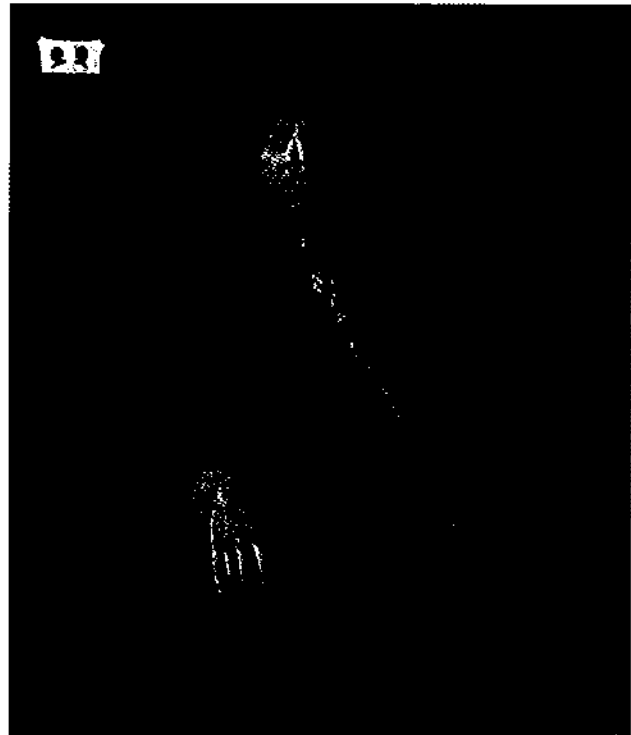
There was a similar decline in the number of former councillors among the commissioners, from 81%, to 52%, and then down to a mere 19%. In this way, the direct ties with the city council became weaker over time. Nevertheless, up until 1789 the commissioners always included at least two magistrates, maintaining the network at that level. After 1789, there were occasions when just one commissioner was a former magistrate. As a rule, however, the president of the bank was always a former magistrate.

But commissioners who were not former members of the city council might have had other connections with the council, for example, in their capacity as city treasurer, or as commissioner of Amsterdam's Bank van Lening. The lines may have been less direct, perhaps indirect. In fact, the ties with the city were still relatively strong. In the bank's first decades, all of its directors had served in a variety of other offices for the city before becoming commissioners. In particular, many of them had held financial (89%) or social (74%) posts. Their numbers did decrease, although throughout the entire period previous experience at a financial institution was valued in would-be commissioners. By the end of the 18th century, other positions, such as those in social and economic areas, had clearly become less important. This meant that many managers had a narrower range of experience, although they often had some financial expertise. Also, the status of their previous positions declined: instead of being, for example, city treasurers



Joan Munter; 1611-1685, burgomaster, merchant, VOC director and commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam for 28 years

Marble bust; Bartholomeus Eggers; 1673



Adriaen van Loon, 1631-1722, merchant and commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam for 22 years

or commissioners of the Bank van Lening, they were commissioners of sand or tow paths close to the city or of the water control boards of polders.

