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## Migration

The Dutch Republic often fascinated and sometimes shocked foreign observers. While its maritime industries, global trade, and military prowess received widespread admiration, the United Provinces' high level of immigration triggered a mixed response. Contemporary travel accounts regularly commented on the disturbingly high number of 'strangers' in Holland's towns and the variety of faiths they represented. Diversity was even a tourist attraction. Travel guides for seventeenth-century Amsterdam typically included walking tours that passed dissident churches and synagogues, which represented the city's many immigrant communities. In his *Cosmographie* (1652), an ambitious attempt to describe every aspect of the known world, the prolific English ecclesiastic Peter Heylyn concluded pessimistically that Amsterdam '[is] inhabited by men of all Nations, and of all Religions . . . A greater Confusion (in my minde) then that of Babel; this being of Religions, that of Languages only.'<sup>1</sup>

Modern scholarship has largely confirmed this striking image of a society 'of all nations'. Stimulated by a quantitative turn in historical studies in the 1960s and 1970s, social historians have reconstructed the composition of seventeenth-century Dutch society and demonstrated how international immigration transformed its cities. Estimates suggest that between 1600 and 1800 about 600,000 foreigners settled in the United Provinces, a country whose population had been 1.5 million for most of its existence. The influx from abroad was particularly profound in the province of Holland. In the early 1600s about 40 per cent of Amsterdam's inhabitants were foreign-born; in Haarlem and Leiden foreigners made up about 55 per cent of the total population.<sup>2</sup> Yet unlike Peter Heylyn, modern scholars also contend that high levels of

immigration were intrinsically connected to Dutch achievements in trade, industry, and warfare.

Migration may be key to our understanding of the Dutch Golden Age, but its significance is not easy to gauge. This is a problem of definition, language, and data. Firstly, 'immigration' and 'emigration' were terms not widely used in the seventeenth century, and contemporary records rarely distinguished among various types of religious refugees, labour migrants, or travellers. It was the language of community, privilege, and order that framed early modern descriptions of migration. Thus, 'stranger' was the word commonly used to label anyone considered a newcomer. Secondly, and relatedly, mobility could be understood quite differently from our sense of the phenomenon today. Migration is generally defined as a movement of people who cross borders. In pre-modern Europe borders took a variety of forms. Political boundaries existed between sovereign states, but equally important were the legal demarcations of provinces and towns, which claimed their own jurisdictions. A traveller from Friesland to Amsterdam could therefore be regarded as an immigrant in the latter. In the mindset of contemporaries such political borders were regularly trumped by religious ones. Some Calvinists preferred to view their community as a transnational Protestant brotherhood. Discontented Dutch Catholics fashioned themselves 'inner exiles' whose spiritual dislocation depended on a lifeline with Rome. For Jews, the notion of 'diaspora' was firmly grounded in their understanding of community, too.

Thirdly, then, movements across such real and imagined borders could be temporary or permanent, voluntary or coerced, or might be part of a longer journey. Thousands of foreigners who arrived in the United Provinces used local ports to continue their travels overseas. In Asia, Africa, and the Americas these 'transmigrants' were confronted with yet another form of mobility that characterized the world of Dutch 'Golden Age': the forced migration and enslavement of indigenous African and Asian populations. Since none of these human movements, whether undertaken voluntarily or effected by force, were registered systematically in the seventeenth century, surviving data about migration are patchy and subject to interpretation. What is more, historians of early modern religion, art, labour, and slavery have largely studied the effects of migration within the boundaries of their respective historiographical tradition. By integrating these different strands of

scholarship, this chapter seeks to map long-distance mobility in its various guises and gauge its impact on social conditions, economic development, religious experience, and cultural taste.

### **Forces and Patterns**

Immigration was not a new phenomenon in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Being relatively urbanized and strategically positioned in the North Sea river delta, the western provinces of the Low Countries had experienced a permanent and varied influx of newcomers throughout the later Middle Ages. As centres of international trade, towns in Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and Zeeland accommodated communities of Italian, Iberian, English, and German merchants and regularly called upon seasonal workers to staff their fleet and industries. Some of these labour migrants came from the surrounding inland provinces, others from farther away, particularly the German lands and northern France. Antwerp, the metropolis of the sixteenth-century Low Countries, was especially famous for its cosmopolitan profile. When the Italian merchant Lodovico Guicciardini summarized his impressions of the area around 1566, he asserted that ‘the foreigners in Antwerp and in all these Netherlands have more freedoms than anywhere else in the world’.<sup>3</sup>

The outbreak of the Dutch Revolt in the 1560s disrupted these patterns of international trade, exchange, and mobility. At the same time, the civil war triggered an unprecedented refugee crisis that would transform the demographic composition of the Low Countries forever. In the early phases of the troubles (1560s–70s) at least 60,000 Netherlanders fled the war’s violence and religious persecution by moving to safe havens in neighbouring countries, notably England and the Holy Roman Empire. The shifting course of the Revolt in the later sixteenth century generated additional forced migrations, both Protestant and Catholic. The most significant of these was the flight of about 100,000 men and women from the major cities in the south (Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent) after these were taken by Habsburg forces in 1584–5. The majority of the southern refugees moved to the northern, rebel-controlled provinces of Holland and Zeeland. By 1600, they made up about a third of the total population of Leiden, Haarlem, and Amsterdam.<sup>4</sup>

Table 3.1 *Migration and urban growth in Holland (estimates)*

Town	1570	1600	1622	1672
Amsterdam	30,000	60,000	105,000	200,000
Leiden	15,000	26,000	44,500	72,000
Haarlem	16,000	30,000	39,500	50,000
Rotterdam	7,000	12,000	19,500	45,000
The Hague	5,000	10,000	15,750	30,000

Source: J. L. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806*, Oxford, 1995, 328–32; J. van Lottum, *Across the North Sea: The Impact of the Dutch Republic on International Labour Migration, c. 1550–1850*, Amsterdam, 2007.

Refugees from the south cemented Holland's position as the commercial heartland of the emerging Dutch Republic. In the following decades, its maritime hubs continued to attract vast numbers of newcomers. Movements from the Republic's inland provinces, including Friesland, Overijssel, and Gelderland, contributed to this demographic upheaval, but immigration from abroad was the most conspicuous current in the flow to Holland's urban centres. Probably the largest group comprised Germans and Scandinavians, whose numbers peaked during the Thirty Years War (1618–48). Smaller groups of Scots, English Puritans and Quakers, and Sephardic ('Portuguese') and Ashkenazi ('High German') Jews settled in the Dutch provinces, too. While immigration rates gradually diminished after the 1660s, there was a notable spike around 1685, when about 35,000 French Huguenots sought refuge in the Dutch Republic. As Table 3.1 reveals, these domestic and foreign influxes caused a dramatic expansion of towns in Holland and to a lesser extent Zeeland. Amsterdam grew from a medium-sized town of about 30,000 inhabitants in the 1570s to a metropolis of 200,000 in the later seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> By 1650 the city was, after London and Paris, northern Europe's third-largest urban conglomeration.

Patterns of migration reveal the push and pull factors that created them. Some scholars have highlighted economic opportunity as the main incentive spurring migration in the Golden Age. Jan Lucassen, for one, has shown how demands on the labour market and high wages

determined the movement and recruitment of specific types of migrants from elsewhere in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Unskilled Germans and Scandinavians largely filled the ranks of the low-paid sectors of the booming maritime economy. In Leiden, the influx of Flemish textile workers in the 1580s coincided with a rejuvenation of its drapery industries. This economic dynamic may also explain the striking gender imbalance among foreign immigrants: men are overrepresented in the records that address migration. Other scholars have privileged religious freedom as an explanation for mobility. In the Union of Utrecht (1579), the United Provinces had formally guaranteed freedom of conscience to all. Although the interpretation of the clause varied according to time and place, religious pluralism became a notable feature of seventeenth-century Dutch society. It is telling that many of its tolerated faith communities were, in fact, connected to specific groups of foreigners: Lutheran churches, Walloon congregations, and Portuguese synagogues largely catered to immigrants. A growing body of scholarship suggests that, for many individuals, such religious and material motivations were inextricably intertwined. Thus, thousands of German Protestants left their homes in the 1620s and 1630s because of religious conflict and dire living conditions, but they consciously chose a host society where they expected to make a living and to express their faith. The Dutch Republic seemed to offer just those opportunities.

### **An Immigrant Society**

Although immigration figures were unevenly spread across the United Provinces – the majority of newcomers settled in the urban centres of Holland – they profoundly changed Dutch society. In economic terms, immigration brought new knowledge, capital, and trading networks, but also accelerated the proletarianization of human labour. The arrival of well-connected entrepreneurs from Antwerp and skilled Flemish textile workers effectively kick-started the commercial expansion of the 1590s. Growing demand for foreign labour in the following decades caused thousands of previously self-employed German and Scandinavian farmers to move to Holland, too. Once settled, they became urbanites dependent on wage labour. The expanding fleets and shipyards of trading companies relied heavily on the recruitment of these and other labourers from abroad. By the mid seventeenth century, almost half of the sailing employees of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) consisted

of foreigners. In the later seventeenth century, French Huguenots and Sephardic Jews again brought new industries and financial experience to the Dutch Republic, although their precise economic impact has been subject to debate. In any case, the continuous flow of newcomers transformed the urban fabric of Holland. Towns that appealed to immigrants such as Amsterdam, Leiden, Haarlem, Rotterdam, Enkhuizen, and Hoorn invested in large-scale building projects, including the expansion of city walls, the renewal of harbour infrastructure, and the design and construction of entirely new neighbourhoods. Amsterdam's planned Jordaan district, for example, was said to be the home of an exotic mixture of foreign accents by the 1620s.<sup>7</sup>

Demographic change redefined religious life. In the 1580s, Calvinist refugees from Flanders and Brabant bolstered the still weak position of the Reformed Church in Holland. The prominence – real or imagined – of immigrants in the public church of the Republic added to the paralysing religious disputes of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–21). The Arminian factions within the Reformed Church regularly expressed xenophobia to discredit the theocratic tendencies of Calvinists by portraying them as foreigners. Immigration also changed other Christian denominations, including the Lutheran community. The Amsterdam Lutheran congregation, by far the country's largest, developed into a hub for thousands of immigrant Germans and Scandinavians; its sermons were typically given in German. The large number of foreigners in Dutch church communities may also explain their strong international orientation. Confessional conflicts elsewhere in Europe regularly incited Protestant churches to organize relief operations and fundraising campaigns for their repressed co-religionists abroad. Grounded in the belief that many religious communities in the United Provinces had themselves grown out of a history of persecution and flight, this type of transnational solidarity was as much an act of charity as an exercise in confessional self-fashioning.

Migration fuelled the production of art and inspired new lifestyles. Numerous innovations in the fields of painting, cartography, and architecture, including some now considered icons of 'Dutch' Golden Age art and culture, originated from the minds of immigrant artists or were driven by the shifting taste of new foreign clients. Among other things, the popular printed cityscape, which framed the image of Amsterdam as a commercial metropolis, was an import product of immigrant publishers. The Dutch school of painting owes many of its characteristics to the creative integration of foreign taste, imported production methods, and

more established artistic traditions. Eric Jan Sluijter has shown how the sudden wave of inexpensive paintings from Antwerp in the early 1600s triggered the development of innovative painting techniques in Holland. The celebrated 'Dutch' genre of landscape painting is just one example. Well-known artists such as Frans Hals, Gerard de Lairesse, and Daniël Marot were born outside the United Provinces. In intellectual spheres, the impact of mobility was no less profound. The Dutch Republic developed a large printing and publishing industry that was famous for its international orientation. Relatively weak state censorship and political patronage enabled migrant authors such as René Descartes and John Locke to publish their controversial works. At Leiden University, about half of the professors and students came from abroad, which added to its academic prestige.<sup>8</sup>

Immigration had distinct effects at the higher ends of society. The princes of Orange and their cousins, the counts of Nassau, originated from Germany and held widespread possessions in the Holy Roman Empire, France, and the Southern Netherlands. Their courts constituted a multi-national community that included numerous Protestant nobles from elsewhere in Europe. Many of the noblemen also held positions in the higher echelons of the Dutch army, which recruited thousands of foreigners annually. Indeed, under the Stadholders Maurice and Frederick Henry, the States Army functioned as an eminent international training school. Dynastic marriage politics furthered the Orange court's cosmopolitan outlook, as it quickly absorbed German, English, and French tastes. Its base in The Hague became the temporary home of several exiled royals, such as the Elector Palatine, Frederick V, and his wife, Elizabeth Stuart, from 1621. In the later 1640s, the prince of Wales, the later Charles II, settled there, too. Court culture in the officially republican state thus developed a profoundly international flavour, which has often been contrasted to the dominant bourgeois image of the Dutch Golden Age.<sup>9</sup>

### **Integration and Community Building**

Not well equipped to control the movements of people, early modern states rarely developed coherent immigration policies. As a rule, political borders were porous and policing resources limited. In the Dutch Republic, the politics of immigration was primarily a local affair



because of decentralized state structures. Some towns, such as Leiden, actively recruited particular types of skilled immigrants and instituted legislation that excluded unwanted, needy potential newcomers. In nearby Delft, the local authorities used the confiscated properties of former Catholic convents to accommodate refugees from Flanders in the later sixteenth century. Such efforts did not prevent local populations from regarding immigration with suspicion and resisting it. In a society where the notion of a unified *corpus christianum* remained an important frame of reference, the influx of 'strangers' posed an evident threat to the social fabric of urban communities.

Recurring themes voiced by immigration's critics included the newcomers' alleged political ambitions, religious fanaticism, and misuse of charity and welfare facilities. The purportedly degenerative effects of foreign taste and lifestyle were worrying, too. Such tropes featured regularly in popular plays such as the *Spanish Brabanter* (1617) by Gerard Bredero. In this farce, stories about the lofty, frivolous, and unreliable behaviour of Brabanter and Flemish immigrants are contrasted with the sincerity and directness of native Hollanders. 'The eye can well behold a man and know him not at all' is the ominous motto of Bredero's play, voicing the anxiety and nostalgia produced in response to a society being transformed by people regarded as strangers.<sup>10</sup>

Against this background, it is perhaps surprising that most newcomers appear to have integrated with relative ease into Dutch society. Immigration certainly put pressure on housing markets, and the arrival of indigent strangers regularly fuelled concerns about charity and criminality. But even during the peaks of the 1590s and 1620s, such worries never led to open resistance or organized urban protests against immigration. Several explanations have been brought forward for this pattern of acceptance and social integration. Taking the notion of 'membership regimes' as a point of departure, some scholars have stressed the accommodating policies of local governments. It is notable, for example, that corporate and commercial facilities in many towns in Holland were relatively open to (wealthy) outsiders, which allowed them to establish themselves as respectable members of the urban community. The magistrates of Amsterdam famously stated in 1607 that 'strangers' and those who held formal citizenship would be treated equally in all financial transactions. Such an open attitude towards

citizenship and the emphasis on judicial equality may have reinforced community-building in the rapidly changing city.<sup>11</sup>

A related government strategy concerned attempts to foster a united urban culture. Jo Spaans and Benjamin Kaplan, among others, have shown that town magistrates supported the development of a city symbolism that was distinctly non-confessional, enabling citizens and immigrants of various religious backgrounds to identify with it.<sup>12</sup> The Damiate cult of Haarlem and the decorative programme of Amsterdam's Town Hall are examples of this religiously neutral, accommodating attitude. In a similar vein, migration historians have pointed to the importance of religious corporatism. More specifically, they assert that religious institutions guided integration processes in Dutch towns. Authorities compelled their tolerated denominations – Reformed, Anabaptist, Lutheran, Catholic, and (in some cases) Jewish – to act as support networks for their immigrant members. Churches thus provided newcomers not only with spiritual care but also with forms of charity and education, and facilitated contacts with local officials. Church discipline served as an additional instrument of policing and punishment for transgressive behaviour. According to this line of argument, social integration in seventeenth-century Dutch society implied the creation of separate, parallel immigrant communities.

To these largely institutional and top-down perspectives, several cultural markers of social integration may be added. Rapid demographic change coincided with grass-roots attempts to forge common Dutch identities. Simon Schama has demonstrated how self-declared independence from Habsburg Spain prompted the development of new patriotic discourses in the early 1600s. Some of these framed the causes of the revolt as a fight for freedom against Hispanic tyranny or sought to justify the foundation of a Protestant society by presenting the war as a struggle for religious truth. Particularly influential were narratives about a providential New Israel and the so-called Batavian myth. The latter suggested that the struggle against Habsburg Spain had been a repetition of the Batavians' fight against Roman oppression in 70 AD. Conscious of the need to write themselves into this emerging national rhetoric, immigrants played a key role in its construction. In pamphlets, urban chronicles, and prints, authors and publicists with immigrant backgrounds glorified the Dutch state as a bastion of freedom for those who were resisting religious coercion and repression. By doing so, they tapped into existing sensibilities about the history of

the Dutch Revolt and its refugee crisis, with which many Dutch citizens identified. This reading of the United Provinces also provided a rationale for a continuing engagement with victims of religious warfare and displaced minorities in the seventeenth century. In the words of the French philosopher Pierre Bayle, the Dutch Republic was widely regarded as ‘the great ark of the refugees’ of his times. Commemorative texts and poems published after the peace with Spain in 1648 similarly framed the Dutch Republic as a natural safe haven for persecuted dissenters.<sup>13</sup> Stories of immigration were thus fused with declarations of patriotism.

### **Emigration**

The Dutch Republic may have been a society of immigrants, but the effects of mobility were specific to localities. In many eastern provinces, demographic stability and (temporary) migration to Holland reshaped rural life. The Twente region in Overijssel, for example, experienced a seasonal movement of young men and women who typically spent the spring and summer months in the maritime provinces. Fortified garrison towns in southern areas, including ’s Hertogenbosch, Bergen op Zoom, and Maastricht, struggled to maintain their population in the seventeenth century. The same was true for the IJssel towns of Zwolle, Zutphen, and Deventer, whose population decreased in each case from about 10,000 in the 1570s to mere 7,000 by the mid seventeenth century. Attempts to reverse their gradual decline by attracting immigrants met with limited success. In 1592, the town of Kampen offered free citizenship to newcomers ‘of whatever nation they may be’, while Zutphen experimented with attractive tax incentives. Nevertheless, a steady emigration from the eastern towns to the maritime west continued to affect these areas.<sup>14</sup> In addition, it appears that outward mobility and emigration from the United Provinces were equally powerful demographic forces. To a large extent, waves of emigration and immigration were intrinsically linked. Two categories of leavers illuminate this connection.

One group of emigrants comprised malcontents, who contested the legitimacy and morality of a Protestant Dutch state. From the start of the revolt in the 1570s, several thousand committed Catholics and Habsburg loyalists had escaped the rebel areas. A number of

Catholic exile communities gradually emerged, mostly in the Southern Netherlands (Antwerp, Brussels, Louvain, Douai) and the Holy Roman Empire (Emmerich, Kalkar, Cologne). Although the number of Catholic émigrés diminished after the 1590s, a string of self-conscious exile communities continued to flourish. They developed educational facilities, sites of pilgrimage, and a printing press that catered to stay-at-home Catholics in the United Provinces. In the university town of Douai, for example, Dutch exiles, students, and travellers gathered together to venerate the Beata Maria Hollandica, an effigy of the Virgin Mary from Leiden, which had miraculously survived iconoclasm during the Revolt. The Collegium Anticollense at Cologne and the Collegium Pulcheriae Mariae Virginis at Louvain provided Dutch Catholics with a tailored, orthodox training centre for their children. In a sense, these exile foundations represented an imagined community of faith, expressing the idea of a Dutch 'counter-society' across the border: a pure Netherlands that remained unspoiled by heresy or dubious Republican authority.<sup>15</sup>

It was not just Catholic loyalists who opposed the new order and confronted Dutch authorities with an unresolved 'exile problem'. Protestant dissenters and supporters of the Oldenbarnevelt regime escaped the United Provinces after Stadholder Maurice of Nassau's successful coup in 1618. About eighty Arminian ministers were actually formally banished. The Dutch Republic may have granted freedom of conscience to all citizens, but its governing elites were not particularly tolerant of critical voices that undermined their authority. Precisely because the United Provinces constituted a new polity in early modern Europe, its leaders seem to have been sensitive towards forms of opposition that challenged the legitimacy of the improvised state. In addition, religious radicals and libertines, such as adherents of Socinianism and followers of Spinoza, had to be careful, especially when their philosophical ideas had wider political implications. Some dissenters, including the legal scholar Hugo Grotius and the libertine Adrian Beverland, felt compelled to settle abroad.<sup>16</sup> While emigration may have presented very different incentives for these individuals and groups, they all shared the experience of being considered outcasts from the Republic. In rebuilding its society after the Revolt, the United Provinces were as much shaped by newcomers from abroad as by departing non-conformists.

A second category of emigration was even more directly connected to parallel forces of immigration. Not all of the tens of thousands who moved to the Netherlands from elsewhere in Europe settled there permanently. Many took advantage of the United Provinces' global ambitions to continue their travels overseas. In the seventeenth century the VOC conveyed about 317,000 men and women, about half of them foreign-born, to its Asian enterprises. Smaller numbers signed up with the Dutch West India Company (WIC) and emigrated to the settler colonies of New Netherland or the plantations at Dutch Brazil and later Suriname. At the WIC's base of New Amsterdam (present-day New York City) only half of the registered settlers were, strictly speaking, 'Dutch'. With a population of about 1.5 million, the Dutch Republic was far too small to build and maintain a global presence strictly on its own. Wars and refugee crises elsewhere in Europe could therefore be considered blessings in disguise. The Amsterdam city council, for instance, complained in 1642 that '[because of] the current hostilities everywhere in Europe . . . many refugees and those affected by war arrive in the city in great numbers, every day'.<sup>17</sup> But these waves of refugees also enabled Amsterdam to pursue its American and Asian colonization projects.

Contemporaries were well aware of the demographic challenges and opportunities that came with empire-building. Initially, the VOC and WIC had tried to populate their emerging global networks by sending Dutch families and orphans to the colonies. When these schemes proved ineffective, the recruitment of refugees and other immigrants took centre stage. Publicist Adriaen van der Donck, for one, argued in 1655 that Holland had become overcrowded with newcomers and that it would be 'advantageous and easy . . . to create another Netherland outside these Low Countries with the help of unnecessary and redundant folk here'.<sup>18</sup> Geopolitical events elsewhere in Europe could further such strategies. During the 'Piedmont Easter massacre' and its evolving crisis in 1656, the magistrate of Amsterdam used local newspapers to advertise attractive conditions for Waldensian refugees who were willing to move to the city's American colony of New Amstel (in present-day New Castle, Delaware). When the repressive policies of Louis XIV in France sparked a Huguenot diaspora in the 1680s, the VOC immediately identified its potential to suit the company's needs. Arriving French refugees were welcomed and recruited for the Cape Colony in South Africa. The VOC also planned an attack on strategic French-held islands in the Indian Ocean, purportedly as 'compensation' for the lost properties abandoned

by Huguenots escaping France.<sup>19</sup> Refugee crises elsewhere in Europe thus facilitated Dutch global expansion.

### **Forced Migration and Slavery**

Human trafficking provided the backbone of the Dutch experience overseas. But the global relocation of thousands of men and women from Europe was just one side of the coin. After some initial hesitation, the Dutch also turned to forced migration and coerced labour to fulfil their ambitions in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Slavery and the slave trade were officially forbidden in the United Provinces, but this proscription was not maintained in its self-declared possessions outside Europe. Especially after the taking of Brazil in 1630, the Dutch bought and used enslaved Africans on a large scale to run their sugar plantations. Between 1635 and 1651, 31,533 men and women were taken and shipped from ports in West Africa – 26,286 of them survived the Atlantic crossing. After the loss of Brazil in the 1650s, the Dutch continued their involvement with the slave trade. The WIC's plantation economies in Suriname and the Caribbean were dependent on the systematic employment of Africans throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For this purpose, the company maintained several slave-trading forts along the coast of Africa, including Elmina in present-day Ghana (see Map 2). A considerable number of enslaved Africans were traded to other European colonists, such as the Spanish, Portuguese, English, and French. Altogether it has been estimated that the Dutch transported between 163,000 and 232,000 enslaved Africans in the seventeenth century, which made them a significant player in the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>20</sup>

In the Indian Ocean, the VOC faced similar problems populating its dense web of trading posts. Around 1688, the company had about 22,000 employees in its fleet and its fortresses in Asia, an insufficient number to run a global company effectively. Like its Atlantic counterpart, the VOC therefore relied on slavery, in addition to its European and Asian contract labour. Precise figures are difficult to establish, due to the great variety of forms of coerced labour that the company used in its scattered territories. In India and the Indonesian archipelago some indigenous populations were compelled to work on plantations, in factories, and in households. These local workforces supplemented men and women from elsewhere in Asia, who were transported by force. For example,

between 1621 and 1665, Dutch ships moved about 38,000 men and women from Pulicat, India, to the VOC's headquarters at Batavia on Java. Individual VOC employees seem to have profited from growing labour demands by setting up private slave-trading ventures. Arab and Indian traders supplied coerced labourers to the company, too. Penal servitude served as the final form of forced migration. By exiling the law's offenders from Java to the Cape Colony in South Africa, the VOC sought to turn its criminal justice system into a labour pipeline.<sup>21</sup> In spite of its self-styled image of liberty and tolerance, the Dutch Republic proved a repressive and opportunistic exploiter of the populations it encountered overseas.

The Dutch involvement with slavery across the globe had repercussions back home. Numerous Amsterdam and Zeeland families acquired fortunes that were linked – directly or indirectly – to their investments in coerced human trafficking. And though slavery was illegal in the United Provinces, a number of entrepreneurs brought enslaved Africans there to work in their households. Sephardic Jews probably introduced this practice in the early seventeenth century. Although the total number of sub-Saharan Africans living in the Netherlands remained relatively small, some featured prominently in lavish family portraits, such as Jan Mijtens' painting of Margaretha van Raephorst (Figure 3.1). The frequent inclusion of black boys or 'Moors' in still-life paintings – sometimes portrayed as mere stereotypes or as an exotic commodity – similarly exemplifies the racial implications of the Dutch global experience.<sup>22</sup>

### **Stories of Migrations**

Migrations of the Dutch Golden Age were at once distinct and connected with one another. Religious refugees, labour migrants, expelled outcasts, and enslaved Africans shared little more than the experience of mobility, which affected their lives in very different ways. Still, the patterns and driving forces behind their disparate movements were often linked. The life story of Georgius Candidius illustrates these distinctions and connections. Born in Kirchardt in the German Palatinate in 1597, Candidius fled his home town during the early years of the Thirty Years War. Like many displaced Protestants, he found asylum in the Dutch Republic, receiving a scholarship in theology





Figure 3.1 Jan Mijtens, *Portrait of Margaretha van Raephorst*, 1668.

from Leiden University. After his graduation in 1623, Candidius continued his religiously spurred peregrinations overseas. The VOC first solicited his services at the trading post at Ternate in the Moluccas. Here, the refugee-turned-Reformed minister became part of a mixed community of European colonists, enslaved indigenous populations, and imported labourers from elsewhere on the Indonesian archipelago. Candidius' tenure was followed by a post at the Dutch church on



Formosa, present-day Taiwan. The latter position inspired him to compose a manual for the Reformed mission in Asia. His *Discours* (1628) reveals how much his migratory experiences had shaped his world-view, in which stories of refuge, exile and mission were intertwined. Candidius returned to the United Provinces in 1639 but travelled to Asia again four years later. In 1647 he died in Batavia as rector of the Latin School, an exotic European export product that catered to Dutch immigrants and Eurasian orphans alike.<sup>23</sup>

The travels of Georgius Candidius demonstrate not only how migration shaped the world of the Dutch Golden Age, but also how it affected the thoughts, world-views, and self-images of those who lived through it. Stories of migration played a powerful, if ambiguous, role in the Dutch imagination in the seventeenth century. On the one hand, they served as tools of religious identification and cultural integration. The experience of revolt and the forced displacements in the sixteenth century had fostered the development of a popular discourse that framed religious exile as a heroic experience. In the seventeenth century, these cultivated memories of refuge were fused with a patriotic discourse. Narratives of New Israel, Batavian freedom, or Amsterdam cosmopolitanism were all built on a strong engagement with stories of exile and mobility. Yet on the other hand, migratory experiences could also function as tokens of social exclusivity and justify Dutch interventions and aggression abroad. The proud descendants of the victims of ‘Hispanic tyranny’ and religious exile showed little hesitation when human trafficking and slavery elsewhere in the world offered them economic opportunities. Migration was both the cause and the outcome of the Dutch Golden Age.

### Notes

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2. J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806*, Oxford, 1998, 328–32; J. Lucassen, ‘Labour and Early Modern Economic Development’, in K. Davids and J. Lucassen (eds.), *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective*, Cambridge, 1995, 367–409.
3. L. Guicciardini, *Beschrijving van Antwerpen*, reprint, Antwerp, 1854, 143.
4. G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, revised edition, London, 1985, 118–19; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 160, 219, 328–32.

5. Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 328–32; J. van Lottum, *Across the North Sea: The Impact of the Dutch Republic on International Labour Migration, c. 1550–1850*, Amsterdam, 2007.
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