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COMMENT

Traditions of Assembly in three Dutch 'Lands' in the Seventeenth Century

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Abstract

This article assesses the cultures of assembly in the Dutch global sphere of influence. It focuses on so-called *landdagen* ('land days'), formal assemblies of Dutch provincial communities. While originating in the late medieval Low Countries, several such bodies were instituted in Dutch colonies in the seventeenth century. This article is the first to compare contemporary reflections on three such land days, namely that of the province of Guelders in the metropole, and those in New Netherland (North America) and Formosa (now Taiwan) in overseas territories. These three assemblies offer an illuminating case study, for, while differing in some respects, they possessed similar powers in the political structure of the Dutch Republic. This article examines how the Dutch traditions of assembly interacted and/or hybridised with other European parliamentary cultures and Indigenous traditions of assembly in overseas contexts. It argues that early modern Dutch perceptions of the genesis and functions of the *landdagen* reveal a pragmatic commingling of different assembly traditions, calculated to foster a shared sense of political community.

Keywords: Dutch Republic; colonial history; political assemblies; cultural history; 1500–1700

In 1642–3, the Dutch West India Company (WIC) pursued an alliance with the Mapuche Indians of Wallmapu or what the Europeans called Araucanía (now southern Chile). Though largely motivated by the prospect of Wallmapu's natural riches, the WIC's attempt was influenced by the nascent self-mythologisation of the Dutch people and their young polity, the Dutch Republic (1588–1795). Political thinkers such as Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) claimed that the Dutch descended from the ancient Batavians, who had been champions of self-rule against Roman domination, just as the contemporary Dutch fought for political autonomy from Spanish rule. These parallels between the Dutch and the Batavians, and Spain and Rome are well known to scholars. Indeed, Grotius echoed a European-wide tradition of envisaging an original 'Gothic' constitution, largely inspired by Tacitus's *Germania*, wherein Germanic tribal councils were the 'ur' example of communal resistance

against imperialism.[1] Less known is that the Dutch also identified with the Mapuche.[2] Influenced by Spanish sources such as Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* (1569–89), the Dutch reimagined the Mapuche as kindred spirits who defied Spanish rule. What was further thought to unite the Batavians, the Dutch and the Mapuche in this political imaginary was their love of liberty and commitment to collective deliberation and decision-making: as the ancient Batavians had convened in political councils, so the Dutch provinces deliberated in Estates meetings and the Mapuche governed themselves through tribal assemblies. In keeping with the myth of the Gothic constitution, much like the hallowed Germanic tribes the Mapuche were cast as gathering in 'a pleasant forest or wood'.[3] The Spanish too signalled the commonalities between the Mapuche and the Dutch, even terming Chile an 'American Low Countries' (*Flandes Indiano*). The Dutch–Mapuche entente failed, though, when the latter realised that their would-be allies were primarily interested in their natural resources and precious metals. Still, the Dutch continued to identify with the Mapuche throughout the seventeenth century.[4]

The Dutch association with the Mapuche illustrates the complex ways in which political traditions were imagined, and in some sense transferred and transformed, across early modern cultures. Of course, as the Dutch–Mapuche alliance-cum-colonisation never materialised, the supposed similarities between their political cultures were never put to the test. There were, however, Indigenous cultures whose lands the Dutch went on to invade and colonise, and where they instituted representative bodies resembling those at home, which occasionally included Indigenous participants. How far did these assemblies reproduce the parliamentary culture of the metropolis? How far were they influenced by other traditions of assembly, both Indigenous and European?

This article explores how transfers and transformations of Dutch assembly culture overseas were shaped by dialogue with such Indigenous traditions of assembly and with other European parliamentary cultures. More precisely, it probes how contemporaries reflected in similar or contrasting ways on three particular assemblies, called *landdagen*, in the Dutch political sphere: the *landdag* of the province of Guelders in the Dutch Republic itself, the *landdag* of European towns and villages in the colony of New Netherland (1614–67/1673–4) in North America, and the *landdag* of European colonisers and Indigenous village elders in Dutch Formosa (1624–62) in present-day

[1]Mark Goldie, 'Retrospect: The Ancient Constitution and the Languages of Political Thought', *Historical Journal*, 62 (2019), 3–34 (esp. 10–12).

[2]This analysis relies heavily on Lisa Kattenberg, 'Braving the Batavians: Classical Models and Countering Rebellion in the Spanish Empire', in *Discourses of Decline: Essays on Republicanism in Honour of Wyger R. E. Velema*, ed. Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes and Arthur Weststeijn (Leiden and Boston, 2022), 153–67.

[3]Alonso de Ercilla y Zuñiga, *La Araucana de Don Alonso de Ercilla y Cuñiga: Dirigada a la Sacra Catholica Real Magestad del Rey Don Philippe Nuestro Señor* (3 vols.; Salamanca, 1569, 1578, 1589). For the Dutch translation: [Alonso de Ercilla y Zuñiga], *Historiale Beschrijvinghe der Goudtrijcke Landen in Chili ende Arauco etc.*, trans. Isaac Jansz Byl (Rotterdam, 1619). See also Goldie, 'Retrospect', 12.

[4]The contemporary account of the Dutchman Johannes de Laet, for example, refers to the 'beautiful goldmines that [the Mapuche] had discovered' (*veel schoone Gout-mijnen ontdect hebbende*): Johannes de Laet, *Nieuwe wereldt, ofte beschrijvinghe van West-Indien* (Leiden, 1625), 364–5. See also Benjamin Schmidt, 'Exotic Allies: The Dutch-Chilean Encounter and the Failed Conquest of America', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52 (1999), 440–73; Kattenberg, 'Braving the Batavians', 160–2.

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Taiwan. These were not the only political assemblies that the Dutch introduced in their colonies. From 1682, Dutch Guiana (Suriname) was ruled through councils manned by planters. In Dutch Brazil (1630–54), town councils called *câmaras*, modelled on Portuguese and Dutch examples, had substantial powers of decision-making. Apart from assemblies such as that of the Potiguara in Tapesserica in 1645 (explored by Bruno Miranda in this volume), the Dutch Brazilian government called a one-off, plenary assembly in 1640.[5]

This article compares the *landdagen* of Guelders, New Netherland and Formosa, first, because they were a recurring phenomenon, they took place with a certain frequency and they gathered people from roughly equivalent regional units, namely provinces. Second, insiders' terminology matters if we are to understand historical cultural phenomena in their own terms, and contemporaries referred to all these assemblies by the common denominator of *landdagen*.[6] The European-style representative bodies of New Netherland and Formosa are compared to their equivalent in the Dutch metropole, the *landdag*, rather than the better-known Estates meetings (*Statenvergaderingen*) of provinces such as Holland or the States General (*Staten-Generaal*), which operated at the level of the entire republic. The *landdag* of Guelders has been chosen because, much like the colonial *landdagen*, this was a gathering that purportedly had far-reaching power over the province, but in practice other institutions dictated policy on a daily basis. In the colonies, it was the Dutch trading companies that fulfilled this role; in Guelders it was the assemblies of the provincial 'quarters' (*kwartieren*) and local town councils. In contrast to other Dutch provinces that also knew *landdagen*, the province of Guelders had no formal ties to these trading companies – unlike Groningen, for example, which had its own Chamber in the WIC.[7] This means that similarities between Guelders and the other *landdagen* studied here can be more easily recognised as part of a shared assembly culture.

