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0521462479 - A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective

Edited by Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen

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In the celebrated words of Sir William Temple, the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces was ‘the fear of some, the envy of others, and the wonder of all their neighbours’. This book looks at the history of the Dutch Republic from a comparative perspective, and provides the first comparative study of key issues in Dutch history from the late sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

Contributors examine political, cultural, economic, and social developments in the Netherlands in an interrelated way, and in doing so sheds new light on historical developments in other parts of west and central Europe. In contrast with previous comparative studies in European early modern history, this book concentrates on comparisons with the central belt of Europe running from north Italy through southern Germany, Flanders, the Dutch Republic, and England. An editorial introduction and conclusion place the individual chapters within a coherent framework.

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The Dutch Republic in European Perspective

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Edited by

Karel Davids

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

and

Jan Lucassen

International Institute of Social History Amsterdam



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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

First published 1995

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

A miracle mirrored: the Dutch Republic in European
perspective/edited by Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index

ISBN 0 521 46247 9

1. Netherlands – Politics and government – 1556–1815
 2. Netherlands – Relations – Europe
 3. Europe – Relations – Netherlands
 4. Political culture – Netherlands
 5. Netherlands – Foreign relations – 1556–1815
 6. Netherlands – Commerce – History
- I. Davids, Karel II. Lucassen, Jan
DJ155.M57 1995
949.2–dc20 94-45616 CIP
ISBN 0 521 46247 9 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2004

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Dr Wiebe Bergsma

Senior Research Fellow at the Fryske Akademie in
Leeuwarden (The Netherlands)

W. Bergsma (1955), studied history and cultural anthropology at Groningen University. He taught history at the University of Leiden and since 1985 has been historian for the early modern period at the Fryske Akademie. He specialises in the history of religion of early modern Europe. His books include *For uwz lân, wyv en bern. De patriottentijd in Friesland* (1987 edited) and *De wereld volgens Abel Eppens. Een Ommelander boer uit de zestiende eeuw* (1988).

Dr Marc Boone

Senior Research Associate National Fund for Scientific
Research Belgium and Lecturer in Medieval History at
the University of Gent (Belgium)

M. Boone (1955) studied history at the University of Gent, where he is now a lecturer. He is a specialist in the social and political history of the late Middle Ages. His books include *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen ca. 1384 – ca. 1453. Een sociaalpolitieke studie van een staatsvormingsproces* (1990).

Prof Dr Karel Davids

Professor of Social and Economic History at the Free
University in Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

C. A. Davids (1952) studied social and economic history at the University of Leiden. He was lecturer in social and political history at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam from 1978 to 1988, research-fellow of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences at the

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University of Leiden and since 1994 has been professor of social and economic history at the Free University in Amsterdam. His books include *Zeewezen en wetenschap: De wetenschap en de ontwikkeling van de navigatietechniek in Nederland tussen 1585 en 1815* (1986), *Dieren en Nederlanders. Zeven eeuwen lief en leed* (1989) and *The Dutch Economy in the Golden Age* (1993) (co-edited with Leo Noordegraaf).

Dr Marjolein 't Hart

Lecturer in Social and Economic History at the
University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

M.C. 't Hart (1955) studied social and economic history at the University of Groningen and Trinity College, Dublin. She wrote her PhD thesis for the University of Leiden with the support of a fellowship from the New School for Social Research in New York. She is the author of *The Making of a Bourgeois State: War, Politics and Finance during the Dutch Revolt* (1993). At present she teaches at the University of Amsterdam.

Prof Dr Jan Lucassen

Head of the Department of Research and Publications of
the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam
and Professor of Social History at the Free University in
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

J. Lucassen (1947) studied social and economic history at the University of Leiden. He taught history at a teacher training college, was (senior) lecturer in Social and Economic History at the University of Utrecht from 1974 to 1988, and is now head of the Department of Research and Publications of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. Since 1991 he has held a private chair of Social History at the Free University in Amsterdam. His books include *Migrant Labour in Europe 1600–1900: The Drift to the North Sea* (Dutch edition 1984, English edition 1987) and, with Rinus Pennix, *Nieuwkomers, nakomelingen, Nederlanders* (revised edition 1994).

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Dr Olaf Mörke

Lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of
Giessen (Germany)

O. Mörke (1952) studied history at the University of Marburg and is now lecturer at the University of Giessen. He is a specialist in the early modern religious and political history of Germany and the Netherlands. His books include *Rat und Bürger in der Reformation* (1983) and “*Stathouder*” oder “*Staethouder*”: *Die Oranier und Ihr Hof in der politisch-gesellschaftlichen Kultur der Republik der Vereinigten Niederlande im 17. Jahrhundert* (due to appear 1995).