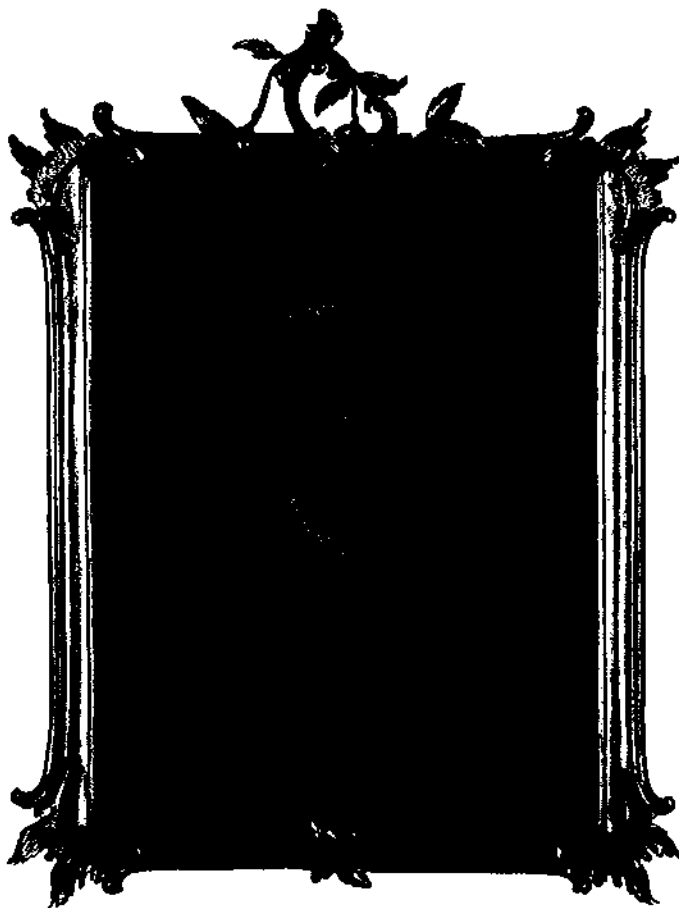
As regards religion, the position of commissioner, and, indeed, all other public offices in the Dutch Republic, was restricted to members of the Reformed Church. There were no Jewish, Roman Catholic or Baptist commissioners, even though these religious groups were prominent among the bank's accountholders. In line with the general political make-up of Amsterdam, membership of a religious community with slightly different views, such as the Remonstrants, did not preclude a person from the position, as illustrated by the commissioner Adriaen de Waert (1627-1695).

COMMISSIONERS' LINKS TO TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Besides their close ties with the city, the commissioners also had good connections with the business community and the stock exchange. A very large number (on average two-thirds) of commissioners were themselves merchants, bankers or leading industrialists. This high percentage stayed roughly the same for almost 200 years and was a

clear indication of strong links between the Bank of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam stock exchange. This percentage may even underestimate the true figure, as not all merchants were registered as such in the archives. Some of the city's wealthiest inhabitants were commissioners (see box text left). Moreover, ties with the business world were further strengthened through posts such as commissioner for maritime affairs and commissioner of the insurance chamber, particularly between 1690 and 1710 (see table 1, under 'Former officers of city institutions – economic institutions').

The commissioners' participation in economic life is further demonstrated by the fact that almost all of them had an account with the bank, often many years before they became commissioners.⁸ The same was also true of the political heavyweights during the early years. In the case of a mere 4% of commissioners, it has not been possible to establish that they had an account, but this does not necessarily mean that they did not have a stake in the bank. They may have been partners in businesses that did not bear their name, or they may have had agents who represented in their dealings with



Portrait of Harman van de Poll Harmansz., 1750 - 1807, merchant trading with the West Indies and commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam for 17 years

the bank. Whatever the case, no evidence has been found of any change over time in this regard: the figure of 4% remained approximately the same in every period. The fact that commissioners had accounts with the bank also served to strengthen the confidence of the other accountholders.

A few commissioners were extremely well informed about the bank's operations since they had made their careers within the institution. For example, the commissioners of the first half of the 17th century included former Bank of Amsterdam cashiers Hillebrand Schellinger (1580-1633), Pieter Hasselaer (1583-1651), Hendrick Reynst (1583-1648) and Ernst Roeters (1581-1648). There were also visible links with the Dutch mints: prior to becoming a commissioner, merchant and banker, Balthasar Elias Abbema (1739-1805) had been master of the Utrecht mint.

Ties with the colonial trade were especially close. Of the commissioners covered by this analysis, some 13% were also directors of the VOC's Amsterdam chamber. These ties became more visible still when in 1682 four former burgomasters were appointed to a committee that would set new rules on lending to the VOC. Three of the four – Johan Munter, Johannes Hudde and Jan de Vries – were also VOC directors. Unsurprisingly, the new rules included a provision under which the city council was no longer required to approve applications for loans submitted to the bank by the VOC provided that the amount to be borrowed did not exceed a specified maximum.⁹ A number of commissioners worked at the VOC before they came to the bank. Jan van Bleiswijk was initially a cashier and bookkeeper at the VOC and became a commissioner in the 1780s, when lending to the VOC increased spectacularly. There were others whose careers progressed in a similar way, only the other way around. The aforementioned Hillebrand Schellinger, Hendrik Reynst and Pieter Hasselaer were all cashiers and then commissioners at the Bank of Amsterdam before they became directors of the VOC.¹⁰

