

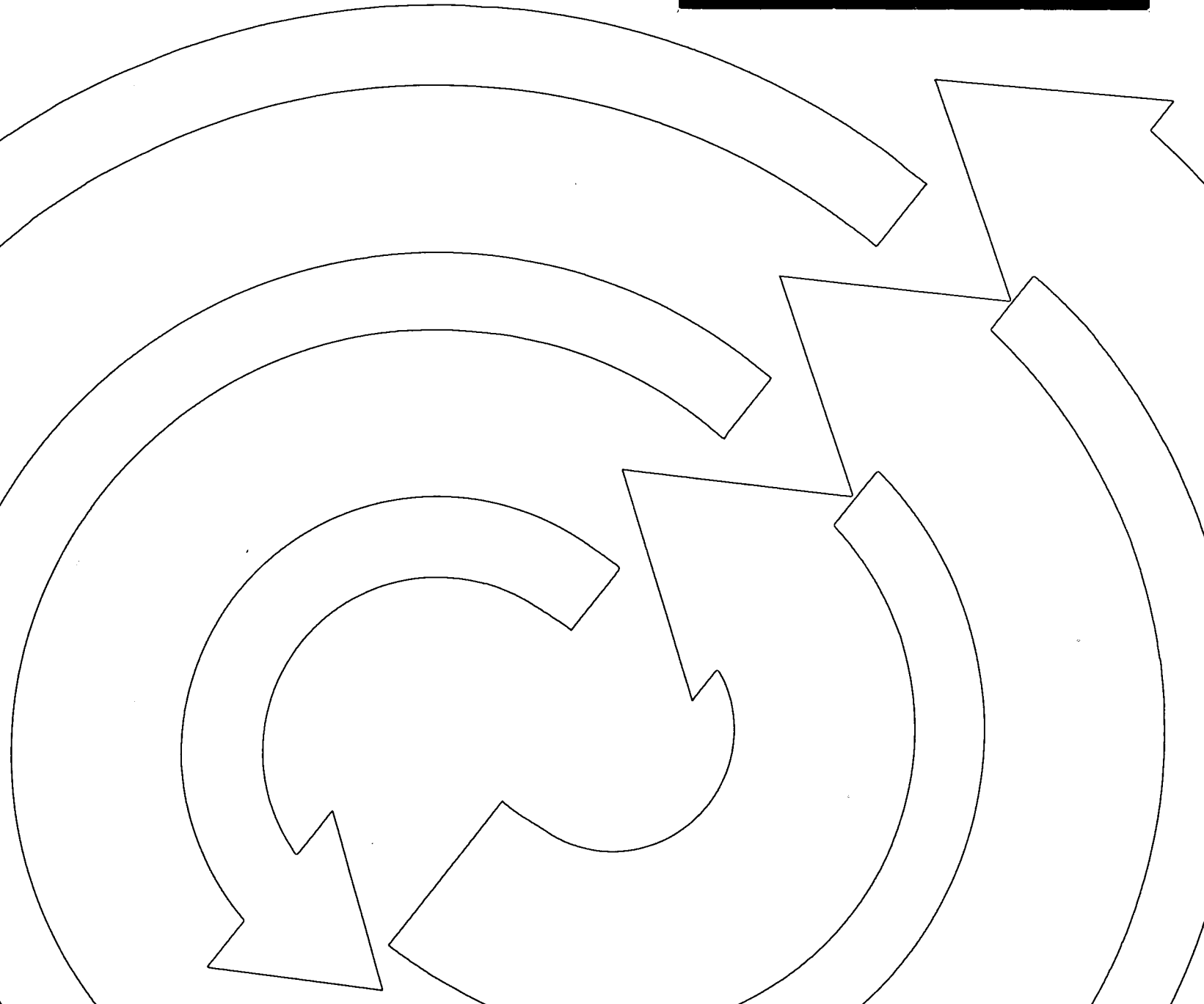
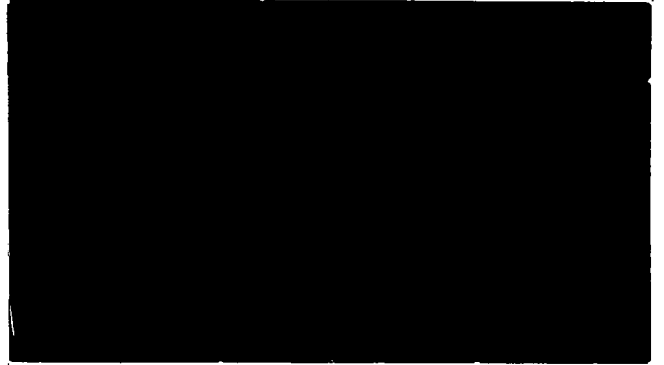


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**THE FAMILIAL STATE: ELITE  
FAMILY PRACTICES AND STATE-MAKING  
IN THE EARLY MODERN NETHERLANDS**

by  
**Julia Adams**

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**THE FAMILIAL STATE:  
Elite Family Practices and State-Making in the Early Modern Netherlands<sup>1</sup>**

Julia Adams  
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

"There is scarcely less trouble in governing a family than in governing an entire state"  
(Montaigne, 1958 [1580]: 175).

In early modern Europe, states and elite families were often so interlocked as to be indistinguishable -- then Montaigne's rueful aphorism was especially apt. Yet state-making and family history are generally studied separately today. I will try to unite them by underlining the central role of family lineages and identities in the formation of political structures and authority, focussing on the Netherlands, a precocious and influential developer along a number of social and cultural dimensions. My thinking about this problem has been guided by several general questions. How and when did elite families and lineages anchor social stability, or contribute to social change? What were the implications for political authority and state-making? This paper will make two main claims: first, that family practices and ideologies (including inheritance, marriage, and the organization of authority along patriarchal lines) structured and limited the development of patrimonial states; and second, that the resulting dominant class/family/state organization influenced national and international politico-economic processes. In particular, I will argue that elite family dynamics in the Netherlands were one cause of that country's spectacular rise and decline.

### **I. Patrimonial Elites and Privilege**

It is well known that early modern European elites persistently pursued state offices and privileges -- a practice known as the kuiperij (machinations) or ambtsbejag (hunt for office) in the Dutch Republic.<sup>2</sup> Contemporaries wrote stilted poetry hailing office and the prerogatives of

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<sup>1</sup>A previous draft of this paper was presented at the 1991 Social Science History Association annual meeting, and at the Program in the Comparative Study of Social Transformations, and the Family Studies Seminar, both at the University of Michigan. I would also like to thank Nancy Curtin, Femme Gaastra, and Els van Eyck van Heslinga for their helpful comments and suggestions. The paper draws on some of the dissertation research I conducted in the Netherlands, which was funded by the Social Science Research Council.