Dr Henk van Nierop

Senior Lecturer in History at the University of
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

H. van Nierop (1949) studied history at the University of Amsterdam, where he is senior lecturer in history. He specialises in the history of the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His books include *Beeldenstorm en burgerlijk verzet in Amsterdam* (1978) and *The Nobility of Holland: From Knights to Regents, 1500–1650* (Dutch edition 1984, English edition 1992).

Prof Dr Leo Noordegraaf

Professor of Social and Economic History at the
University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

L. Noordegraaf (1949) studied philosophy and history at the Free University in Amsterdam. He was lecturer and since 1987 has been professor of economic history and since 1989 also professor of social history at the University of Amsterdam. His books include *Hollands welvaren? Levensstandaard in Holland 1450–1650* (1985) and *De Gave Gods. De pest in Holland vanaf de late middeleeuwen* (1988).

Prof Dr Michael North

Professor of Medieval and Modern History at the
University of Kiel (Germany)

M. North (1954) studied history and slav languages in Giessen. He is professor of medieval and modern history at the Christian-Albrecht University of Kiel (Germany). He is a specialist in monetary and

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financial history and of the history of commerce and culture of the early modern period. His books include *Geldumlauf und Wirtschaftskonjunktur im südlichen Ostseeraum an der Wende der Neuzeit (1440–1570)* (1990), *Kunst und Kommerz im Goldenen Zeitalter. Zur Sozialgeschichte der niederländischen Malerei im 17. Jahrhundert* (1992), *Northwestern Europe in the World Economy 1750–1950* (1993) and *Das Geld und seine Geschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (1994).

Prof Dr Maarten Prak

Professor of Social and Economic History at the
University of Utrecht (The Netherlands)

M. Prak (1955) studied social and economic history at the University of Utrecht and worked there as a research-fellow of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Since 1993 he has been professor of social and economic history at the University of Utrecht. He specialises in the socio-political history of the Netherlands. Among his books are *Gezeten burgers. De elite in een Hollandse stad: Leiden 1700–1780* (1985) and *De bloem der natie. Adel en patriciaat in de Noordelijke Nederlanden* (co-edited with Johan Aalbers, 1987).

Prof William A. Speck

Professor of Modern History
at the University of Leeds (UK)

W.A. Speck (1938) studied history in Oxford and is fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He taught at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, was professor of history at the University of Hull and since 1984 has been professor of modern history at the University of Leeds. He is a specialist in the early modern history of Britain. His books include *Society and Literature in England 1700–1760* (1983), *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (1988) and *A Concise History of Britain* (1993).

Prof Dr Margaret Spufford

Professor of History at the Roehampton Institute,
London (UK)

H.M. Spufford (1935) was a research scholar at the Department of Local English History at the University of Leicester. She was an

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honorary lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Keele, before becoming an ESRC senior research-fellow first at Keele, then at Cambridge. Since the beginning of 1994, she has been professor of history at the Roehampton Institute, London. She is a specialist in the social and cultural history of England of the early modern period. Her books include *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1974), *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (1981), and *The Great Reclotting of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (1984).

Dr Peter Spufford

Reader in Economic History at the University of
Cambridge (UK)

P. Spufford (1934), studied history in Cambridge and was reader in history at the University of Keele and since 1979 has been reader in economic history and fellow of Queens' College at the University of Cambridge. He is a specialist in financial and monetary history. His books include *Monetary Problems and Policies in the Burgundian Netherlands* (1970), *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (1986) and *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (1988).

Prof Dr Jan Luiten van Zanden

Professor of Social and Economic History at the
University of Utrecht (The Netherlands)

J. L. van Zanden (1955) studied economics and history at the Free University in Amsterdam. He was lecturer at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, professor at the Free University in Amsterdam and has been professor of social and economic history at the University of Utrecht since 1993. He is author of *De economische ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw in de negentiende eeuw 1800–1914* (1985), *The Rise and Decline of Holland's Economy* (Dutch edition 1991, English edition 1993) and, with R.T. Griffiths, *De economische geschiedenis van Nederland in de twintigste eeuw* (1989).

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In the spring of 1987, Eric Fischer, then director of the International Institute of Social History (IISH) and of the Netherlands Economic History Archives (NEHA), convened a group of younger social and economic historians to discuss the problems of the profession as he saw them in general, but in particular in the Netherlands. During the following discussions, two main points of concern proved to be shared by the participants. These appeared to be a dearth of international comparisons and a lack of communication and interchange of research findings between the various branches of historical scholarship.