Given the more than evident links between the VOC, the Bank of Amsterdam and the city council, one might expect that this clique would not tolerate any ties with the rival WIC. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The number of bank directors with direct ties to the WIC or businesses that focused on the West Indies trade was remarkably high at around 15%. For example, the commissioners who served alongside Nicolaas Calkoen include Abraham Dedel (1732-1798), director of the colony of Surinam. His close relative Jan Abraham Dedel (1745-1793) had direct interests in the Danish islands in the West Indies. Then there was Harman van de Poll Harmanszoon (1750-1807), who co-ordinated investments in plantations in Surinam and Berbice; the Surinam-based merchant Marcellus Broen (1738-1802), and Gerrit Corver Hooft (1744-1807), director of the Society of Surinam, which obtained private loans for around 230,000 guilders to 240,000 guilders from the Bank of Amsterdam between 1786 and 1794.¹¹ These transactions may have been supported by former commissioner Cornelis Hartsinck Jansz. (1749-1797), who went to Surinam on business in 1785 and stayed there until his death. Trade with the Mediterranean, the



Dirck Jacobsz. Bas and his family. Dr Bas (1569-1637) was one of the first commissioners of the Bank of Amsterdam

Painting; Dirck Dircksz. Santvoort; ca. 1634

Levant and the Baltic was also well represented among the commissioners.

At the request of stock exchange traders, the City Chamber of Loans was set up in the early 1780s so that merchants could use their securities as backing for advances. The chamber had remarkably strong ties with the Bank of Amsterdam. Three of its directors were also bank commissioners: the aforementioned Abraham Dedel and Harman van de Poll Harmanszoon, as well as Joan Frederik d'Orville (1732-1809). The bank also granted private loans to the chamber.¹² Ties such as these

with the VOC, the WIC, the Society of Surinam and the City Chamber of Loans were, of course, highly conducive to transfers of funds between these organisations.

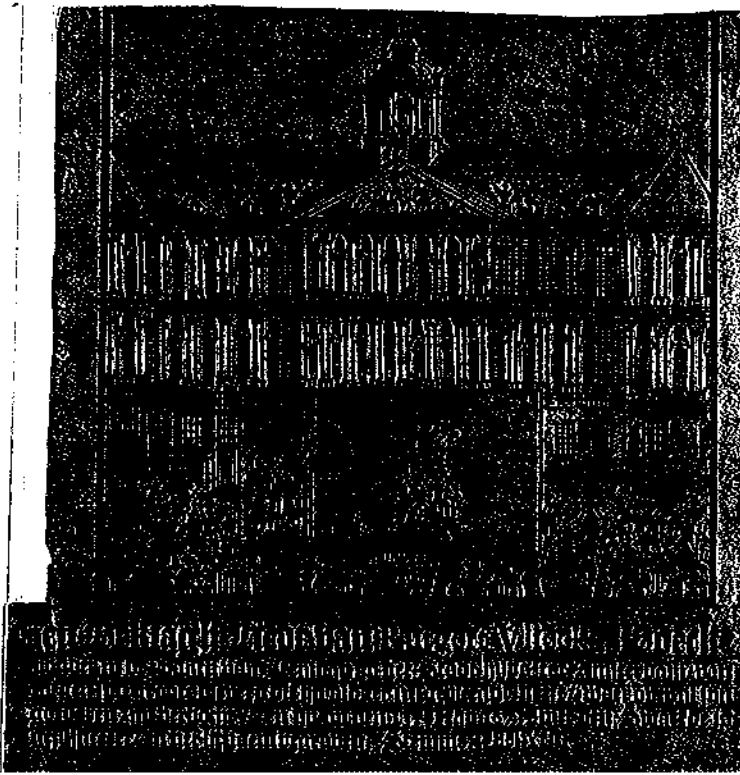
PERIODS IN OFFICE, FAMILY TIES AND MANAGEMENT

In line with the decline in political status, the commissioners of the 18th century were also younger than their 17th century predecessors, going by the date on which they were first appointed commissioner. The commissioners of 1610-1630 were on average 46 years old, which in itself alters the customary idea of elderly