<sup>2</sup>De Witte van Citters reviews instances of the ubiquitous pursuit of privilege in eighteenth-century Europe (1875: v-xxxii).

privilege as a source of political power and a badge of status. "Happy Hasselaars!" enthused a typical ode on the occasion of a marriage in the Dutch regency, in this case between the cousins Gerhard Hasselaar and Suzanne Hasselaar in Amsterdam in 1752. "The country has placed in your tutelary hands / The sword of Themis and the Depot of the Laws..." The poet further abjured Gerhard to exercise his offices in the illustrious tradition of his patrician ancestors (AGA 292: #1739). Contemporaries also thought of money. "Everyone knows that the quickest way to get rich is to get into the government and that is the reason that men pay to get in," wrote the Dutch pamphleteer Claudius Civilis in 1747 (De Jong, 1985: 38). At the pinnacles of patrimonial states, economic rewards (and risks) could indeed be enormous: witness Richelieu's "fruits of office", the largest fortune accumulated in France until that time, or the dramatic trajectories of Essex, the Cecils, and other Tudor and Stuart grandees.<sup>3</sup>In the Netherlands, the regent patriciate received fixed "rents" or intermittent windfalls from office, such as the schout's (sheriff's) percentage of the fines he imposed (Vries, 1977: 330), an income which could be quite extensive, especially in the eighteenth century (Smit, 1977: 388-90).<sup>4</sup> Beyond serving as a direct source of resources, state offices and privileges were a vehicle for broad control over the conditions of making and keeping money, and over economic affairs generally. Dutch regents, for example, who invested on over half their fortunes in state bonds in the eighteenth century, also used their positions in the state to decide the interest rates that their loans would command, and to block reforms in the fiscal system that seemed disadvantageous to them.<sup>5</sup>

Although they have quarrelled over whether economics, politics or ideology were prime movers in the reproduction of patrimonial social structures, most students of these states and societies recognize that an elite's capacity to accumulate resources was at least empirically bound up with its capacity to impress and command. At minimum, certain approved styles of conspicuous consumption and display were an important means to an economic end for an aspiring

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<sup>3</sup>For the sources of Richelieu's fortune, see Joseph Bergin's Cardinal Richelieu: Power and the Pursuit of Wealth (1985). On the Tudor and Stuart office-holding grandees, see Lawrence Stone's The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641 (1965: 398-504) and his Family and Fortune. Studies in Aristocratic Finance in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (1973). Paul Bamford's Privilege and Profit: A Business Family in Eighteenth-Century France (1988) usefully disaggregates three major types of privilege that underpinned 18th century French business fortunes: seigneurial domain, venal office, and state monopoly.

<sup>4</sup>"Regents" are conventionally defined as occupants of high state offices; in practice, they are a subset of the "elite", which also includes members of the landed gentry and merchant and industrial capitalists who do not hold office.

<sup>5</sup>The best English-language source on how the Dutch patricians structured the terms of their own loans to the state is Riley, International Government Finance and the Amsterdam Capital Market, 1740-1815 (1980: 68-82).

member of the elite, and that some form of feudal or patrimonial privilege, with the coercive apparatus to back it up, and the clientele and allies it produced, was a necessary path to wealth.<sup>6</sup> But patrimonial privilege was not merely a means to an end: it was embedded in and reproduced a relationship between rulers and elites that was inextricably political and economic, based simultaneously on authority and economic exchange. When a ruler granted exclusive politico-economic rights and immunities to self-governing corporate groups, he was also gathering funds and deploying power, while corporate elites in turn got economic concessions, political representation and derived status (Weber, 1968 [1922]: 226, 293-7, 1006-7, 1010-13, 1022, 1028-31). If elites were to maintain their social position, they depended on this peculiarly patrimonial privilege which functioned as property, which could be acquired, traded, even sold or passed on to descendants, which carried the right to sanction subordinates, and which offered a share in the ruler's legitimacy.<sup>7</sup>

In the northern Netherlands, a powerful urban regent patriciate, primarily based in vroedschappen (town councils) and privileged corporate monopolies like the East and West Indies Companies, faced a series of weak patrimonial rulers -- first the Habsburgs' delegates, followed by emissaries of France and England, and finally the indigenous stadholders, the Princes of Orange.<sup>8</sup> The regents consistently resisted their would-be rulers' efforts to govern, opposing efforts to create new corporations or revive traditional or fictive ones, to appoint relatively autonomous bureaucrats, or to call on alliances with other patrimonial powers. Such policies, however traditionally acceptable, threatened to disperse and devalue elite privilege, or even to abolish it

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<sup>6</sup>This was especially true of courtly societies, but even a burghers' paradise like Holland maintained "a rich tradition of ceremonial waste" (Schama, 1987: 310). The limits to this type of politico-economic accumulation were graphically illustrated by Fouquet, unseated by his envious patron, Louis XIV (Dessert, 1987).

<sup>7</sup>It is important to underline that both "privilege" and the reproduction of the patrimonial polity itself were rooted in "traditional values" which, as Mark Gould puts it, "necessitate a legitimation of innovation in terms of past practice" (Gould, 1987: 168). In such polities, notes Gianfranco Poggi, corporate bodies were "constrained chiefly by the concurrent, traditional rights vested in other individuals and bodies" (1990: 48-9). Yes: although neither Gould's nor Poggi's otherwise excellent books recognizes that these bodies were shaped and honeycombed by family cliques, and that the "traditional" rights and values on which they were based were patriarchal and familial. I discuss this issue further below.

<sup>8</sup>On the Habsburg period, the most useful English-language source is Tracy's Holland under Habsburg Rule, 1506-1566 (1990). Subsequent quasi-monarchical "protectors", chosen on the basis of Dutch alliances with France and England, were ousted after they tried to bend Dutch foreign policy to the dictates of the French and English crowns (Schoffer, 1988: 146-52). From that point, the 1579 defensive pact among several provincial estates against Spain served as the blueprint for the new state, coexisting uneasily with the stadholder's traditional rights (Groenveld and Leeuwenberg, 1979: 29-51).

altogether. Yet the regents could not simply dispense with their opposite numbers, for even in the so-called stadholderless Eras of True Freedom (Ware Vrijheid) when the regents temporarily governed alone, their own politico-economic position and legitimacy derived from the ruler's intertwined executive capacities and symbolic incarnation of sovereign unity.<sup>9</sup> Here was the Dutch version of the classic "patrimonial paradox", and the source of the characteristic oscillations of patrimonial politics, likened by contemporaries to a pendulum, or a balance scale. Whether corporate elites managed to gain control of state offices, resulting in the "estatist" patrimonialism characteristic of the Netherlands,<sup>10</sup> or the ruler to assert politico-economic authority over elites, in the "absolutist" tendency evident in France, the interdependence between the two undermined any definitive institutional compromise or solution.<sup>11</sup>

This uneasy arrangement was strained to the breaking-point in a number of early modern European countries. In seventeenth-century agrarian England, according to Robert Brenner, the system was riven by two "fundamental, interrelated discontinuities". First, argues Brenner, "the country's landlords no longer maintained themselves economically by their capacity directly to coerce a possessing peasantry, a capacity which had depended on membership in various kinds of local, regional, and national patrimonial or household-centered political communities or groups." Second, "the Crown, while remaining itself a patrimonial lord with the capacity to maintain itself by virtue of its privately possessed political powers, had ceased to depend for its government on lords who, by virtue of their own political organizations, often centered upon the households of great bastard magnates, had their own private access to the means of coercion, their own

<sup>9</sup>"The customary way the history of the Dutch Republic is told, which makes the government of States-with-stadholder the normal pattern and the two stadholderless periods...interruptions that distort the pattern," notes Rowen in The Princes of Orange. The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic, "may be as false as the opposite vision of the followers of De Witt in his own time and in subsequent generations who saw the Republic in its purity as government without a stadholder" (1988: 110-11; see also 95-130, 148-62). The eighteenth-century political reformer Simon van Slingelandt crisply posed the alternatives to his fellow regents: either they submit to the stadholder, or find another way of submitting (submittie) their squabbles to adjudication; if not, "government without stadholders" would be merely "full-fledged anarchy" (Van Slingelandt: 1784 [1717]: 4-5; 1784 [1722]: 94-96). The incapacity of estatist organization to resolve major political crisis did provoke a return to a strengthened, hereditary stadholderate in 1747.

<sup>10</sup>See Weber's "rule by honoratores (notables)" (1968: 1009-10; 1038-42). "Estatism" is preferable, because it makes explicit the parallelism to absolutism.

<sup>11</sup>Elsewhere (1990) I have argued that this oscillation was common to all patrimonial systems. Holders of patrimonial privileges and offices were tied to ruling regimes, but could, when threatened, play an important part in resisting them: thus the vacillation of office-holders in the French Fronde (Moote 1971), or of chartered company merchants in the English Revolution (Brenner 1992). Elite capacities for resisting rulers were also formed by their ability to survive in the interstices of the dominant system, or to parlay their privileges into new types of purely economic advantage.

authority within a limited territory, and thus their own effective right and capacity to govern within a given locale" (Brenner 1992: Postscript). More generally, wherever forms of politically-constituted property (or privately- or corporately-owned forms of power) remained in the hands of patrimonial elites -- even in countries like the Dutch Republic, where wage labor, rather than coercive exploitation of land-owning peasants, was the dominant type of surplus extraction -- the intra-elite squabbling characteristic of patrimonialism was increasingly accompanied by emergent tensions between patrimonial elites, dependent on corporate bodies as key mechanisms in securing, maintaining and extending wealth, power and status, and independent agents who were not anchored in these bodies, and who called for new forms of political power divested of such "archaic" mutual obligations.

Brenner attributes the emergence of such structural tensions, and the revolutions that ensued, to the rise of the capitalist mode of production. I will leave this causal issue aside for the moment, in order to deal with a theoretical absence in his and other analysts' accounts of the patrimonial system -- the family. The force of family and lineage was unmistakably a constitutive factor in the development of early modern European political economies, whether they are characterized as patrimonial, neo-feudal, predatory, absolutist, brokerage, tax/office, tributary, fiscal/military, or agrarian bureaucratic (all terms currently in vogue, testifying to the extent of theoretical confusion). Yet analyses of the patrimonial system fail to do justice to either the key gendered, familial component of the motivations of elites and rulers, or the rules of reproduction of the system itself.<sup>12</sup> They have thus missed the range of social-structural and ideological outcomes that ensued.

That family practices had political effects has been argued elsewhere. Dynastic struggle and decay have long been thought to affect political cycles (Khaldun, 1967 [1377-81]: 133-42). The generalized exchange of women continues to be cited as a dynamic factor in kin-structured societies.<sup>13</sup> Others have argued that concepts or ideologies of family and gender can provide a

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<sup>12</sup>In the Brenner quotation above, for example, the roles of family, household and lineage are registered empirically, but do not figure in the theory of the system. This has been the case with analyses of non-European patrimonial systems as well, such as Zeitlin's The Civil Wars in Chile (1984).

<sup>13</sup>See Levi-Strauss (1949). For recent derivations, see Gailey's book on colonial state formation in the Tongan Islands (1987), Searle's rational-choice account of the exchange of women in pursuit of the construction of Norman power (1990), and Musisi on Buganda (1991). So far, no work revolving around the exchange of women has dealt adequately with the problem raised by Carolyn Steedman: "Under particular social circumstances, people may come to understand that whilst they do not possess anything, they possess themselves, and may possibly be able to exchange themselves for something else. Under such circumstances, there exists the specificity of a woman's situation, and the under-standing of herself as an object of exchange that may arise

medium by which politics is conducted and contested (see among many others Applewhite and Levy (1990) whose collection deals specifically with early modern Europe). However, "family" has not been systematically integrated into social theories of transition from kin- to state-structured societies. Barring Weber's account of "patrimonialism" in Economy and Society (1968 [1922]), itself only a first step, the themes of family and state form, and certainly "gender", have been ignored by the canonical theoretical texts of early modern state formation.<sup>14</sup> This is so in spite of the fact that when the reproduction of a ruling elite rested on gendered family principles, including marriage, inheritance, and paternal authority, familial dynamics were also constitutive of societal modes of politico-economic reproduction: that is, they determined how political alliances were formed and how power was transferred, how new members of the elite were recruited, and how economic extraction and political rule were extended and legitimated.

## II. Family Practices and Genealogies of Privilege

"The inheritor, the eldest son is the land (or the firm) made flesh" (Bourdieu, 1990 [1980]: 152).

The Bicker family archive in Amsterdam holds an emblematic document which testifies to both the Bickers' long representation in city government offices, and to the author Hendrik Bicker's pride in his family's record. Headed "Fourteen Generations Beginning with...", it spans a two-hundred-fifty year period from the 1400s to the 1680s, listing each Bicker male, his offices, the names of his wife or wives, his sons who also held office, and culminating with Hendrik himself, at that time an Oud-Schepen, a member of the magistracy (AGA 195: #36). The Bickers' is a particularly detailed example, but such documents are not unusual.<sup>15</sup> The regents excelled at these hybrid "office genealogies", which were at once means of family survival, bids for power, and glorious clan narratives.

Family heads, whether landed or mercantile, petty squire or ruler, were stirred by visions of their own ascendant lineages.<sup>16</sup> Paulus Teding van Berkhout (1609-72), a member of the

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when she has some choice over reproduction, and can use herself and her children as a traffic with the future" (Steedman, 1987: 68-9).

<sup>14</sup>They are absent, for example, from Giddens' The Nation-State and Violence (1985), Skocpol's States and Social Revolutions (1979), Mann's The Sources of Social Power (1986), Tilly's Coercion, Capital and European States (1990), Wallerstein's The Modern World System (1979), and (in spite of its title) Anderson's Lineages of the Absolutist State (1979).

<sup>15</sup>Later additions extend the line to 1772. Another especially rich example, drawn up by B. Huydecoper, lists the chronology of high offices filled by generations of Huydecoper men in Amsterdam from 1578 to 1749 (RU 67: #4).



Hague regency, typically reminded his children that they formed only "a link in a growing chain" of Van Berkhout generations, and that they should care for the wealth and possessions intended not only for their pleasure, but for the family's nageslacht (descendants).<sup>17</sup> The "social fact" of cathexis impelled early modern family heads to mortgage the futures of themselves and their kin.<sup>18</sup> Inheritance practices were particularly central in their attempts to construct or maintain a functioning patrilineage. The legal mechanisms of primogeniture and entail had spread throughout Europe, in response to pressure by landed elites who wanted to keep their estates together for family posterity, although the rules were not as stringently enforced in the Netherlands as in some other European countries.<sup>19</sup> Among the Dutch regent patriciate, great wealth and the relative mobility and divisibility of finance and merchant-capital stocks, major forms of regent assets, allowed daughters and younger sons to inherit some part of the patrimony. Nevertheless, the eldest son (or his functional substitute) was systematically preferred among both the landed gentry and urban patriciate, whether in inheritance of the family demesnes, or in filling the offices identified with the family, respectively. In both cases, father's and son's respective capacities to

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<sup>16</sup>The definition of "lineage" follows Plakans (1984: 213): "When analysed synchronically, it contains linked subsets of persons, all of whom are alive at the same time, recognize that they are descended from the same ancestor or have been brought into such a group by marriage or adoption, and express this sense of corporateness through common activities, rituals and behaviours that separate a particular subset from similar groups in other lineages. Analysed diachronically, the lineage (patrilineage, in this example) is understood: to have a "founder"; to persist in time either in the form of a single line, when each generation has only one male offspring, or in the form of branches, when there are several male offspring; and either to become extinct when males are no longer produced or to continue as a fixture in a community's population as a result of continuous production of males."

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Schmidt (1987: 133). See Stone and Stone (1986 [1984]: 79-91) for a witty discussion of indirect heirs and name-changing among the English landed elite: "a fiction that was a necessity if the ideal of family continuity was to be realized in practice" (91).

<sup>18</sup>The social-psychological mechanisms of identification with "the line" have been addressed at various levels of theoretical ambition and historical specificity. In The Politics of Reproduction (1981), feminist theorist Mary O'Brien hypothesizes a primal paternal reproductive anxiety, a desire for control over "the seed", as the cause of attempts by men to control women's reproduction. In my view, we are better served by a less grandiose, more historicized focus. Two exemplary Freudian texts are Elizabeth Wirth Marvick's The Young Richelieu. A Psychoanalytical Approach to Leadership (1983) and her Louis XIII: The Making of a King (1986).

<sup>19</sup>Primogeniture appeared in areas of France in the early 11th century as a response to a familially-driven fragmentation of holdings and patrimonies (Duby, 1976; Cooper, 1976: 252-76), and was increasingly combined with the entail of lands on a succession of tenants for life from the early sixteenth century (Thirsk, 1976). Among the early modern Dutch landed gentry, the best property went to the eldest son, but primogeniture was not ironclad (Marshall 1987). On primogeniture in general, see Gies and Gies (1987).

dispose of family property were legally circumscribed in favor of descendants (Haks 1982, 1988; Aalbers and Prak 1987; Marshall 1987).<sup>20</sup>

For the regents especially, office, rather than land, held the key to future family fortunes. Aspiring regent families sacrificed to get prospective heirs into office, if not in this generation, in the next. The path open to the would-be regent's son and heir was less formally codified than it was in France, where patrimonial privilege and office were also closely coupled to elite economic wellbeing and reputation, defining the route to inter-generational reproduction of family position, but where even high office could be bought and directly conveyed by deed of inheritance (Mousnier, 1971 [1945]; Giesey, 1977). In contrast, most high offices in the Netherlands could not be directly bought and sold, or formally inherited. Elites did buy minor but lucrative state offices for their progeny, such as the venal postmasterships, but they also sought to have prospective heirs appointed to non-venal offices, which lay at the outset of a conventionally understood career path, one which would end in a directorship of a privileged corporate body, such as the East Indies Company, a seat on the vroedschap (town council), or even access to the inner circle of the vroedschap, the burgemeesterschap (mayoralty). If all went well, the heir would eventually either ascend into the regency, or (if his father were already a regent) replace him as the family head and its political representative.<sup>21</sup> Of the first thirty-six Amsterdam vroedschap members in newly independent Holland (installed in 1578), only nine who had available male descendants or relatives were not succeeded by them at their deaths, a pattern which characterized the Amsterdam patriciate until the end of the early modern period (Elias, 1903-5: xlii; Tab. VII). Furthermore, for much of this period, nepotism was seen as perfectly acceptable: the eighteenth-century diarist who commented uncritically that Mayor Bicker of Amsterdam had earmarked the sinecure of vendumeester van schepen en koopmanschappen, "worth 6000 guilders a year," for his fourteen-year-old son Henrik appears to be typical (quoted in Van Nierop, 1939: 220). Positive normative expectations extended beyond the nuclear family to the wider kin network, and cut both ways. Hence Jacob van Citters, mayor of Middelburg, regularly answered letters from office-seekers

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<sup>20</sup>Primogeniture, entail and their functional substitutes have thus seemed to some commentators, such as Francis Bacon, to undermine paternal authority, but if the locus of family honor and paternal authority is understood to reside not in the individual or the nuclear family but in the lineage, necessitating that "the lineage should enjoy a wealth, dignity, and authority commensurate to its inherited status and right" (James, 1974: 184), it is less surprising that the strengthening of entail is generally accompanied by stronger patrilineal prerogatives. See Cooper (1976).

<sup>21</sup>This career pattern resembles those identified for other patrimonial elites. See for example Moreau on the Liege patricians (1978), Forster (1980) and Giesey (1977) on the ancien regime French bourgeoisie.

stamped with his own family tree, indicating the relationship of the petitioner to the mayor up to the sixth degree (Coumans, 1984: 103).

Those who aspired to family glory and who wanted to install or maintain their families in the sanctum of high office, also had to practice huwelijkspolitiek, the "politics of marriage": to marry well, and marry their children well. "Men frequently regarded marriage in terms of what it would do for their line" (1987: 51), concludes Sherrin Marshall, referring to the early modern Dutch landed gentry; the same was true of urban regents. Marriage gave a family normative claims on the allied family's patrimonial privileges and offices (which could, in the case of lesser offices, be directly acquired via dowries); it created a web of political supporters, and it polished family prestige -- factors which were important in helping families gain or maintain ascendancy.<sup>22</sup> Regent families thus kept careful genealogical records, not only of their own pedigrees, but of other office-holding families with which they had intermarried, and sometimes of those with which intermarriage was considered plausible. The powerful Backer family, for example, researched or collected the genealogies of 320 Amsterdam patrician families, many of which were related by marriage to the Backer clan, as well as drawing up huge chronological lists of Amsterdam families which had boasted one or more mayors from 1343 to 1727 (AGA PA172: #40-45, 104). The importance of marriage to elite and especially regent families was also evinced in the close management of children's marital prospects, culminating in complex and protracted negotiations between the family heads who were considering whether to consent to the alliance, giving rise to detailed contingency planning and regulative documents (AGA 195, #60, #61, #66, #73, #79).

If all parties sacrificed for "the lineage" in the regent family, the sacrifice was unevenly distributed along the lines of age and gender. Younger sons were systematically disadvantaged in comparison to eldest sons. The higher offices were traditionally reserved for the latter, even when a town charter did not limit the number of immediate family members that could sit on the town council, and younger sons were relegated to lesser offices, and roles as supporters and permanent understudies.<sup>23</sup> The agency of daughters was even more circumscribed. A marriageable daughter

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<sup>22</sup>For specific case studies which attest to the multiple functions of marriage for regent families, see among others De Jong (1985) on Gouda; Kooijmans (1985) on Hoorn; De Lange (1972) on Medemblik; Porta (1975) on Amsterdam; Prak (1985) on Leiden. The pioneering work on a familieregering ("familial regime"), one which rested on the sons-in-law of the family head, was Jorissen's (1887), for the town of Gorinchem. See also Vreede (1836).

<sup>23</sup>Els van Eyck van Heslinga drew my attention to one younger son's struggle to depart from the norm: an 18th-century case in Rotterdam, in which a younger brother in the Gevers family, who had temporarily filled his bankrupt older brother's vroedschap seat, tried to retain it when the latter returned from the East Indies (ARA 2.21.070). More typical "modes of exit" for younger sons included marrying into a regent family in another town (becoming the surrogate son and heir

could function as a medium of exchange and a guarantor of trust, enabling her father to retrieve his financial position, or to construct and consolidate politico-economic alliances with other men.<sup>24</sup> Her "virtue" symbolized the honor and integrity of both the patrimonial line from which she came and that which she would join and perpetuate; not surprisingly, women's sexuality and marital prospects were more closely regulated than men's.<sup>25</sup> In short, the rules of reproduction of the patrilineage elevated the position of men over that of women, and eldest over youngest, with the first rule superseding the second (Radcliffe-Brown 1952: Chapter 2). But it is important to stress that no one was exempt: the negative sanctions levelled at perceived mesalliances included those contracted by the head of the family himself.

There were certainly differences between the family practices of landed elites and the urban patriciate in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, both were characterized by patrilineal inheritance and marriage practices, whether focussed on retaining and expanding landed estates or on office, or both, like the noble dynasties of van Heeckeren, Bentinck or the Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, which "provided personnel for all the commanding posts of the military, ecclesiastical and judicial hierarchies" (Schama 1977: 76-7).<sup>26</sup> The ranking noble family, the House of Orange, which held vast landed holdings in Nassau, also asserted dynastic rights to property in the highest office of the land, the stadholderate. Beginning with William I, hailed as vader Vaderlands ("father of the Fatherland"), the Princes of Orange invoked the legitimating ideologies of paternal authority and dynasty in attempts to claim or consolidate the sovereign authority they insisted accompanied that office, and they drew on their marital alliances when seeking to extend their authority to new territorial or substantive domains (e.g. Poelhekke 1978: 151-53; Rowen 1988: 137). In this they were less successful than their continental royal counterparts, but not wholly so.

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if that family lacked one), or making enough money, generally in European or Indies trade, to found a collateral branch of the family, again in another town. It would be interesting to know whether the marriages and migrations of younger sons to other towns or provinces solidified wider geographic bonds among elites. The question, unanswerable at the moment, has obvious implications for nation-building.

<sup>24</sup>At times, this took a direct form, as when the prominent Amsterdam regent Corver married his daughter Maria Margaretha to his enemy Nicolaas Geelvinck as a peace offering. She was a rich gift: well-dowered, and 17 years younger than Geelvinck, who was a widower with five children. The marriage shifted Geelvinck into Corver's party, and culminated the latter's familial grip (Porta, 1975: 157-8). C. Schmidt's (1986) dissertation shows that when the heads of regent families were in financial straits, their daughters would marry wealthy but lower-status merchants. The new son-in-law would occupy a subaltern office by virtue of his marriage, but his son would take his place among the regency.

<sup>25</sup>Unlike younger sons, daughters had no options for exit. The Dutch regents were Protestant, and thus the cloister was closed to their women. For an English-language discussion of early modern Dutch views of women's sexuality, see Schama (1987: Chapter Six).

<sup>26</sup>For the landed elite in general, see Van Nierop (1984) and Marshall (1987: Chapter 3).

Orangist dynastic concerns and the stadholders' policies of international alliance and war that these concerns entailed persisted alongside, and in tension with, the power of the regent family regimes. Can we make sense of the history of the Dutch Republic, including its very survival as an independent state, without considering the charismatic and organizational role of the House of Orange in the war of independence against Spain? the impact on Dutch politics of Willem III's dynastic marriage to his niece Mary Stuart and their ascension to the English throne as "William and Mary" at the Glorious Revolution? Willem IV's capacity to threaten the Amsterdam regents with English intervention, to induce them to agree to his reinstatement as hereditary stadholder with expanded executive powers? Surely not. Nor can the ebb and flow of regent power be understood without reference to the rhythms of Orange family life, particularly the birth of posthumous children, and the minorities of heirs and attendant regencies that marked the two so-called "stadholderless eras".

As patriarchal family and lineal networks and ideologies were woven into the web of patrimonial power, they constituted a Dutch equivalent of what the French historian Ralph Giesey has termed a "dynastic officialdom" (1977: 282) and what one might call, more generally, a "familial state". Let me clarify what I mean by the term. First, as I've just noted, gendered familial criteria were constitutive of political authority. This was still an era, in Ozment's memorable phrase, "when fathers ruled". Both the regents and the Princes of Orange grounded their political claims on the basis of hereditary qualification and patriarchal power, rather than on the basis of adherence to rational-legal procedure or other substantive standards of justice.<sup>27</sup> Second, the important political offices and privileges were distributed to men on the basis of their family ties and position. Sitting burgomasters allotted the higher city offices to family members, and lesser ones to their clients (Elias 1923: 201-2, 1937: 116-17; Vries 1977: 338-40), as well as exercising jurisdiction over appointments to key positions at the provincial and Generality level, such as deputies to the States-General and Raad van State. Amsterdam burgomasters had more offices to dispense (over 3200 in the mid-eighteenth century) than other towns did (Bussemaker 1907), but their general procedure otherwise typified that of burgomasters elsewhere. In addition, many offices or privileges carried *de facto* rights to dispense or sell other privileges (Swart 1949).<sup>28</sup> The stadholders and their lieutenants also sought to build familial patronage networks

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<sup>27</sup>With reference to early modern England, see Schochet's (1975) discussion of the mobilization of patriarchal doctrine as a defense of Stuart absolutism, and Pateman's (1988: Chapter 4) commentary and revision, which includes the principle of gender.

<sup>28</sup>The States-General tried to deal with the perceived expansion of office sales with a 1715 *plakaat* against "taking forbidden gifts" and "corruption in the government" (Groot Placaet-Boeck 1638-1796 v: 684). The directive proved unenforceable, and the States-General eventually

with the offices and privileges under their jurisdiction (Gabriels 1989: 145-68, 202-22, 330, 361). In the case of the position of the stadholders, who were traditionally from the House of Orange, the potency of family criteria in state recruitment is obvious.

Thus family representation in the state extended both horizontally, such as in the town of Zutphen in 1747, when six of the twelve city aldermen belonged to one extended family, and over time, such as in Hoorn, where the Breedhoff family held the principal magistracies and postmastership for three generations (Schama, 1977: 50-2). Both tendencies were exemplified in Amsterdam. Between 1698 and 1748 only 40 regents held the nine annually rotating senior offices of the city, and those regents were mainly members of the Corver clan (Geyl, 1949: 317). Joan Corver had assumed the leading position in the town council after the death of stadholder Willem III in 1702, at the outset of the second stadholderless period, and the number of his family members holding the office of mayor rose quickly: in 1707, of the nine sitting mayors, five belonged to the Corver family (Elias, 1923: 195). The Corvers intermarried with the Van Bambeeck, Hooft, Munter, and Van den Bempden families over the next 30 years, and the ramifying bloc held power until 1747-48 (Elias, 1903-05: cxxxix, Tab. 3-5; Porta, 1975).

Familial factors even affected the size of the nascent state. At times regents sought to include more of their male relatives by means of expanding state bodies beyond the traditional limits set by civic charters.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, in many eighteenth-century towns, demographic shortfalls of men from "suitable" regent families produced dramatic and persistent vacancies in the town councils, rather than any broadening or relaxation of the gendered, familial criteria for qualification.<sup>30</sup> Family position and family ties were not the sole determinant of state size, of course, but were potent enough to override traditional limitations. Finally, as we shall see in Section III, family principles were a major factor in structuring the articulation among the state's component parts.

In such a state, we would expect to find characteristically gendered, familial patterns of conflict and alliance. Recruitment of relatives met with resistance from opposing, often newly-displaced, cliques of regents, and was accompanied by multi-generational conflicts among families

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endorsed the traffic by imposing special taxes, or ambtgelden, on office-holders upon assumption of offices, in essence taking a cut of venal transactions.

<sup>29</sup>An outraged 1736 letter to the Holland Raad van State from Balthasar Huydecoper called attention to attempts by the Texel regents to do just that: Huydecoper accused the regents of appointing excess magistrates in order to incorporate their family members, and he pointed out in no uncertain terms that they were violating the town's 1509 charter (RU 67, #377). Femme Gaastra pointed me to the Huydecoper family archive.

<sup>30</sup>In some cases, the vacancies were filled via recruitment of burghers married to regent daughters. More often, the regents simply recognized and accepted the shrinkage of the state body.

inside the state. In the Amsterdam vroedschap, the rivalry between the Bickers and the hard-nosed Calvinist colonial merchant Reynier Pauw and his sons' faction continued throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup> "Two houses, both alike in dignity..." but even more in ambition. The family fault-lines of the Amsterdam vroedschap recrystallized in the early eighteenth century in the famous Sautijn Scandal, when a clique led by burgomaster Jeronimus de Haze de Gregorio, nephew of the well-connected Joannes Hudde, and opposed to the ascendant Corver family, exposed the extortionate office sales of Willem Sautijn, the brother of burgomaster Nicolaas Sautijn (member of the Van Bambeeck family clan and staunch Corverite), and his associate burgomaster Jan Six, also a member of the ruling Corver faction. Sautijn and Six had sold offices for thousands of guilders and divided the proceeds between themselves. In 1717-24, Sautijn had made a minimum of 22,820 fl. via office sales, including many in the East Indies Company. During the long and acrimonious trial (1724-31), many prominent regents were found guilty of selling offices, including burgomaster Jan Trip; Pieter Six, schepen and later burgomaster; and Bonifacius Bisschop and Arend van der Burch, both members of the Admiralty Board. Nicolaas Sautijn even sold a gravedigger's office for 8,000 guilders in 1721, which may have been the cause of his not being elected burgomaster again after 1725. In an ironic twist, De Haze himself was found to have sold offices in 1723: among others, the office of East Indies Company boekhouder van de equipage for the tidy sum of 16,000 guilders (AGA #5061, 641A). These leading lights of the regency ended up in court not because their actions were unusual, but because cycles of family conflict over leverage in the town council bared habitual but nominally illegal practices.

When access to a city council seat had become definitive of regent family position, "family feuds" in the urban patriciates became more heated, eventually provoking an array of settlements in a number of cities. The distribution of city offices was formalized by means of written succession rules (contracten van correspondentie), in which the regents laid out systems by which all eligible elite families would take turns getting mayoralties, East Indies Company directorships, and other corporate privileges. The contracts of correspondance were a brilliant institutional solution to the problem: they protected specific families' stake in an office, and guaranteed that all regent families' office genealogies would continue unbroken. Such contracts existed in Hoorn from the 1720s (Kooijmans, 1985), in Gouda from 1748 (De Jong, 1985), in Leiden from 1702-21 and 1741 on (Prak, 1985: 264), in Amsterdam from 1752 (AGA #5059, 93), and elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup>For the rivalry between the Bickers and Pauws, see Elias (1923).

<sup>32</sup>In Enkhuizen, in 1730, a typical agreement noted the desire of the regents "not to exclude any of the gentlemen-councillors from the directing of affairs" (cited in Kooijmans, 1985: 211). At

contracts of correspondance regulated the membership in and control over corporate bodies, which were the conditions for capital accumulation, political power, and family honor.

The regents' embrace of politico-economic privilege and office was closely associated with a turn to passive rentiership.<sup>33</sup> The fortunes of Leiden regents from 1700-80 are relatively typical in composition. More than 62% of their capital was invested in state bonds, and less than 1% in trade or production. By contrast, Leiden merchants and manufacturers invested 22% of their capital in trade or production (Prak 1985: 117). The tilt toward rentier status was accompanied by the admission of fewer merchants into the town councils from the late seventeenth century.<sup>34</sup> Regent families had successfully laid claim to political institutions, which became the *de facto* inheritable property of various lineages. Intentionally or not, the male representatives of these families had succeeded in constituting a state which had the functional effect of reproducing their patrilineages.<sup>35</sup>

### III. Decline and Fall

"Is this thy soft Family love  
Thy cruel Patriarchal pride  
Planting thy family alone,  
Destroying all the World beside." (Blake)

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times this system was less effective in suppressing factionalism, such as in Haarlem (De Jongste, 1985: 177-81).

<sup>33</sup>This position was first argued convincingly by Roorda (1964), and his findings were expanded by Van Dijk and Roorda (1971). See also Burke (1974).

<sup>34</sup>Of the twenty-four new mayors in Amsterdam during 1718-48, for example, only two were active merchants (Elias 1903-5: 238). The percent of burgomasters and councillors with no recorded occupation (who are conventionally assumed to live off their rents), and who owned a country seat, also rose over time, although not monotonically. There was a partial rollback of the percentage of rentiers and owners of country seats in 1672-1702 and 1748-95, due to Stadholders' interventions into the composition of the town council during national crises occasioned by attempted invasions (in 1672 and 1747) (Burke 1974). At those times, the absolutist tendency of patrimonial governance came to the fore, and Stadholders were able to replace ruling regent families with others more sympathetic to Orangist preoccupations.

<sup>35</sup>Some Amsterdam families were unusually successful in the quest for the wealth, power, and prestige that accompanied family privilege and continuity. Ideally, we would be able to specify quantitatively the practices associated with the preservation of some patrilineages and the extinction of others. While I am engaged in some analysis along these lines, nothing will be definitive until the five meters of documents pertaining to Amsterdam regent appointments to state offices (1493-1813) are sifted. Thanks to Mr. Dudok van Hell for introducing me to these documents, available in the Amsterdam Gemeente Archief (AGA #5013), and for dissuading me from doing anything about them.



When corporate family cliques captured offices and privileges in estatist patrimonial political economies, the effect on state policy and the political economy hinged on who they were and what they wanted: whether they were merchant capitalists, feudal landlords, landed capitalist aristocrats, or a plurality of elites in conflict or coalition, whether they wanted to expand colonial trade, or dreamed of continental territorial conquest. This is not to argue for an ahistorical "instrumental theory of the state", but to recognize the triangle of patriarchal family, dominant class, and political privilege that characterized early modern patrimonial systems in general and the Dutch case in particular. So in seventeenth-century Holland, when the merchant-capitalist Bicker family controlled the apparatus at the Amsterdam mayors' disposal, including the Indies Companies (when without too much hyperbole, one could say that a single family came closest to ruling the world) -- then Dutch dynastic officialdom favored the explosive development of mercantile capitalism on a world scale, advantaging Dutch elites and the Dutch population (but not the peoples of Brazil, Africa, India and Indonesia). So what went awry for the Netherlands? The usual explanation of the decline of the Dutch political economy in the eighteenth century attributes it to increased European economic competition, especially from England, and external military pressures.<sup>36</sup> No doubt these factors should figure as parts of any complete explanation. Yet the above arguments also point beyond, to an understanding of how Dutch statemaking and the exercise of power were also undermined from within, in part by family practices and ideologies, and the accumulation and strengthening of privilege and position they made possible.

We have seen that multiple family fiefdoms provoked cyclical feuding and, ultimately, interfamily settlements which established equilibrium in the familial state. In turn, these settlements reaffirmed and stabilized the localism of regent power structures. Taxes, naval policy, foreign and colonial policy remained subject to regent control, conducted via offices which the regents constituted, appointed and filled, and state development took on a pronounced local cast. Compare the over 3000 offices in Amsterdam alone to the relatively low total of central state offices, an estimated 100-200 in the early seventeenth century and only 300 in 1800 (with some of those newer offices actually appointed and paid by the provinces) (Gosman, 1988; 'T Hart, 1988: 312-4). Particularly important were the naval and colonial apparatuses, which formed the political basis of Dutch mercantile strength and of the impressive military force the Netherlands could bring to bear on European and colonial foes. The regents and their provincial representatives established and headed the five duplicate admiralties, responsible for the collection of customs in their respective areas and for maintaining the navy (funded by customs proceeds), as well as the

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<sup>36</sup>Historians are still debating the character and timing of the Dutch decline. Van Dillen (1970) and Israel (1989) helpfully discuss sectoral trends in an international context, although neither attempts to integrate the phenomenon of economic decline with a focus on political shifts.

multiple, redundant constituent chambers of the chartered companies, which were the major shapers of colonial policy.<sup>37</sup> Contemporaries argued that the overlapping naval and colonial organization was cumbersome, and deplored the inflated expense due to its administrative costs ('T Hart 1988: 325; Steur 1984). But the localism of the Dutch political economy was not a significant disadvantage at the outset of the early modern period: other European countries faced similar situations (Andrews 1984; Acerra and Meyer 1987), and the Dutch towns and their hinterlands were both relatively extensive and cohesive, and largely controlled by merchant capitalist families, rather than by landed feudal dynasties or unstable elite coalitions.<sup>38</sup> By the latter part of the early modern period, however, when the Dutch were no longer operating from an advantaged position in the world political economy, this structure magnified the tensions occasioned by the decline of Dutch entrepot trade and the rise of British manufacturing. Each admiralty responded to these pressures by lowering customs rates, hoping to wean trade away from its counterparts.<sup>39</sup> Estimates of evasions of the customs range from 30-40% in Amsterdam and Rotterdam to almost 80% in Zeeland (Oldewelt 1953; Joh. de Vries 1958; Westermann 1948). The rate of evasion appears to have risen as well (Joh. de Vries 1958: 225-6), contributing to a drop in revenues, and to an insecure and inadequate supply of funds for the navy.<sup>40</sup> Thus while the English navy doubled its tonnage from 1714 to 1760, deploying up to 10,000 men in peacetime and over 100,000 at the time of the American War (Brewer 1989: 33), the Dutch navy

<sup>37</sup>In the Amsterdam chamber of the East Indies Company (VOC), at least 82% of the 77 men who served as directors at some time between 1748 and 1794 were burgomasters, magistrates, or served in some other capacity on the vroedschap. Twenty-three (30%) were merchants or manufacturers, while 38 (49%) had no recorded occupation, and were thus almost certainly rentiers. At least 52, or 68% owned a country seat. Thus while there were proportionately more merchants and manufacturers in the VOC directorship than in the Amsterdam town council at large, the figure had dropped dramatically from the 100% of the VOC's inaugural years (Adams 1990). The same shift characterized other chambers. Family ties continued to be the primary mechanism of transmitting control: in Rotterdam, for example, 66% of the directors stood in relation of son, father or grandfather to one another. Twenty-six directors were succeeded by a son, son-in-law or grandson (Kors 1988: 16).

<sup>38</sup>Jonathan Israel makes these two points forcefully in his excellent Dutch Primacy in World Trade 1585-1740 (1989).

<sup>39</sup>The customs were bringing in an average of 1.5 million guilders a year in the early eighteenth century, less than the seventeenth-century average of 1.7 million (Fritschy 1988: 35).

<sup>40</sup>Although the customs duties, or konvoeien en licenten, are most important here because of their direct impact on naval readiness, it is worth noting that the other important indirect tax remained regionalized and subject to local regent control. Excise duties (gemeene middelen) more than quadrupled the price of basic commodities, and raised the price of Dutch wages and exported goods substantially (Aalbers 1977: 85). While the regencies structured and appointed the offices of tax receivers, there was little chance of instituting uniform and bureaucratically administered excise duties, or redressing the regressive character of the tax (Sickenga 1864; Diederiks 1977).

was increasingly undermanned and underequipped, unskilled and technologically outdistanced (De Jonge 1858-62 iv: 1-440). The chartered company directorates, merged with the regent elites, were subject to similar dynamics, and proved equally impervious to reform from within and vulnerable to challenges from without.<sup>41</sup> The changing class character and increasing familial exclusivity of the regent familieregeringen curtailed state support of domestic manufacture and infrastructure as well as trade, which was the lifeblood of the Dutch political economy.<sup>42</sup>

The formalization of the proprietary claims of regent families to state offices evoked struggles for change which gathered steam in local movements across the Netherlands in 1747-48. For the first time, organized pressures against the regents emerged from the burgher (burgerlijk) strata "just below". Reform movements in the northern provinces sought to eliminate office sales (Swart 1949: 77-8); those in Holland and the south, such as that of Rotterdam, demanded that office sales be opened to a wider public, with proceeds going not to the regents, but to a truly public purse (Loveringh 1747; Groot Placaet-Boeck 1638-1796 vii: 106-8, 828-9). As elite families embraced their piece of the polity more tightly, the legitimating political symbolism of "heredity, birth and blood" conflicted sharply with the newer Enlightenment and popular attitudes of "merit, utility and reason" pervading eighteenth-century Europe. While an analysis of the scope of the Patriot Revolution (1782-7) lies beyond the scope of this argument, it is striking to note that the sequence of municipal revolutions, led by small merchants and manufacturers, challenged the position of both the urban patriciates and the Prince of Orange (Te Brake, 1989; Palmer, 1959i: 364-70), in part on the basis of the familiarly-loaded charge of "nepotism". The stadholder and the regents joined together to resist democratic municipal elections and the elimination of their patrimonial prerogatives, and the "Dutch Spring" (Lente) was violently suppressed in a counterrevolution paid for by a loan of 90,000 pounds by the English state, and carried out by Prussian mercenaries. The conflicted and debilitated state fell to the French invasion of 1795, and was dismantled following a radical Patriot (French-sponsored) coup d'etat in 1798.<sup>43</sup> The local family regimes, suppressed by the revolution, were reinstated after the French occupation was

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<sup>41</sup>Naval buildup would have necessitated, at minimum, the introduction of enforcement mechanisms for corporate bodies that lagged in their payments or refused to pay altogether, and eventually the elimination of those intermediary bodies. Revamping the structure of colonial policy would have required changing the terms of the Union of Utrecht: its allotment of sovereignty to the provincial States, and the system of representation by which the urban regents constituted the policy-making members.

<sup>42</sup>For an extended discussion of this point, see Adams (1990).

<sup>43</sup>For complementary English-language surveys of the period, see Leeb (1973) and Schama (1977).

over, and endured in some towns, such as Amsterdam, until definitively broken by the constitutional revolution of 1848.

The failure of the Dutch elites to innovatively respond to politico-economic decay and threat may seem puzzling. Certainly the regents and the stadholders were aware of politico-economic problems, and collectively considered ways to address them (e.g. Hovy 1966). Yet the regents resisted substantial change in social arrangements, particularly when it involved loosening their grip on office and privilege.<sup>44</sup> One plausible view is that, in refusing to consider restructuring or surrendering their privileges, the heads of elite families were acting with their own, or their families', or their class' economic benefit in view -- what's key is the isolation of "the economic" -- a position associated with neo-utilitarian (rational-choice) theory and certain forms of Marxism. However, it should be clear by now that patrimonial social arrangements are incompatible with principles of individual cost-benefit accounting: actors are not able to identify consistently net private economic gains or losses.<sup>45</sup> In addition, some of the goals desired by patrimonial family heads were economically counterproductive<sup>46</sup> -- the actions of elites who wanted to hang onto patrimonial prerogatives either in the face of more lucrative opportunities or obsolescence remain inexplicable within the theory (see for example Gieseey 1977).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>The "enlightened" reformer Simon van Slingelandt, secretary to the Raad van State and later Grand Pensionary (1727-36), proposed the most thoroughgoing set of reforms: that the grip of the regencies on offices be loosened, that rights to policy-making, taxation and adjudication of urban and provincial differences be vested in "neutral third parties" (i.e. central state officials). Slingelandt's proposal was taken up by the Grote Vergadering of 1717, the second constitutional convention in the history of the Republic, but no changes could be agreed upon, and none were adopted (Schutte 1988: 276-79; Veenendaal 1980: 28).

<sup>45</sup>More careful than some, North (1981) is careful to restrict the applicability of the theory to instances in which net private economic gains to actors are clearly discernable. In general, rational-choice theory is consistently applicable only to the economic costs and benefits that actors face under competitive conditions, given a specific set of goals and institutional arrangements. See Parsons' on the logical problem of "given", "random", or "exogenous" ends or preferences in utilitarianism (1968 [1937] i: 64).

<sup>46</sup>This is obviously a complicated problem. In practice, many neo-utilitarians deal with it by reinterpreting actors' goals after the fact, categorizing them as rational. "It is important to note in this context that the economic approach is essentially tautological and accommodates all sets of values we care to include and all possible constraints," cautions Eggertsson (1990), himself sympathetic to this approach.

<sup>47</sup>If we assume that regent family practices reduce to neo-utilitarian strategies, we run the risk of putting the causal cart before the horse. This also holds true when the concept of neo-utilitarian strategy is given a Marxian twist, and introduced under the guise of "class interest". In The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (1972 [1884]), for example, Engels argues that the nuclear family, and associated systems of inheritance, came about and persists because it serves the function of reproducing private property, and thus the dominant class. This may be an effect of the nuclear family, but there is no evidence that it was or is a cause. Even within the

Alternatively, elite family heads may have been unwilling to reshape certain received forms of politico-economic privilege because they deemed them best for their children, whom they loved. This approach carves out a theoretical space for the causal role of socially-structured affect, but tends to lead to anachronistic romanticization of elite families. Certainly some fathers and husbands did love their children, and their wives, and wanted to secure their futures, as E. P. Thompson has written, "to try to throw forward some grid which will support them" (1976: 346). Yet (*pace* Thompson) the metaphor of the grid is aptly double-edged; grids also restrict and entrap. The boundaries of the normative structures that patterned family social position are as always most evident when transgressed. Parents were prepared to punish or disown children who threatened family position and honor, and the high courts to back them up.<sup>48</sup>

Neither the "romantic" nor the "rational-choice" perspective problematizes gender and age power relations within the family, or enables us to deal with the traces of such relations in politics. Instead of taking either of these analytical paths, I want to insist on the nonrational, socioemotional component in our ideal-typical motivational set of the patrimonial family head. His ideological identification with the honor of the lineage was central to his self-representation, and was constitutive of his dual desire to both support his children economically and emotionally, and to deploy them as pawns. It was embedded in the patrimonial package of family, dominant class and state, and embodied in genealogies of office. My point here has not been to explain the genesis of this belief system, which merits an article in itself, but to begin to draw out its explanatory possibilities, and (in the following section) the implications for theories of early modern European politico-economic development.

#### IV. Conclusion

States can be said to be "in the making" when properly political functions are anchored in "a relatively centralized, differentiated, and distinct organization that controls the principal

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terms of the theory, Engels cannot explain one key step: why fathers should want to pass on their property to their "own" (biological) sons -- anybody's sons could serve the economic purpose. This nonrational preference remains exogenous to, and inexplicable within, Marxism as it is currently understood.

<sup>48</sup>See Schama (1987: 441-45). Note that parents did not generally arrange marriages, but they did exercise veto rights over their children's choice of spouse. The point can be illustrated by another example from the history of the Bicker clan. In 1650, the Amsterdam burgomaster Andries Bicker, who had refused his consent to the proposed marriage of his 26-year-old son Gerard to Alida Koninks on the grounds that the Koninks' social status and fortune was too far below the Bickers', brought a case against his defiant son before the magistrates of the Hoge Raad, who decided in the father's favor. Gerard and Alida finally married in 1656, after both Bicker parents were dead *and* after Gerard had asked the Raad, in loco lineagensis, to reverse its decision, and been successful (Smidt and Gall, 1985: 37-9). Only in 1809, after the fall of the Dutch *ancien regime*, were children legally allowed veto rights over their parents' choice of spouse.

concentrated means of coercion within a contiguous and clearly-bounded territory" (Tilly, 1985). Then the more "developed" the state, the more that political activities are organized in specific institutions, and the more that roles in the state sector are handed out according to a set of distinct, specialized requirements, rather than according to incumbents' roles in other institutions (Eisenstadt, 1963: 8-10; 1966: 3) -- including the family.<sup>49</sup> In patrimonial systems, I have been suggesting, both the relationship among state positions and the legitimation of the nascent state are in part familially defined. Thus patrimonial systems should be conceptually distinguished from both rational-legal bureaucratic systems, and patronage systems, in which holders of offices are recruited largely according to particularistic -- including familial -- criteria but in which offices themselves are bureaucratically structured. Patrimonial systems have their own sui generis characteristics and developmental dynamics.

(FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

The differentiated development of a political structure does not necessarily make it "functional" or even viable: states can be unmade as well, along the same dimensions, again, familial ones. In the Dutch case, the growing urgency of the demands placed on the patrimonial state by foreign economic competition and military threat encouraged endogenous devolutionary tendencies. Economic resources, power and legitimacy flowed to particularistic regent familial regimes at the expense of the overall politico-economic structure in which those local regimes were embedded, however insecurely. The extent of coordination among key state elements --the urban and provincial governments, the regents and the stadholder, the multiple family regimes -- declined, and processes of politico-economic disintegration set in, rendering the Dutch state more vulnerable and undermining its adaptability to external pressures. Had politico-economic privileges and offices not functioned as the patrimony of elite families, I would argue, counterfactually, reformers would have been more capable of introducing measures to address politico-economic pressures at home and abroad, before the epochal revolutionary upheavals of the 1780s presented another, more drastic, solution.

My claim, that gendered family practices imparted specific dynamics to Dutch societal development, is necessarily an open one, calling for comparative study. One set of contrasting claims would revolve around other transitional ancien regime, or patrimonial, elites, whose capacity to accumulate economic resources hinged on their membership in and control of corporate

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<sup>49</sup>For helpful discussions of dimensions of state development, see Tilly (1990); Eisenstadt (1963: 26-9), and Parsons (1960; 1966: 21-5). However, none of these texts takes gender into account as a structural principle.

bodies. Were they recruited into and did they exercise control over those bodies in part due to their entwined statuses as men and as current or prospective family heads, as were the Dutch regents and stadholders? Did the lack of differentiation between elite families and state privileges limit politico-economic development in similar ways? These questions suggest a restructuring of research agendas into the relations between the dynastic dynamics of patrimonial rulers and elites, and the consequences of those dynamics for state formation and policy. An equally important comparative claim would be, of course, that innovative elite family practices and attitudes contributed to the flight from patrimonial privilege in seventeenth-century England, and helped stabilize political power there in the eighteenth century. I would have to show that family practices were one source of the English elite's notorious longevity, the comparative stability of the organization of political power and evolutionary changes in state government. In any case, one implication of my argument here, if it is correct, is that the variability in the central trajectories of patrimonial societies, whether development or devolution, can be explained in part by variations in gendered family practices, such as purchase of venal office for the males in the family, patrilineal inheritance of privileges, and dynastic intermarriage and dynastic claims.

Figure 1  
 State Structures: Schematic Typology

|                           |              | STRUCTURE OF POSITIONS |                            |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
|                           |              | Familial               | Non-Familial               |
| PRINCIPLES OF RECRUITMENT | Familial     | Patrimonialism         | Patronage Systems          |
|                           | Non-Familial | X                      | Rational-Legal Bureaucracy |



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