These concerns were worked out in a brochure, written by Jan Luiten van Zanden and the two editors of this volume and published in 1988 (see Davids, Lucassen and Van Zanden, *De Nederlandse geschiedenis* and 'Schaduwboksen'). In the form of a provocative rewriting of Dutch history, starting in the present and reaching backwards to the mid-fourteenth century, the authors, in the name of the group just mentioned, invited the Dutch historical world to reflect on and discuss the problems raised, in a wider audience of historians of all kind. This happened in a conference in Amsterdam in May 1988. Although the reactions of the colleagues who flocked in great numbers, were not unanimously positive, to put it mildly, others believed in the sincerity of our concerns. Fortunately, the initiative resulted in an invitation by the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies (like IISH and NEHA part of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences, KNAW) to form a theme group in order to work out the proposals and to stay from September 1992 to July 1993 in its premises in Wassenaar.

The group was composed in such a way that both international comparisons and interdisciplinary discussions would be safeguarded. Initially, Heinz Schilling and Peter Burke were also members of the

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team, but because of new academic obligations, they were unable to come to NIAS. In the end Wiebe Bergsma, Karel Davids, Marjolein 't Hart, Jan Lucassen, Olaf Mörke, Henk van Nierop, William Speck, Margaret Spufford and Peter Spufford were able to spend a fruitful year at NIAS and to prepare the present volume. In regular and sometimes lengthy meetings, our ideas gradually took shape. The other contributors either took part in the preliminary discussions from 1987 onwards (Leo Noordegraaf, Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden) or were invited during the year to take part in the project (Marc Boone and Michael North). The ideas of the group were put to the test in three conferences at NIAS and in a conference in Amsterdam in spring 1994 on the theme 'The Dutch Republic: Maritime or Continental?', organised under the auspices of the 'Conferentie Maatschappijgeschiedenis'. The proceedings of this conference have been published in: Karel Davids, Marjolein 't Hart, Henk Kleijer, Jan Lucassen (eds.) *De Republiek tussen zee en vasteland. Buitenlandse invloeden op cultuur, politiek en economie in Nederland 1580–1800* (Leuven and Apeldoorn, 1995).

As the history of this book shows, apart from the authors, many institutions and many persons have contributed to this volume. With gratitude we would like to mention first both the IISH and the NEHA, both in Amsterdam, fairy-godmothers who stood by the cradle of this initiative, as well as the Nederlands Historisch Genootschap which co-organised the 1988 conference. Afterwards, the stay of the group at NIAS was first suggested by Hans Blom, further prepared at two conferences, one at NIAS and chaired by Jan Bank and the other sponsored also by the Fryske Akademie in Leeuwarden. It was made a success by Dirk van de Kaa, director of NIAS and his staff. We would like to mention in particular Mrs Anne Simpson who did such a great secretarial job. The corrections to the English of the non-native speakers were made by William Speck, Margaret Spufford and Peter Spufford, and outside the theme group by Michael Frearson (Cambridge) and Stella Pigott (Bath).

We also owe much to our colleague-fellows at NIAS and to the colleagues who attended our seminars and conferences at NIAS, among whom we would like to mention here in particular Julia Adams, Dick van Arkel, Wim Blockmans, Hans Blom, Marten-Jan Bok, Jaap Bruijn, Wayne Te Brake, Rudolf Dekker, Herman

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Diederiks(†), Alastair Duke, Willem Frijhoff, Wantje Fritschy, Femme Gaastra, Graham Gibbs, Mark Greengrass, Irene Groeneweg, Simon Groenveld, Eberhardt Isenmann, Lex Heerma van Voss, Jonathan Israel, Jan de Jongste, Peter Klein, Paul Knevel, Ad Knotter, Clé Lesger, Marcel van der Linden, Richard Price, Peter Priester, Juliette Roding, Herman Roodenburg, Joke Spaans, Raymond van Uytven, Wyger Velema and Juliaan Woltjer for their contributions to the discussions.

Amsterdam, August 1995

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Abbreviations
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Bodleian Ms.	Bodleian Library, Oxford, Manuscripts
Bibl.	Bibliotheek
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
GA	Gemeentearchief
KB	Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague
NA	Notarieel Archief
OSA	Oud Stadsarchief
PA	Particulier Archief
PRO	Public Record Office, London
VOC	Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie