

The Dutch Republic A New State in Europe



Map of Europe in the Sixteenth Century



Creation of the Dutch Republic: Timeline

- 1481-1579: the Low Countries (territories corresponding to present-day Netherlands and Belgium) under rule of Habsburg Dynasty, which also controlled the Holy Roman Empire and Spain
- The 17 provinces of the Netherlands rose in rebellion against Habsburg Spain; war officially lasted from 1568 to 1648 (called the Eighty Years' War)
- By the early 1600s, Spain had reestablished control of the southern provinces, while the rebels had consolidated power in the north under the leadership of **William of Orange**
- Conflicts halted in a truce that lasted 12 years (1609-21); de facto independence for the northern Netherlands
- 1648: Peace of Münster; official recognition of Dutch Republic

William of Orange: Leader of the Dutch Revolt

- Wealthy nobleman; became Prince of Orange in 1544
- Started his career serving the Habsburgs in the Southern Netherlands, but joined the rebels in 1567 as Spanish oppression increased
- Became main leader of the rebels
- Assassinated by supporter of Spain in 1584
- Known to the Dutch as “Father of the Fatherland”



Goltzius, *William of Orange*, 1581

1609

- United Provinces
- Spanish Netherlands



The Netherlandish provinces in 1609, when the Twelve Years' Truce went into effect.

The Dutch Republic

- New republic among monarchies in 17th-century Europe
- Official religion = Calvinism (Protestant)
- Became major European power within decades

The old Amsterdam Town Hall was then destroyed by fire in 1652

Pieter Saenredam, *Old Amsterdam Town Hall, 1657*



Gerrit Berckheyde, *Dam Square showing Town Hall in Amsterdam, 1672*



Amsterdam Town Hall (now Royal Palace), Dam Square, Amsterdam
Designed by Jacob van Campen, completed in 1655



Amsterdam Town Hall (now Royal Palace), central hall



Dutch Republic: Religion

- Official religion: Calvinism (Protestant)
- Religious tolerance
 - Catholics allowed to worship in private
 - Jews had more opportunities and rights compared to elsewhere in Europe

From William Temple,

Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands (1673).

Temple was an English statesman traveling through the Dutch Republic.

Of all other Religions, every man enjoys the free exercise in his own Chamber, or his own House, unquestioned and unespied: And if the followers of any Sect grow so numerous in any place, that they affect a publique Congregation, ... [t]hey go and propose their desire to the Magistrates of the place where they reside, Who inform themselves of their Opinions, and manners of Worship; and if they find nothing in either, destructive to Civil Society, or prejudicial to the Constitutions of their State, And content themselves with the price that is offer'd for the purchase of this Liberty, They easily allow it ...



Emanuel de Witte,
*Interior of the Portuguese
Synagogue in Amsterdam,*
1680

The Dutch Republic: social and political structure

- De-centralized government, with states and even large towns retaining a lot of autonomy
- Each province sent representatives to the **States-General** (central government)
- **Stadhouder**: appointed military commander and de facto head of central government, especially in war and times of crises
- Descendants of William of Orange, leader during the Revolt, occupied the position of Stadhouder for most of the 17th century

Goltzius, *William of Orange*, 1581



Social Structure

- It was a republic: a few old noble families left from the Spanish days, but not a very powerful presence
- Most influential: the regents of important cities, drawn from prominent merchant and professional families (what we may call “burghers”)
- Artisans and farmers were also better off in Republic than their counterparts in much of Europe

The Urban Elite



Thomas de Keyser,
Constantijn Huygens, 1627



Rembrandt, *Portrait of Maria Tripp*, 1639

Rembrandt, "The Night Watch", 1642. Oil on canvas, 11'11" x 14'4".



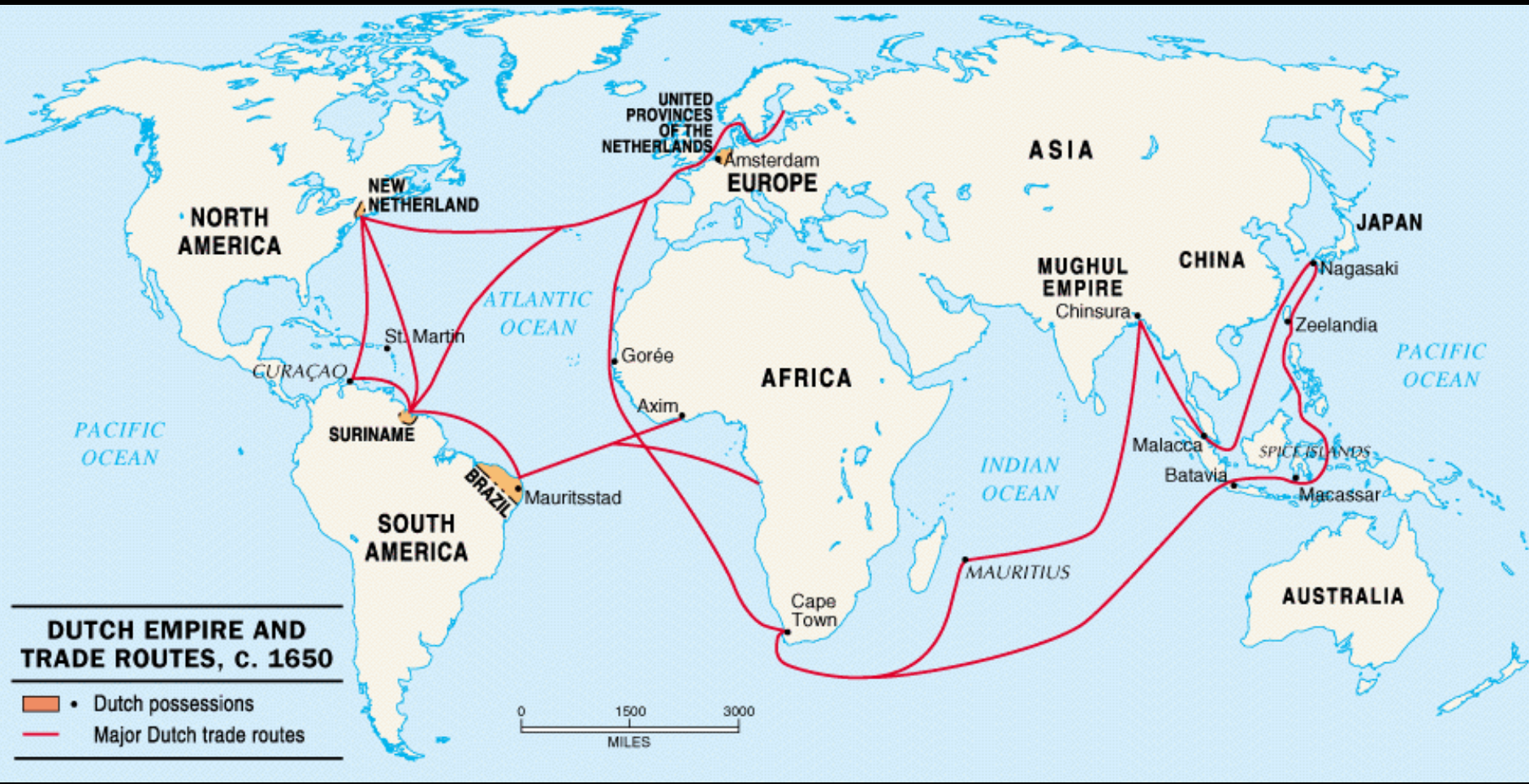
The Dutch Republic: The Economy

- The Dutch Republic was a small state with few natural resources
- The wealth of the Republic came from manufacturing, trade, and finance
- Dutch advantage in shipbuilding and seafaring

Hendrik Cornelisz. Vroom, *The Return to Amsterdam of the Second Expedition to the East Indies*, 1599. Oil on canvas, 102.3cm × w 218.4cm



Major Dutch trade routes, c. 1650



Innovations in finance



Emanuel de Witte, *Courtyard of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange*, 1653

Lack of a centralized monarchical power;
adoption of Protestantism as official religion

What were the impacts on artistic production in the Dutch Republic?

Artistic Production in the Dutch Republic

- Who were the buyers?
 - Not a noble court or the Church, but burghers
 - Larger segment of population had money to spend on art
- Size and format?
 - Smaller, standardized formats to fit middle-class urban houses
 - Also easier and more economical for painters to produce
- Painters produced finished paintings for an open market (instead of working on commissions)
 - Landscape, still life, genre painting became popular subjects in their own right
 - Artists tended to specialize in one or two genres

Salomon de Bray, *Book and Picture Shop, 1628*