TABLE 2 *Ten longest serving commissioners of the Bank of Amsterdam 1609-1795*

<i>Years in office</i>	<i>Name and dates of birth and death</i>	<i>Notes</i>
45	Harman van Ghesel (1701-1787)	merchant
28	Joan Munter (1611-1685)	burgomaster, merchant, director of VOC
22	Adriaen van Loon (1631-1722)	merchant
20	Philips de Flines (1695-1771)	merchant, insurance broker
19	Fredrick Berewout (1692-1772)	merchant, ship-owner, banker, director of WIC
17	Diederik Grommée (1693-1772)	merchant, shipping agent
17	Harman van de Poll Harmansz. (1750-1807)	merchant trading with the West Indies
16	Hendrick Roeters (1617-1699)	merchant, brandy distiller, rope maker
16	Jan Baptista Slicher (1689-1766)	burgomaster, merchant, director of VOC
15	François Beeldsnijder (1688-1765)	iron trader

Sources: see table 11.1



Pamphlet on the beheading of Vlieck ("for grand theft ... subjected to the vindication of the sword," see also chapter 6)

commissioners, but the commissioners of 1690-1710 were even younger, with an average age of 41. This downward trend continued, with the commissioners of 1770-1790 proving to be significantly younger, with an average age of 33. Between 1609 and 1795 the proportion of commissioners who died in office was around 2%, which again indicates that the commissioners were not particularly old. In this respect, the bank had a somewhat unfortunate time with the commissioners from the Reynst family, three of whom died in office: Hendrick Reynst (1583-1648), who died at the age of 65; his 59-year-old relative Gerrit Reynst (1599-1658) who fell in Amsterdam's Keizersgracht and drowned; and finally Hendrick's son Jacobus Reynst (1621-1667), who died in his first year as commissioner, aged 46, possibly as a result of the plague.

Meanwhile, the period spent in office grew. During the bank's early years the average term served by a commissioner was 2.8 years. By around 1700, this had more than doubled to 6.1 years. There was no further increase. Even at the end of the 18th century, the average period in office was still six years. Moreover, commissioners

tended not to interrupt their terms in office as often in order to perform other jobs, whereas in the 17th century they would sometimes spend years doing other things between periods as commissioner (see the list of commissioners at the end of this chapter). This trend was a sign of increasing professionalisation.

A few served just one year as commissioner, but terms of 10 to 12 years, or even longer, were not uncommon (see table 2). Harmen van Ghesel spent no less than 45 years as a commissioner after 1730, with just one break in 1743 when he served briefly as a magistrate in Amsterdam so that he would subsequently count as a former magistrate and be able to serve as president of the bank. There was another strong family connection here: Harmen's father, Jan van Ghesel, was a commissioner at the bank until 1727; his uncle Gerbrand Claas du Fay had also been a commissioner, and his brother-in-law, Albert van der Merct, was a commissioner for 12 years, mainly during the same period as Harmen.¹³ Similar family ties were seen among other commissioners, but they were most visible in the case of the Calkoen family.

The picture that emerges from the analysis is surprising since the assumption that nearly all of the bank's commissioners were former members of the city council is only accurate in the case of those who served during the first decades of the bank's existence. Over the course of time, the commissioners became younger and served for longer periods of time. Remarkably, the annual payment to commissioners also decreased over time, from 1000 guilders a year (a massive salary at that time) to 500 guilders by the middle of the 17th century. It dropped further, to 250 guilders, in the 18th century.¹⁴ There was no corresponding decline in the status of the office: being a commissioner was, after all, not a full-time job that required one to be present at the bank every day. The fact that the post was not filled by political heavyweights so often was probably down to the increasing amount of work involved in managing the bank, which was difficult to combine with meetings held at a national, provincial or local level, not to mention time-consuming foreign missions. This shift in political significance indicates that professionalisation was taking place, which would also have been connected with increasingly detailed new directives drawn up from time to time. The fact that a growing number of commissioners held the title of Master of Law (see table 1) also points in this direction.

The question is, of course, whether all these commissioners did their work well. Lending to the VOC and the City Chamber of Loans in the 1780s did not do the status of the bank any good. Johan de Vries even speaks of a “very bad policy error”.¹⁵ We have already noted that the extension of such loans was a political decision on the part of the burgomasters of Amsterdam. However, mistakes were sometimes made in supervising the bank’s day-to-day operations. In 1673, it emerged that a bookkeeper, Rutger Vlieck, had been embezzling money for years (see chapter 6). He was put to death for his crimes. Almost 100 years later, in 1775, it was discovered that another bookkeeper, Hendrik Grauwart, had managed to enrich himself by falsifying the signatures of accountholders on payment orders. In his case the death penalty proved unnecessary due to his untimely death. On both occasions, the commissioners came up with new rules and regulations aimed at improving supervision.¹⁶

A matter of a quite different nature was the suggestion made by a burgomaster in 1686 to check whether the amount recorded as being held in the vaults was correct.¹⁷ Evidently this task had not been carried out properly every year. The commissioners got down to work, and their calculations revealed that an amount of 43,770 guilders was missing. Nevertheless, the finger of suspicion was not pointed at their predecessors, and the ‘responsible’ commissioners were subsequently reappointed. The city council offered a reward for information leading to the identity of the guilty party, but to no avail. Given the city’s guarantor status, the burgomasters had the shortfall of 43,770 guilders made up at the city’s expense.¹⁸ Moreover, in the same year the number of commissioners was increased from three to four, probably in an effort to improve the way in which the amount of money held by the bank was checked.

Of course, it was difficult to establish whether these incidents of fraud were just the tip of the iceberg. When such cases came to light, however, the response was always resolute: all three of these cases led to a change in policy, and the death sentence was clearly considered suitable punishment. Such firm action helped increase confidence in the bank, and it was known far and wide that money could be

Burgomaster Andries de Graeff: rich and influential

Andries de Graeff (1611–1678) was one of the wealthiest inhabitants of the Dutch Republic and an influential politician, holding the office of burgomaster on no fewer than seven occasions and serving as a deputy in the Council of State. Even richer than Andries de Graeff was Alexander Velters (1656–1719), a commissioner around 1700. This merchant, the son of the extremely wealthy Abraham Velters who arranged the settlement of an amount of 925,000 guilders through the Bank of Amsterdam in 1645, would also go on to become burgomaster. When he died he left behind assets worth more than a million guilders, mostly in shares. Other commissioners who settled large amounts through the bank were Daniel Hochepped (1630–1708), a ship owner, merchant and banker who traded 3 million guilders through the bank in 1668. He became a commissioner in the same period as Velters. Another of his colleagues, Abraham Muysart (1676–1724), went on to leave the bank to become a director of the VOC. In 1715, the bank transferred the sum of 2.4 million guilders for him. That same year, the silk merchant Aegidius van den Bemden (1667–1737), a commissioner at the beginning of the 18th century, settled an amount of 1.9 million guilders. Other huge transactions were executed for the business owned by the commissioner Abraham Dedel: 1.1 million guilders in 1755, 1.4 million guilders in 1765, and 1.2 million guilders in 1775.²⁷



Burgomaster Andries de Graeff, commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam in 1669, modelled after the ideal of the Roman consuls

Marble bust; Artus Quellinus; 1661

entrusted to the bank “with the greatest of confidence” because it was “under the management of the burgomasters, through the policy of selected commissioners.”¹⁹ This solid reputation enjoyed by the bank’s deposit function was, without doubt, unique in early modern Europe: in no other state could money be entrusted to anyone or anything with more certainty.²⁰

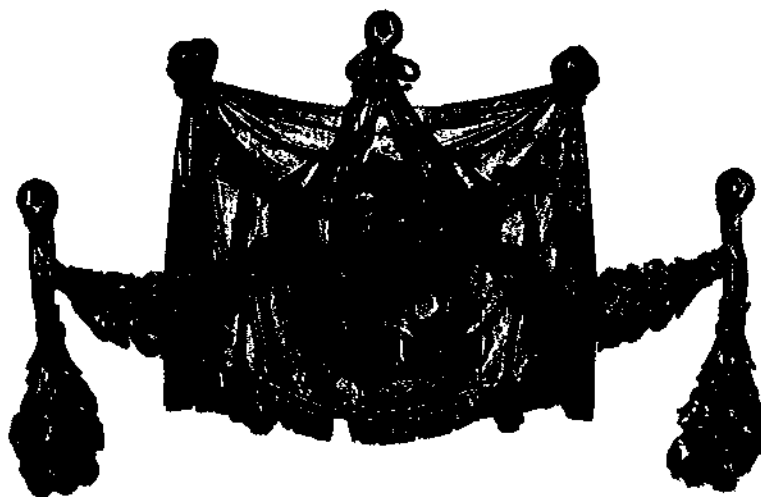
CONCLUSION

It was not until the 1780s that confidence in the bank started to crumble in response to growing political unrest and rumours about the loans to the VOC. Yet the bank had operated for almost 200 years, providing solid support and stability for trade in and with Amsterdam. Even the critical Amsterdam-based lawyer Nicolaus Bondt wrote in 1791 that bank money was “the universal standard” for international payments. Thanks to a reduction in transaction costs, the Bank of Amsterdam stimulated the growth of the Amsterdam stock exchange and attracted money to the city from all over the world.²²

In 1797, Johan Konijnenburg said the bank was “true to its nature, a Company of Merchants”.²³ Its policy was upheld by the commissioners, who formed an old boys’ network unique to Amsterdam. As we have seen, those commissioners came to be, over time, men in their 30s rather than their 40s. Initially they had strong ties with the city council; ties which slowly weakened. True political heavyweights also gradually became few and far between at the bank. The bank’s focus narrowed, shifting

inwards towards Amsterdam, away from national interests. Commissioners stayed in office longer, with terms of six years, not three, becoming the norm. The ties with the city remained because former magistrates continued to account for a significant number of commissioners. At the same time, the commissioners also had excellent relations with the mercantile community: around two-thirds were themselves merchants or bankers. Moreover, nearly all the commissioners had their own accounts with the bank and as a result had a direct interest in it.

The fact that things went so well for so long time probably had a lot to do with the tight rein the city council kept on the bank. Each year there was a great deal of deliberation before the commissioners were appointed. In his book ‘The Wealth of Nations’, Adam Smith praised the bank for the great confidence its policies enjoyed, backed up by the regular rotation of those responsible for its management. Despite these changes of the guard, he said that “the prevailing party at no time accused their predecessors of infidelity in the administration of the bank.”²⁴ Indeed, the system of annual evaluations allowed for a flexible appointments policy, a flexibility which may well be highly relevant in today’s business world, in which corporate governance codes apply. It was the application of a flexible appointments policy within an extremely strong old boys’ network²⁵ that enabled the Bank of Amsterdam to retain the confidence of the business community in Amsterdam and beyond for almost 200 years. <



Coat of arms of Hendrick Roeters, 1617-1699, merchant, brandy distiller, rope maker and commissioner of the Bank of Amsterdam for 16 years

Master of Law = Dutch meester; Lord = Dutch heer; Knight = Dutch ridder

1609-1618	Dirck de Vlaming van Oudshoorn	1673-1673	Jonas Witsen (Master of Law)	1747-1749	Jan van Marselis
1609-1623	Dr Dirck Jacobsz Bas (Knight)	1673-1677	Lord Gaspar Pellicorne	1748-1748	Pieter van Loon
1609-1623	Frans Hendricksz Oetgens van Waveren	1674-1684	Hendrick Becker	1748-1748	Daniel Jacob du Peyrou
1610-1611	Gerrit Jacob Witsen	1675-1675	Dr Joan ten Grootenhuis	1748-1750	Nicolaes junior Warin
1611-1623	Lord Laurens Jansz Spiegel	1675-1675	Jacob Hinlopen Vermaes	1748-1756	Pieter Schaak (Master of Law)
1612-1619	Roelof Egbertsz	1676-1676	Michiel Tiellens	1749-1758	Adnaer Temminck
1612-1615	Reynier Pauw Adriaensz (Knight)	1677-1677	Vincent van Bronckhorst (Knight and Master of Law)	1749-1768	Phillips de Flines
1612-1638	Lord Jacob Dircksz de Graeff	1683-1688	Lord Daniel Bernard	1751-1760	Mattheus Boendermaker
1613-1617	Jacob Boeiens Andriesz	1685-1686	Jean Appelman	1751-1765	François Beeldsnijder
1614-1614	Cornelis Pietersz Hooft	1686-1686	Frederick Willem van Loon (Master of Law)	1755-1755	Jan Testas
1614-1615	Cornelis Banning Jansz	1686-1707	Adriaen van Loon	1755-1772	Diederik Grommée
1615-1615	Bartholt Cromhout Adriaensz	1687-1693	Joan Coymans	1756-1756	Thomas van Son
1616-1616	Joris Jorisz	1689-1692	Albert Geelvinck (Master of Law)	1758-1767	Jan van Tarelirk
1616-1623	Jacob Gerritsz Hoyng	1692-1692	Lord Philip Weevering (Doctor)	1761-1762	Bartholomé MuIman
1620-1624	Pieter de Vlaming van Oudshoorn	1692-1696	Dirck Backer (Master of Law)	1763-1764	Pieter Hartsinck (Master of Law)
1622-1622	Lord Volkert Oeuvrlander (Knight and Master of Law)	1693-1694	Cornelis Munter (Master of Law)	1765-1781	Abraham Dedel
1624-1624	Lord Andries Bicker Gerritsz (Doctor)	1693-1703	Joan Huydecooper (Master of Law)	1766-1769	Quinjn Willem van Hoorn
1624-1644	Lord Anthony Oetgens van Waveren (Knight)	1694-1696	Lord Cornelis Bors van Waveren (Master of Law)	1768-1770	Lord Willem Huydecooper (Master of Law)
1625-1634	Lord Cornelis Bicker Gerritsz	1695-1704	Daniel Hocephied	1769-1770	Egdius van de Poll
1625-1635	Jan Cornelisz Geelvinck	1696-1705	Alexander Velters	1770-1776	Lord Pieter Nicolaas van Hoorn
1626-1626	Hillebrand Schellinger	1698-1698	Lucas Trip (Master of Law)	1771-1771	Johan Frederik d'Orville
1626-1628	Frederick de Vrij	1698-1698	Cornelis Verpoorter	1771-1788	Harman van de Poel Harmansz
1627-1627	Dr Jacob Reael	1699-1706	Cornelis Calkoen	1772-1773	Jan Wynantz
1628-1628	Warnaer Ernst van Bassen	1703-1704	Abraham Muysart	1772-1782	Leonard Kuysten van Hoesen (Master of Law)
1628-1630	Dr Matthys Willemsz van Raephorst	1704-1707	Jacobus Trip** (Master of Law)	1773-1773	Hendrik Nicolaas Hasselaer (Master of Law)
1629-1630	Ernst Roeters	1706-1712	Joan Blauw (Master of Law)	1774-1784	Jan Abraham Dede
1630-1630	Lord Gerrit Schaep (Doctor)	1707-1709	Nicolaes van Loon (Master of Law)	1776-1776	Lord Matthys Ooster
1631-1631	Jacob Backer	1707-1714	Constantin Decquer	1776-1777	Lord Dirk de Smeth (Master of Law)
1631-1637	Dr Laurens Reael (Knight)	1707-1718	Egdius van den Bempden	1776-1780	Balthasar Elias Abbema (Master of Law)
1632-1639	Dr Albert Bas	1710-1722	Nicolaas Calkoen	1777-1779	Gerrit Corver Hooft (Master of Law)
1633-1648	Hendrick Reynst	1712-1712	Hendrick Hudde	1777-1782	Cornelis Hartsinck Jansz
1636-1636	Pieter Hasselaer	1713-1713	Pieter Eyghels	1778-1792	Jan van Bleiswyk (Master of Law)
1639-1670	Joan Munter	1713-1713	Cornelis Graafland	1779-1779	Lodewyk Hovy the Younger
1641-1646	Lord Jacob Geritsz Bicker	1714-1715	Wigbold Slicher the Younger (Master of Law)	1781-1782	Pieter van de Poel jansz (Master of Law)
1647-1648	Nicolaes Corver	1714-1727	Adam van Rijn	1781-1792	Robert Jean Néel
1648-1650	Cornelis de Vrij	1715-1717	Arnold van Aelst (Master of Law)	1783-1783	Everard Adriaan van Muyden
1649-1652	Joan van Waveren	1716-1718	Jacob Valkenier	1783-1784	Cornelis van Lennep (Master of Law)
1651-1651	Joris Jorisz Backer (Master of Law)	1716-1728	Dirk van der Meer	1784-1787	Jan Danser Nyman
1651-1655	Dr Jacob Bas Dircksz	1718-1718	René de Vicq (Master of Law)	1785-1786	Lord Nicolaas Calkoen (Master of Law)
1653-1653	Nicolaes Pancras	1718-1719	Joan de Witt (Master of Law)	1785-1786	Arend van der Waegen Warin
1653-1658	Dr Gerrit Reynst	1718-1725	Lord Gillis Graafland	1787-1791	Jan Hartsinck
1654-1655	Pieter Trip	1719-1719	Dirck Alewijn (Master of Law)	1787-1788	David Cornelis van Lennep (Master of Law)
1655-1692	Hendrick Roeters	1719-1726	Lord Theodorus Huijghens (Master of Law)	1788-1790	Pieter Alexander Hasselaer
1657-1658	Dr Cornelis van Dronckelaer	1720-1726	Jan van Ghesel	1789-1789	Marcellus Broen
1658-1672	Joan Hulft	1720-1735	Philip Anthoni van der Ghiessen	1789-1792	Jan Jacob Momma
1659-1660	Jan van de Poll	1722-1735	Lord Ferdinand van Colien the Younger (Master of Law)	1790-1795	Jan Bolten
1661-1662	Lord Coenraed Burg (Master of Law)	1723-1723	Abraham Edwards Boddens (Master of Law)	1791-1795	Eduard t'Hoer
1662-1665	Cornelis Backer	1723-1738	Jacob Fredrik du Fay	1792-1795	Jacob Rijnbrand Graafland
1663-1664	Gerard Claesz Hasselaer	1723-1738	Jan Calkoen	1793-1795	Johannes Cornelis Bert
1665-1665	Dirck Spiegel	1724-1725	Reynier Bouwens (Master of Law)	1793-1795	Johannes Hendriksz Luden
1666-1666	Nicolaes Rochus van de Capelle	1724-1727	Gerbrand Claes du Fay (Master of Law)	1795-1805	Laurens à Roy
1666-1670	Knight-Baronet Dirck Tulp	1727-1732	Nicolaas Calkoen the Younger	1795-1799	Hendrick Remmers
1667-1667	Lord Pieter de Graeff	1727-1742	Jan van Loon (Master of Law)	1795-1813	Willem Bruyn
1667-1667	Dr Joan Blauw	1727-1747	Fredrick Berewout	1795-1798	George Gerard Lans
1667-1667	Jacobus Reynst	1728-1728	Jan Sautijn (Master of Law)	1795-1803	Claude Crommelin
1668-1668	Jacob Jacobsz Hinlopen	1728-1729	Daniel de Dieu (Master of Law)	1795-1817	Gerardus Willebrordus ten Sande
1669-1669	Andries de Graeff (Knight and Master of Law)	1729-1746	Albert van der Merc	1796-1818	Adriaan Teyler van Hall
1670-1670	Lambert Reynst (Master of Law)	1730-1747	Jan Baptista Slicher (Master of Law)	1798-1814	Jan Brouwer joachimsz
1670-1691	Adriaen de Weert	1730-1775	Harman van Ghesel	1798-1820	Herman Haesebroek Gerhardsz
1671-1682	Lord Joan Six (Master of Law)	1731-1731	Hendrick van der Spelt	1800-1801	Paulus Charlé
1672-1672	Lord Joan Geelvinck (Master of Law)	1732-1732	Lord Jan Lucas Pels	1801-1810	Dirk Westrik
1672-1672	Aernout Hellemans Hooft (Knight and Master of Law)	1735-1748	Theodoor Rogge	1801-1812	Daniel Changuon Charlesz
1672-1672	Lord Joan Huydecooper (Knight and Master of Law)	1737-1746	Lord Samuel Elias Coymans	1814-1820	Pieter van Lennep
1672-1680	Lord Cornelis Geelvinck	1739-1747	Pieter Calkoen	1814-1820	Petrus Paulus Charlé
1672-1698	Adriaen Backer (Master of Law)	1743-1743	Anthoni Warin (Master of Law)	1818-1820	Jacob Hendrick Luden
1673-1676	Lord Hendrick Hooft	1747-1748	Abraham Alewijn (Master of Law)	1818-1820	Ananias Willink

* a dash indicates an unbroken period, two dots indicate a broken period.

** the two weeks which Jacob Trip (possibly the same Trip) served in 1698 have not been included.

Sources: see 11.1, Bank of Amsterdam archives 13 & 1297; Amsterdam Historical Museum 7894.