The principal argument of this article is that early modern European reflections on the functions and historical origins of the different 'land days' betray a pragmatic commingling of different assembly traditions designed to foster a shared sense of political community. While the constitutional powers of these land days were highly restricted even in the metropole, their purpose was largely symbolic, and in that sense, they worked – albeit principally in the interest of local political elites, Dutch or otherwise. This analysis situates itself within the burgeoning historiography on Dutch cross-cultural contacts and colonial expansion in the early modern period. Historians have cultivated this field to great effect. Recent years have seen the tackling of such themes as the political economy of Dutch enterprises in multi-ethnic colonial contexts (Brazil), military competition over Indigenous resources with other European powers

[5]Bruno Romero Ferreiro Miranda, 'Indigenous Alliances in the Dutch–Portuguese Wars in Brazil: Native Petitions and the 1645 Potiguara Assembly', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, this volume. Van den Tol, *Lobbying in Company*, 52–6; Suze Zijlstra, 'Anglo-Dutch Suriname: Ethnic Interaction and Colonial Transition in the Caribbean, 1651–1682' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2015), 165–7.

[6]Cultural anthropologists would call this an *emic* perspective, the classic study being Kenneth Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (Glendale, 1954; 2nd rev. edn, 1967, repr. 2015).

[7]Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge, 1997), 541.

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(Amboina), and intellectual exchanges between thinkers of Dutch and non-European empires (Ming–Qing China), to name but a few examples.[8]

As regards Dutch colonial politics, though, more is said about the practices and procedures of political bodies such as the *landdagen* than about their cultural-ideological underpinnings and rationalisations.[9] In fact, scholars have not explored what characterised the *landdagen* in the political system of the Dutch Republic. Literally 'land days', these assemblies are usually Latinised to 'Diets' in anglophone scholarship, which conveys the quotidian nature of such meetings.[10] Conversely, this article emphasises the territorial component of 'land', as the official purpose of the *landdagen* (like that of their equivalent in some other provinces, the Estates) was to represent the political communities of these territories – which also raises the question of whom contemporaries considered part of those communities.[11] Historians have noted that the *landdagen* differed from other provincial assemblies in their frequency: the Estates meetings in provinces such as Holland and Zeeland usually sat permanently (though not officially so), while the *landdagen* were called about once a year or once every six months.[12] Some historians have further characterised the *landdagen* as a rural phenomenon, as opposed to the urban Estates meetings.[13] It is debatable whether this is accurate, as urban delegates were prominent members of the *landdagen*, which often convened in towns. To be sure, *land* is synonymous with 'countryside' in Dutch, but the late medieval and early modern concept of *land* had a multiplicity of other meanings. In the legal-constitutional context of the *landdagen*, it could refer to a geographic region, a legal domain, or a space governed by a single ruler or certain customs and laws (*landrechten*). Also, in sixteenth-century Europe, 'land' became increasingly associated with territory. However, land was inherently linked to the populations that lived there and their customary rights – not merely a physical space so much as a 'land community'.[14] Did this mean that contemporaries associated the *landdagen*, perhaps more so than Estates meetings, with the shared interests, shared history and cultural similarities between the people(s) that inhabited these lands?

[8]Joris van den Tol, *Lobbying in Company: Economic Interests and Political Decision Making in the History of Dutch Brazil, 1621–1656* (Leiden, 2021); Adam Clulow, *Amboina, 1623: Fear and Conspiracy on the Edge of Empire* (New York, 2019); Trude Dijkstra, *The Chinese Imprint: Printing and Publishing Chinese Religion and Philosophy in the Dutch Republic, 1595–1700* (Leiden, 2021).

[9]See also: Paulina Kewes, Steven Gunn, Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves, Paul Seaward, Tracey Sowerby, Jim van der Meulen, 'Early Modern Parliamentary Studies: Overview and New Perspectives', *History Compass*, 21 (2023), e12757.

[10]The term Diet is also applied to the etymologically similar *Landtage* of the German lands, and the *sejmy* of the Kingdom of Poland and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

[11]See below, 000–000.

[12]Ida Nijenhuis, 'Representation by Numbers: How Attendance and Experience Helped Holland to Control the Dutch States General (1626–1630)', in *Political Representation: Communities, Ideas and Institutions in Europe (c. 1200 - c. 1690)*, ed. Mario Damen, Jelle Haemers and Alastair Mann (Leiden, 2018), 182–202 (186–9).

[13]See: A. T. van Deursen, 'Staatsinstellingen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1579–1780', in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, V (Haarlem, 1980), 350–87.

[14]Ernst Schubert, 'Der Rätselhafte Begriff "Land" im Späten Mittelalter und der Frühen Neuzeit', *Concilium Medii Aevi*, 1 (1998), 15–27; cf. Wim Blockmans, *The Voice of the People? Political Participation before the Revolutions* (2024), ch. 1, which categorises the *landdagen* among assemblies that referenced the practice of calling delegates before a *curia* or princely council. I am grateful to Professor Blockmans for

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The *landdagen* are used here as a vehicle to explore how the Dutch colonial assemblies related to the broader political culture of early modern Europe. The analysis is based on a wide range of textual evidence, from historical tracts produced by Dutch and other European political thinkers, to the minutes of assembly proceedings, to proto-ethnographic reports of Indigenous customs. Note that this evidence was almost exclusively produced by, and hence primarily applies to, European observers. Even on this basis, however, it is possible to infer how some ideas and customs of the Dutch colonial assemblies were affected by Indigenous traditions, whose pre-colonial assembly cultures have been virtually ignored in parliamentary studies (see the Introduction to this special issue). A preliminary foray, this article is an invitation to expand the scope of enquiry into transnational connections of assembly culture in the early modern world.

Land(s) and people(s) of the landdagen

Dating back to the fourteenth century, the *landdag* was a venerable institution in the province of Guelders, where it lasted until the end of the *ancien régime* in 1795. By contrast, the assemblies that the Dutch held in Formosa (1644–60) and New Netherland (1649–64) were recent and relatively short-lived experiments. Whether in Guelders, Formosa or New Netherland, however, these *landdagen* were gatherings that nominally represented the people of one or more legally circumscribed 'lands'. In this they differed from Dutch provincial Estate meetings, which were largely defined along the lines of the status groups, or Estates, that represented the individual status group's interests at the gathering. A characteristic shared by virtually all Dutch provincial assemblies, including the *landdagen* of New Netherland but excluding those on Formosa, is that most decisions were taken by local assemblies, often gatherings of town councils (*vroedschappen*). Some were also devolved to other supra-local gatherings, such as the meetings of the three individual quarters (*kwartierdagen*) of Guelders, which nominated delegates to the *landdag* much like this provincial assembly sent deputies to the Dutch States General, the supreme body of the Republic. In that sense, the Dutch parliamentary system formed a kind of pyramid.[15]

There are three important provisos. First, in contrast to what happened in some Portuguese colonies (see Pedro Cardim's article in this volume),[16] in the Dutch political system only the provinces of the metropolis had the right to send delegates to the States General, the political gathering in The Hague where decisions affecting the Republic as a whole were made. Second, provincial assemblies such as the *landdagen* were not always the most significant representative body in their own province. In Guelders, as noted, the individual meetings of the three quarters were more powerful

allowing me to read the manuscript of this book before its publication. On the parallel territorial development of the *Landtäge* or regional Diets of the German Empire, see Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Das Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation: Vom Ende des Mittelalters bis 1806* (Munich, 2018), ch. 2.

[15]Landmark studies on the political history of the Dutch Republic include Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995); John Price, *Dutch Society, 1588–1713* (2000); Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2005).

[16]Pedro Cardim, 'Representative Institutions and Parliamentary Culture in the Portuguese and Spanish Empires (*c*. 1500–*c*. 1700)', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, this volume.

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than the *landdag* itself, because they took a more active role in governing their respective parts of the province and they convened with greater frequency.[17] Third, despite its nominal connection to *land* (instead of status groups), the *landdag* of Guelders was still made up of deputies nominated from within the different Estates of these quarters, the Knighthood (*Ridderschap*) and Cities (*Steden*). These status groups consisted respectively of scions of noble families who could trace their bloodlines back to 1500, and of members of urban mercantile elites who were co-opted by their own family members. In fact, throughout the Dutch political system, the selection of delegates happened entirely by co-option. Accordingly, there was no place for artisans or ordinary countryfolk. Many of these men (for they were all men) controlled their own private territories in the countryside in the form of lordships (*heerlijkheden*).[18]

The Dutch colonial assemblies overseas knew no Estates as such, but in practical terms, the *landdag* of New Netherland certainly had similar traits. On the one hand, it consisted of delegates nominated by colonial town councils such as that of New Amsterdam (now New York). On the other, it featured so-called 'patroons', members of the landed elite who controlled proprietary manors or 'patroonships' (*patroonschappen*). These patroonships were instituted by the WIC, which based its authority on a trade and colonisation monopoly it had been granted by the States General in 1621, much as the VOC had been given a monopoly in the Dutch East Indies in 1602. The purpose of the American patroonships was to outsource the task of contracting settlers to members of the Dutch elite, who were rewarded with a vast estate and associated seigneurial rights if they managed to attract fifty to sixty people over the period of a few years.[19] While this strategy failed to come off and the flourishing of the settlement after 1650 actually coincided with the WIC phasing out the introduction of new patroonships, it illuminates how the Dutch inclined towards a reliance on local elites in their overseas territories as much as in the metropole. The VOC implemented a similar policy in the East, and Dutch Formosa was no exception in this regard. What makes the Formosan *landdagen* exceptional is that they included a sizeable contingent of Indigenous leaders, who sat together with VOC officials. As these assemblies were instituted top down by the VOC, and the Company also selected the delegates, the Formosan bodies had little actual voice in the management of the colony, but the inclusion of Indigenous people is nonetheless significant.[20]

The evidence for New Netherland and Formosa suggests that the delegates and the colonial governments considered the constituencies of their *landdag* as a 'land'

[17]Frank Keverling Buisman, 'De Bestuurlijke Organisatie van het Gewest Gelre (1543–1795/1798)', in *Van Hertogdom Gelre tot Provincie Gelderland, Hoofdstukken uit de Geschiedenis van Bestuur en Bestuursinrichting van Gelderland 1339–1989*, ed. Frank Keverling Buisman and Olav Moorman van Kappen (Nijmegen, 1990), 53–74.

[18]Maarten Prins, 'Heren van Holland: Het Bezit van Hollandse Heerlijkheden onder Adel en Patriciaat (1500–1795)', *Virtus – Journal of Nobility Studies*, 22 (2015), 37–62; Jim van der Meulen, 'Seigneurial Governance and the State in Late Medieval Guelders (14th–16th Century)', *Continuity and Change*, 36 (2021), 33–59.

[19]Jaap Jacobs, 'Dutch Proprietary Manors in America: The Patroonships in New Netherland', in *Constructing Early Modern Empires Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500–1750*, ed. Louis Roper and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke (Leiden, 2007), 301–26.

[20]Tonio Andrade, 'Political Spectacle and Colonial Rule: The Landdag on Dutch Taiwan, 1629–1648', *Itinerario*, 21 (1997), 57–93.

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or province, at least to some extent. For instance, in their correspondence with the States General, both the deputies of the New Netherland *landdag* and the director-general (who was appointed by, and acted on behalf of, the WIC) referred to the colony as a 'province' of the Dutch Republic. And in 1649, director-general Peter Stuyvesant wrote that such an assembly was 'for the best interest of the *land*' (my emphasis).[21] In Formosa, it is unclear how far the Indigenous Austronesian elders present at the *landdag* considered these gatherings as pertaining to a legally or culturally coherent land and people. The Dutch colonial government did, though. In Formosa, there were four different *landdagen*, each of which corresponded to a sub-region of the island. These assemblies followed a territorial grid, combined with a pragmatic cultural-linguistic logic: they more or less coincided with the predominant *lingua franca* of the different subregions of the colony, and their locations were primarily chosen with an eye towards geographical accessibility. The timing of the annual *landdag* cycle also seems to have been adjusted to the different climatic and economic seasons of the island. Even so, mismatching occurred. In 1646, for example, the village elders of Serrien Tala-Oon, Serrien Takikoas and Serrien Moemossa excused themselves from their regional *landdag* because it occurred in a time of year when they were 'busy working their fields'.[22] In practice, then, the *landdagen* were not fully in sync with the needs of the land community. From the Dutch perspective, however, the Formosan *landdag* system undeniably implied some connection between the inhabitants and their land. The daily registers of Formosa frequently refer to the customs and common good (*gemenebeste*) 'of our land' and occasionally equate the Indigenous subjects with 'countrymen' (*landsaten*).[23]

The top-down imposition of the Formosan assemblies is less of an aberration in the sense that, technically, all Dutch *landdagen* originated as platforms of political dialogue among local political communities and some kind of political overlord (or *parlementer*, in the words of Michel Hébert).[24] Throughout the Low Countries as in many other European regions, the overlords in question had been territorial princes such as the counts of Holland or the prince-bishops of Utrecht. Regional political gatherings became opportunities to voice grievances and offer counsel to such rulers between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.[25] This only changed when the rebellious Netherlandish provinces declared themselves a Republic. After the northern provinces revoked the sovereignty of King Philip II in 1581, the Dutch assemblies became a platform for internal dialogue among the deputies themselves. In New Netherland and Formosa, by contrast, the *landdagen* essentially revived the old style of *parlementer*, since their delegates convened with political overlords, respectively the officials of the WIC and the VOC. Consider that the first *landdag* of New

[21]H. Cornelisse, '"For the Best Interest of the Country", the Landdag of New Netherland: Development of a Provincial Assembly (1649-1664)', *De Halve Maen - Journal of the Holland Society of New York* 88 (2015), 51-62, 52 (where 'land' is translated as 'country').

[22]Chiu Hsin-hui, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624–1662* (Leiden, 2008), 112–19; *Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, 471–2 (H, fo. 301r).

[23]*Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, 615 (K, fo. 446v) (Dec. 1647).

[24]Michel Hébert, *Parlementer: Assemblées représentatives et échanges politiques en Europe occidentale à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2014).

[25]On the development of the *Landdag* of Guelders: Aart Noordzij, *Gelre: Dynastie, Land en identiteit in de Late Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum, 2009), 200–7.

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Netherland was called by European-American settlers in 1649 as a counterweight to the power of the director-general and his council, who had previously monopolised the management of the colony as appointed agents of the WIC and its shareholders.[26]

Although the Formosan *landdagen* were not initiated by the local inhabitants, they arguably had a still stronger connection to the land and the communities inhabiting it, as these were the only colonial assemblies in the Dutch sphere with a substantial presence of Indigenous delegates. In fact, the Dutch-Formosan assemblies were entangled with Indigenous political traditions. Some of the Austronesian village communities on the island had had local assemblies long before the arrival of the first Europeans, and supra-local political alliances had been quite common as well.[27] By the time the Dutch began imposing their rule from the 1620s onwards, a strong tradition of political assembly already pervaded parts of the island. This was significant for the development of the *landdagen*, as Indigenous institutions and procedures blended into the overarching structure that the Dutch sought to impose. The Siraya of Tayouan, for example, organised themselves into village communities of 800–1,000 people, each of which was governed by a council called the *Tackakusach* or *Quaty*. The elders who sat on this council, whose time in office lasted for two years, consisted of men of over forty who had retired as warriors. The *Tackakusach* was held whenever something important happened in the village, whereupon the councillors would convene. After their meeting, a general assembly was called that was attended by the entire community of villagers. Here, the elders discussed the issues and weighed different options of how to resolve them. The villagers would then decide collectively what should be done – probably the closest approximation of direct democracy in the early modern Dutch political sphere.[28] This village council system lent itself particularly well to absorption into the colonial assembly system. A selection (made by the VOC) of the *Tackakusach* councillors could simply be summoned to represent their local village at the regional assembly instituted by the Dutch.[29]

The Sirayan assembly system was disrupted, however, by the superimposition of the Dutch *landdag* system. This was mainly because the governor and Council of Formosa, the agents employed by the East India Company *in situ*, got rid of the two-year term for those village councillors who were summoned to the *landdag*. An entry of a statement by the governor in the daily registers of the Dutch colonial outpost of Fort Zeelandia explicitly contrasts this way of doing things with the accepted custom in the Dutch Republic:

> Although the manner of our land is that city councillors are switched each year ..., (for various reasons) we did not at this time wish to alter the [body of Formosan elders]. Instead, we will postpone doing so until next year, so that

[26]Cornelisse, "'For the Best Interest of the Country'", 52.

[27]Chiu, *Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 21–5.

[28]*Ibid.*, 19–22. Unfortunately, it is unclear how councillors were (s)elected, or how voting took place during the collective village gathering.

[29]On one isolated occasion, in April 1641, to inaugurate the new governor, Paulus Tredanius, the Dutch even called an 'Imperial Diet' (*Rijcxdag*), attended by forty-two representatives from fourteen different villages.

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> we retain the right to change them at our will. This will be of no consequence whatsoever to us, and will not bring shame or insult to any [Formosan elder] either; on the contrary, it will inspire them to do an even better and diligent job.[30]

Recalling their reliance on seigneurial elites both in New Netherland and in the metropole, for the councillors selected as delegates to the *landdag* the Dutch thus practised a system resembling feudal vassalage. The feudal bond between councillor and governor had to be formally reconfirmed each time a new councillor was appointed. As the passage suggests, the governor deemed it more practical to forge long-term personal bonds between himself and the appointed councillors, who were henceforth given the title of *capitang*. The Dutch colonisers might have known that the customs of the people of their fatherland had not evolved towards one-year tenures for no reason. As it was, their reforms in Formosa equally led to cases of councillors abusing their position and it inspired acts of retaliation by fellow villagers who suspected the *capitangs* of seeking favour with the Dutch overlords, for their expanded tenure made these *capitangs* more powerful than their predecessors had been under the two-year-term *Tackakusach* system. This poor state of representation may have been exacerbated by the colonial government not always exercising judgement when it came to selecting Formosan councillors. Often, a current elder was kept in place even when he was known to be a drunkard or a 'heathen' (*heydens*). A familiar refrain in the records in those cases was that there were simply no better candidates available. At the other end of the spectrum, one Formosan elder who had been removed from his position for committing adultery was 'found to be so diligent and competent' that he was promptly reinstated.[31]

Assemblies had been a prominent feature of the political framework of the different Amerindian societies that lived in and around the area that would become the Dutch colony of New Netherland from 1614. Thus, well before the arrival of the first Europeans, the five Nations of the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy (Onondagas, Cajugas, Oneidas, Mohawks and Senecas) had forged a supra-local political alliance that was maintained through, among other things, a multinational assembly called the Grand Council.[32] This assembly even has a claim to being the first international parliamentary body in world history. It was not 'democratic', as the fifty sachems or chiefs who sat on the council did so by virtue of their hereditary status, not an election. Then again, the process of selecting delegates of European assemblies was often a question of elite co-option as well, certainly in the Dutch Republic.[33]

[30] *Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, 469 (H, fo. 294v).

[31] *Ibid*., fos. 295v–296v.

[32] Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, 1992); Susan Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg, 2017).

[33] See, for example: Donald Grinde and Bruce Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles, 1991); Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 190–2; Julia Adams, 'The Familial State: Elite Family Practices and State Making in the Early Modern Netherlands', *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994), 505–9.

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Unlike Formosa, the *landdag* of New Netherland had no Indigenous representatives. Even though the New-Netherlanders continuously engaged in trade transactions and diplomatic contact with members of the Algonquian and Haudenosaunee Nations, these people played no role in the *landdag*. The explanation for this lack of Indigenous 'representation' is that the WIC pursued a policy of active white European settlement in New Netherland. This marked a contrast with what the VOC did in Formosa, which was first and foremost a trading post, with only so much Dutch presence as was indispensable to subdue the local population and oversee the colony's commercial exploitation. As in other European colonial projects in North America, the establishment and expansion of New Netherland's settler community centred on the dispersal, displacement and destruction of Native peoples, whom Europeans would not accept into their land community.[34] Chiefly affected were the various Algonquian Nations of the southern part of the Hudson valley and on the Delaware river, where this expulsion by the Dutch was most pronounced. The Lenape societies living in these areas, roughly divided between the Munsee (Minisink) of Delaware and the Quiripi–Unkechaug speakers of the Connecticut and Quinnipiac valleys, knew a political organisation that was less regionally integrated than the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. They were also perceived as relatively peace-loving and open to outsiders by the early Europeans, whom they literally invited to 'set up shop' in their lands. The problem was that the newcomers did far more than that.[35] In a way, other Nations such as those of the Haudenosaunee profited from the expanding Dutch presence and vice versa, with the European newcomers supplying the Mohawks and others with firearms to pursue the conquest of other areas in exchange for beaver pelts.[36] Insofar as there was two-sided political dialogue and cultural exchange among the Amerindian Nations and the Dutch-American settlers, it took place through other platforms for negotiation such as the 'ancient house' of Beverwijck (now Albany in New York State). This was not a specific assembly hall. For the Haudenosaunee, whose name translates as 'the People of the Longhouse', the 'house' was both a cosmological and socio-political term for their model of relational governance. The ancient house was thus a general term for Beverwijck as the site of (Anglo-)Dutch-Haudenosaunee relations and negotiations.[37] Diplomatic exchanges during such meetings may have indirectly affected the political system of the Dutch colony, but they did not shape the culture of the New Netherland assembly. In fact, the most significant involvement of the *landdag* with the affairs of Indigenous peoples occurred in 1663, when director-general Peter Stuyvesant called a session to muster a collective response to the perceived military threat of an (unidentified) American Indian Nation.[38]

[34]See, for example: William A. Starna and José António Brandão, 'From the Mohawk–Mahican War to the Beaver Wars: Questioning the Pattern*Ethnohistory*, 51 (2004), 725–50.

[35]Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (New Haven, 2015), 45–6, 57.

[36]*Ibid.*, 198–9; cf. Jean R. Soderlund, *Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society before William Penn* (Philadelphia, 2015), 168.

[37]Erin B. Kramer, '"The Entire Trade to Themselves": Contested Authority, Intimate Exchanges, and the Political Economy of the Upper Hudson River Region, 1626–1713' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018), 2–5, 277–80.

[38]Cornelisse, '"For the Best Interest of the Country"', 54.

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Cross-cultural connections

Dutch enmity towards the 'savages' (*wilden*) who had originally inhabited 'their' lands did not stop contemporary commentators from comparing the political customs of these societies with European assembly cultures. In 1655, for example, the New Netherland landowner and lawyer Adriaen van der Donck wrote about the distinction between the Upper House (*Overstens Huys*) and the Commons (*Gemeente*) in the political structure of certain unidentified Native American villages. The Dutch used the same terms to refer to the House of Lords (*Opper* or *Hoger Huys*) and the House of Commons (*Lagerhuys*) of the bicameral English parliament. Van der Donck added that the Commons of the Indigenous villages 'seemingly held quasi the same rights as a *vroedschap*', a city council in the Dutch Republic.[39] Of course, such statements were coloured by the observer's frame of reference, through which strange customs were translated to what was familiar. It is telling in that regard that whereas the early Dutch colonists described the political system of the Lenape societies they encountered as egalitarian or even 'popular', the English colonisers saw the Lenape as monarchical. To be sure, the Lenape societies in the English sphere of influence, the Wampanoags, Narragansetts and Pequots, did indeed consist of large constellations of villages that were governed by a small number of sachems, which might qualify them as monarchical unlike those in the Dutch sphere, where villages were more locally independent.[40] However, the contrasting assessments of Lenape politics by the Dutch and the English is also a reflection of what was perceived as a desirable governmental framework in these respective cultures. That said, the English and Dutch projections also shared common ground. Much as early modern Dutch authors found constitutional similarities in Indigenous tribal councils, so there was a strong English tradition of describing Native American 'kingship' in quasi-republican ways, not purely as stemming from bloodline but also in terms of martial prowess. Again, these elements accorded with the Tacitean perspective on the ur-assemblies of chieftains in the German woodlands (with a distinct tension between royal sovereignty and republicanism in England in the run-up to and aftermath of the Civil War).[41]

Despite the absence of Indigenous representatives, the *landdag* of New Netherland was a multinational affair. In fact, the first colonists whom the WIC installed in Lenape country in the 1610s and 1620s were thirty French-speaking Protestant Walloon families from the southern Low Countries.[42] Moreover, the 'Dutch' settlers were wedged in between and lived in close proximity to other communities of European settlers, most notably English-speaking villages. The early European colonisation of North America had not been a coherent, closely coordinated venture; it began as a scuffle across the eastern seaboard by a miscellany of states, companies and individuals. The seventeenth century witnessed various tussles over jurisdiction between different European powers. Consequently, a number of villages that came to reside under the authority of the Dutch WIC and the High Council of New Netherland were majority

[39] 'Vande Ghemeente | die quasi het recht der Vroedtschappen schijnt te behouden te hebben': Adriaen van der Donck, *Beschryvinge van Nieuvv-Nederlant, (Ghelijck het tegenwoordigh in Staet is) Begrijpende de Nature, Aert, gelegentheyt en vruchtbaerheyt van het selve Lant* (Amsterdam, 1655), 75–6.

[40] Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier*, 43–5.

[41] Goldie, 'Retrospect', 10–13.

[42] Soderlund, *Lenape Country*, 28.

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English-speaking (e.g. Hempstead, Newtown, Gravesend).[43] Little wonder that when the landowners and magistrates of New Netherland first petitioned the WIC for a civil (*borgerlycke*) government in 1649, they explicitly invoked the assembly of their neighbours in the colony of New England as a precedent. At the first few *landdag* sessions of New Netherland, the English villages that fell under the colony's jurisdiction even dominated at the meetings. That the New-Netherlanders perceived Anglo-American assemblies as equivalent to their own is further suggested by a Dutch description of a general meeting of the English colonies in 1663 as a 'common Diet' (*gemeene Lantsdagh*). Despite the noted similarity of political traditions, however, as political tensions between England and the Dutch Republic mounted in the 1650s and 1660s, the attitude towards Anglo-American representatives quickly soured. The final *landdag* meetings, held in 1663 and 1664, were for Dutch eyes only. But already as early as 1654, the director-general and the High Council of New Netherland professed no longer to want any dealings with the English nation, 'that we may not ourselves drag the Trojan horse within our walls'.[44]

Because of their multinational nature, and in contrast with the *landdag* of Guelders in the metropole, the colonial assemblies of New Netherland and Formosa had to cope with problems of translation. On 11 December 1653, for instance, nineteen delegates of the American *landdag* convened in New Amsterdam's City Hall jointly to file a petition with the director-general and High Council of the colony. Originally drafted in English, the document was translated into Dutch. When the High Council came together one day later, acting secretary Cornelis van Ruyven recorded that the council members had difficulty understanding the 'tenor' of some of the points in the petition, as 'they had been either unclearly phrased or poorly translated'.[45] Translation was even more of an issue at the multi-ethnic Formosan *landdagen*. In terms of modern ethnic classification, the people whom the European newcomers lumped together as 'Formosans' constitute three main ethno-linguistic groups and six cultural complexes based on similarities of social structure, material culture, religion, and so forth. Dutch-ruled Formosa further hosted a large and growing resident community of (predominantly Fukienese) Chinese, whose ties to the island dated back to the thirteenth century, but who were as a rule excluded from the *landdag*.[46] This multilingual context meant that the operation of each session of the Formosan *landdag* relied on the intermediation of several translators. These were usually members of the clergy who had acquired Indigenous languages as part of their conversion missions across the island. At a meeting of the Northern and Southern *landdag* in February 1646, for instance, the colonial government made a number of important announcements that were 'first translated into the

[43]See in general the contributions in *Constructing Early Modern Empires: Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500–1750*, ed. H. Roper and B. Van Ruymbeke (Leiden, 2008). On the establishment and expansion of jurisdiction in New Netherland in particular, see Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden and Boston, 2005), 95–104.

[44]Cornelisse, "'For the Best Interest of the Country'", 53, 57, 61.

[45]New York State Archives (NYSA), A1809–78, V05, 0165, available as a scan and in translation on: https://digitalcollections.archives.nysed.gov/index.php/Detail/objects/54773 (accessed 18 Jan. 2024).

[46]There is a single exception where the records refer to a 'Chinese elder' (*Lacko Chinees*): *Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, xii, 548 (J, fo. 559v). Also, the colonial government condoned a council of Chinese *cabessas* to collect local taxes and oversee the activities of Chinese entrepreneurs: Chiu, *Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 118, 150–1.

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Sinkanese tongue by the *proponent* [a clerk in Holy Orders] Hans Olhoff, and subsequently into two kinds of "Mountain language" [Berghs], Favorlingian, and Camachat or Quataongh by other translators'.[47]

The multilingual nature of the colonial *landdagen*, especially those on the island of Formosa, thus required the European colonisers to invest in acquiring a degree of local knowledge of relevant aspects of the culture of their interlocutors. A great deal was of course still lost in translation, and miscommunications occurred on a regular basis. In keeping with the notion that people saw a connection between the *landdagen* and the 'land communities' they represented, though, contemporaries also contemplated the shared histories of such countries and their inhabitants.

Historical (re)imagination and the identity of land and people

The reimagination of shared historical events played (and still plays) a key role in the formation of regional as well as 'national' identities. Recent scholarship on the Dutch Revolt has shown, for example, that memory culture around historical events often started locally and was only incorporated into the national memory canon at a later stage.[48] Historical (re)imagination also affected contemporary perceptions of political bodies such as the *landdag* and of their connection to the land communities whose interests they represented. This historical reimagination operated on several levels. On one level, contemporaries buttressed their sense of proper parliamentary proceedings through events that had taken place in the very recent past. On another level, they tried to come to terms with their present political situation by drawing parallels with ancient exemplars. Consider the 'Batavian myth', which placed the history of the Dutch people in a mythologised historical framework that stretched back to ancient Batavian resistance against Roman rule. Grotius was not the sole proponent of this narrative. Nor was it limited to written histories: historical paintings embraced the Batavian motif as well, a notable example being a panel series of twelve tableaux painted by Otto van Veen, which included an assembly of Batavian conspirators (*The Conspiracy of Julius Civilis and the Batavians in a Sacred Grove*). Note that the woodland clearing as the imagined gathering place is again redolent of the pan-European Gothic myth based on Tacitus' *Germania*. Tellingly, it was the Dutch States General that purchased this series to be hung in its assembly hall in 1613.[49]

Even as the Dutch Revolt inspired such mythmaking about the Dutch nation, a similar phenomenon took place at the provincial level. This may have been a reaction to the fact that people such as Grotius, who held political positions in Holland, principally associated the Batavians with the people of their own province.[50] But the regional history genre was already well established by the time Grotius published his 'general'

[47] *Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, 467–8 (H, fo. 293r).

[48] Marianne Eekhout, 'Celebrating a Trojan Horse: Memories of the Dutch Revolt in Breda, 1590–1650', in *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Erika Kuijpers et al. (Leiden, 2013), 130.

[49] Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 420–2; Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (1987), 75–82.

[50] This is reflected in the title of the Dutch translation of his work. The original Latin version was called *Liber de antiqvitate reipvblicae Bataviae* (Leiden, 1610), the translation *Tractaet vande oudtheyt vande Batavische nu* Hollandsche *republique* [my emphasis] (The Hague, 1610).

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history in 1610. The *landdag* of Guelders, for example, commissioned a history of its own province in 1597. The work would take three successive authors and the best part of half a century to complete. Ironically, when it was finally finished by Arend van Slichtenhorst in 1653, the *landdag* of Guelders tried to ban its publication because it was deemed too critical of the province's nobility and urban elites.[51] The project demonstrates the importance that contemporaries attached to regional history for the construction of their identity. Considering that the *landdag* represented the community of a legally circumscribed territory, it is telling that Van Slichtenhorst's history was a 'chorography'. This genre, which was reinvented in the sixteenth century, tied the history of a people to the physical landscape surrounding that people and vice versa. Several such works were written about Guelders in this period.[52] As Grotius did with regard to the people of Holland, these histories connected the people of Guelders with the hallowed *Batavi*. Some of them even held that the historical heartlands of this noble tribe had been the river area surrounding the ancient city of Nijmegen, not Holland.[53]

Europeans, too, saw connections between ancient civilisations and Indigenous political cultures, as we have seen in the case of the Mapuche. Continued interest in the Classics and the importance of a classical education meant that such parallels remained popular into the eighteenth century. Writing of the Haudenosaunee and Wyandat of the St Lawrence valley (or Kahnawake) in 1724, the Jesuit missionary Joseph-François Lafitau saw strong likenesses between the political structures of the Native Americans and those of the barbarian societies of ancient Greece, especially the Lycians of Asia Minor. One notable parallel, wrote Lafitau, was that both the Lycians and the 'Iroquois and Huron' held a general assembly (*Conseil general*), where delegates (*Députés*) of every village sat together as equals in pursuit of 'the common good' (*le bien commun*), to the great benefit of the unity and 'well-being of the nation' (*le salut de la Nation*).[54]

It is to be expected that in approaching new foreign cultures, European observers would draw on historical examples with which they were intimately familiar. After all, they and their reading audiences were constrained by their particular frame of reference.[55] More intriguingly, commentators instrumentalised these perceived historical likenesses to negotiate the still fluid power balance in the invaded territories.

[51]Arend van Slichtenhorst, *XIV. Boeken van de Geldersse Geschiedenissen* (Arnhem, 1653).

[52]Gerald Strauss, 'Topographical-Historical Method in Sixteenth-Century German Scholarship', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 5 (1958), 87–101; Noordzij, *Gelre*, 278–9.

[53]Ute Heinen-Von Borries, 'Het Gelderlandgevoel in Historieliederen en Geschiedschrijving, Zestiende en Zeventiende eeuw', in *Het hertogdom Gelre: Geschiedenis, kunst en cultuur tussen Maas, Rijn en IJssel*, ed. M. Evers et al. (Utrecht, 2003), 482–93; Job Weststrate, '"De Verhooging van de Luister des Vaderlands": Gelderland in de Nederlandse Historiografie rond 1800', in *Begrensd beeld: Identiteit in grensregio's omstreeks 1800*, ed. Job Weststrate and Dick de Boer (Hilversum, 2021), 29–54, at 41–4.

[54](Writing of the 'Iroquois' and 'Hurons') 'Mais quand il s'agit des affaires, qui interessent le Corps de Nation, ils se réünissent dans un Conseil general, où se rendent les Députés de chaque Village; ce qui se fait avec tant d'égalité, de zele pour le bien commun, qu'il en résulte un concert, & une union admirable, qui fait le salut de la Nation, & que, par cette raison, rien n'est capable de romper': Joseph-François Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages Amériquains, Comparés aux Mœurs des Premiers Temps*, I (Paris, 1724), 463–4.

[55]Anthony Grafton (with April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi), *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); cf. Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (Philadelphia, 2015).

Grotius even wrote a short tract called *De origine gentium Americanarum dissertatio* (1642) about the purported origins of the American Indians. Contrary to other contemporary authors such as his adversary Johannes de Laet, Grotius rejected the idea that the American Indians shared a common ancestry with the Dutch. This is suggestive because De Laet, who was one of the founders of the Dutch West India Company, had summoned this very argument in support of the Dutch colonial enterprise in the Americas. Instead, Grotius opined that the Indigenous peoples were descendants of an ancient Norse tribe called the 'Cimbri', who were more closely related to the people of Sweden – a prominent colonial competitor of the Dutch in North America.[56] Yet Grotius's and De Laet's interpretations were outliers. Most Dutch authors who had travelled to New Netherland, and certainly those who wished to live there, or sought to inspire others to do so, emphasised the 'savage' nature of the peoples who had to be displaced to facilitate European settlement. In his proto-ethnographic account of the Mohawks (1644), the Dutch pastor and Protestant missionary Johannes Megapolensis did remark upon the similarities he observed between the language of the Amerindians and Greek (although he admitted that this was 'pure speculation until such a time as I have become an Indian grammarian'). As with the Dutch attitude towards the lands of the Mapuche in Chile, however, Megapolensis was keen to glorify the bountiful American landscape, which he described as 'in general like that in Germany'. In winter, he wrote, the abundant deer of the country became 'as fat as any Dutch cow' (though he somewhat diminished the appeal of that statement by adding that this made their flesh 'virtually inedible'). Adriaen van der Donck, a staunch proponent of expanding the Dutch settlement in New Netherland, also preferred rosy descriptions of the boundless opportunities of the American landscape to detailed reflections on Indigenous history. Like Megapolensis, he drew parallels between the American environment and that of the European countryside, noting that while some parts of the landscape flooded in springtime, they could be diked and drained in similar fashion to how water-logged floodplains were cultivated in Holland.[57]

Direct connections between European history and the pre-colonial history of Dutch-ruled Formosa do not feature prominently in early modern accounts of the island. There are only a few examples where commentators drew such parallels. Even then, they were more proverbial than historical. In his correspondence with Pieter Nuyts while Nuyts was governor of Formosa in the late 1620s, the reverend Georgius Candidius expressed his appreciation for the oratorical skills of the Sirayan village elders of Formosa. 'Demosthenes himself', Candidius remarked, 'could not have been more eloquent and more fluent with words'.[58] Such commendations were few and far between. Early commentators often likened the aboriginal inhabitants to a 'barbaric

[56]Hugo Grotius, *De origine gentium Americanarum dissertatio* (Paris, 1642). See Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Hugo Grotius's Dissertation on the Origin of the American Peoples and the Use of Comparative Methods', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991), 221–44.

[57]Johannes Megapolensis, *Een Kort Ontwerp van de Mahakvase Indiaenen, Haer Landt, Tale, Statuere, Dracht, Godes-Dienst ende Magistrature* (Alkmaar, 1644), A3, A5; Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 11–12.

[58]Leonard Blussé, 'Dueling Wills: Dutch Administration and Formosan Power, 1624–68', in *Early Modern East Asia: War, Commerce, and Cultural Exchange. Essays in Honor of John E. Wills, Jr.*, ed. Kenneth M. Swope and Tonio Andrade (Abingdon and New York, 2018), 65–83, at 68. Demosthenes (384–322 BCE) was an ancient Athenian statesman famed for his oratorical skills.

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people'. One of the first Chinese descriptions of Formosan Indigenous people, written by a Chinese scholar named Chen Di (陳第) in 1603, was also titled 'Dong fan ji' (東番記) or *An Account of the Eastern Barbarians*.[59] Still, the Dutch were optimistic about the possibility of converting the Indigenous Formosans to Christianity, a mission already promoted successfully across the island by Catholic missionaries based in Spanish Formosa (a colony in the north of the island between 1624 and 1642). In contrast with contemporary mythologisation of the origins of the American Indians, however, this was not accompanied by speculations about a shared Christian ancestry.[60]

Of course, the peoples whose lands were invaded by Dutch and other European colonisers had their own historical traditions underpinning their political cultures. How far did these clash, or harmonise, with the parliamentary culture of the *landdag* as introduced by the Dutch? In the case of Formosa, this is difficult to examine, because no written evidence survives before the accounts by Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch authors.[61] In the case of the North American Indians, however, recent studies have reconstructed relevant aspects of Indigenous political traditions. Even though the *landdag* of New Netherland had no Native representatives, these traditions are germane to the question of the broader assembly culture of the colony. Consider a crucial aspect of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) historical tradition, the story of the introduction of the Great Law. The Great Law forged a political union between the Five Nations and resulted in the creation of the Grand Council, the multinational assembly of chiefs. According to the origin myth, as depicted on the Ayenwahtha wampum belt, the Mohawks and Senecas were the first Nations to accept the Great Law, which earned them the title of Elder Brothers. This status meant that the Mohawk and Seneca chiefs voted first in council meetings, followed by the 'Younger Brothers' (Cajuga and Oneida). Once they had reached a decision, it was ratified by the Onondagas. The latter were called the 'Fire-Keepers', because their territory had the most central location of the Five Nations, the political union of which was imagined in spatial terms where each Nation's territory formed part of one longhouse.[62]

There are a number of notable parallels with Dutch representative bodies. At the States General in The Hague, for example, the delegates of the *landdag* of Guelders took pride of place because their province had historically been a duchy, making it of higher rank than former counties such as Holland (even though, under the Republic, there were no longer dukes or counts).[63] The delegates of Guelders therefore voted first, and were listed first in official documents drafted by the States General. The delegates of

[59]Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 2008), 3.

[60]Chiu, *Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 229.

[61]There has been a recent upsurge of interest in Taiwan's Indigenous history, but very little research has focused on the inhabitants of the former Dutch territories. See Scott E. Simon, *Truly Human: Indigeneity and Indigenous Resurgence on Formosa* (Toronto, 2023). Professor Simon kindly shared his speculation that this is because the Sirayan population of Tainan were greatly assimilated into Han Taiwanese society and are only beginning their cultural revitalisation.

[62]Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, 30–5.

[63]Technically, the stadtholder of Guelders took on tasks and responsibilities formerly held by the duke, but contemporary writings reveal that the position of the stadtholder and the extent of his powers was frequently up for discussion in the seventeenth century. See, for example: Alexander van der Capellen, *Gedenkschriften van Jonkheer Alexander van der Capellen, Heere van Aartsbergen, Boedelhoff, en Mervelt,*

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Guelders also took seats at a place nearest the head of the table during sessions of the States General.[64] Similarly, at the Estates meetings of Holland, the city of Dordrecht was considered 'first' because it was the oldest in the province.[65] In other words, the procedures of Haudenosaunee and Dutch assemblies, while different in many other respects, were shaped through their participants' awareness of their own history and the perceived status of their territory, and conditioned through a metaphor of domesticity (the longhouse, the table).

While diplomatic relations between European newcomers and Native Americans often suffered from mutual misunderstandings, recent scholarship has shown the significance of such overlaps in political-cultural frameworks. Negotiations between delegates from New Netherland and the Onondagas, for example, took place in what the latter referred to as the 'ancient house' of Albany. When the (Anglo-Dutch) New-Netherlanders and Onondagas assembled there in 1700, the Onondaga leader Sadeganachtie addressed his interlocutor as 'brother' and referred to the meeting place as the 'house of conference between your Lordship and the Five Nations'. In his speech, Sadeganachtie also emphasised the shared historical dimension of the European–Amerindian encounter, stating that 'We were here before you and were a strong and numerous people when you were but small and young ... and therefore when we propose anything to you, if you cannot agree to it, let us take council together.'[66]

Disputes over priority derived from relatively recent, shared history featured prominently in contemporary perceptions of the colonial *landdagen* as well. The New Netherland *landdag* of April 1664 thus began with a conflict over the internal hierarchy between the delegates of New Amsterdam and the patroonship of Rensselaerswijck. The representative of Rensselaerswijck, Jeremias van Rensselaer, reported to his brother Jan Baptist that:

> at the Common Diet [*de gemene lant dagh*] on the Manhattas ..., we had a great dispute with the delegates from the city of [New] Amsterdam ... as to the right to preside [*de voorsitting*], which we claimed, as being the oldest colonisers. But, under protest, we sat without special order.[67]

Such issues over pride of place were rife in assemblies in the Dutch metropole. After a session of one of the 'quarter days' of Guelders in 1647, for example, the Lord of Dorth complained to the sworn clerk charged with keeping record of the proceedings that his name was listed after that of a fellow participant, Alexander van der Capellen, whom he deemed to be of inferior social rank. In his reply, the clerk remarked that the Lord

Beginnende met den Jaare 1621, en Gaande tot 1654, by een Gezameld en Uitgegeven door Robert Jasper van der Capellen (2 vols.; Utrecht, 1777–8), I, 203–5 (Jul. 1623).

[64]See Wim Blockmans, Representation (Since the Thirteenth Century)', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, VII: *c.1415–c.1500*, ed. Christopher Allmand (Cambridge, 2008), 37–8.

[65]Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2005; 2nd edn, 2023), 165.

[66]Kramer, '"The Entire Trade to Themselves"', 3–4.

[67]New York State Library, Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer, Letter books of Jeremias van Rensselaer, SC7079, Box 5, Folder 15. For an English translation of this and other letters, see A. J. F. van Laer, *Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer (1651–1674)* (Albany, 1932), 352–4.

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of Dorth had not even been present at the session in question.[68] But what makes the episode in New Netherland especially telling is that it occurred when the colony was not yet fifty years old. This demonstrates how little time it took for historical events to be woven into the procedure of the *landdag*.

The rituals and procedures of the Formosan *landdagen* were similarly moulded by the colony's young history. An important part of the assembly was when the Dutch governor would grant the select number of elders who represented their community at the *landdag* a rattan staff, a symbol of their authority, which was a means to establish bonds of reciprocal loyalty with the Indigenous villages. Each session progressed according to a fixed order of rituals meant to strengthen the bonds between these Formosan *capitangs* and their Dutch overlords. Key aspects were the joint feasting at the end, and the transfer of authority to new *capitangs* whose predecessors had died or were no longer fit to fulfil their office for some other reason.[69] These rituals followed the ceremonial order the Dutch had orchestrated when the colony's first governor, Hans Putmans, was replaced by his successor Johan van der Burch to formalise the peace with the people of Mattauw and Tayouan in 1636.[70] In keeping with the connection between historical seniority and pride of place, moreover, the Formosan elders of the different villages were led before the colonial governor in 'the order in which they have over time entered into friendship with the [East India] Company' (i.e. surrendered to Dutch authority).[71]

Furthermore, whereas earlier historians saw the Formosan *landdagen* as spectacles wherein the Dutch colonisers pulled the strings, recent scholarship has exposed how Indigenous elders used them to their own advantage. A good example are the staffs or canes that the Dutch governor bequeathed to the councillors at each *landdag*. These were intended to serve as a symbol of Dutch authority, but also as a sign of the exalted status of the elders, who were even believed to have accorded some kind of magical status to them, the wellspring of which was the governor. The Dutch authorities referred to them as a 'sleeping draught' (*slaepdranck*), a stick which was actually a carrot, meant to make the elders into puppets. However, the village elders do not appear to have accorded any special – let alone magical – status to the staffs. They used them for everyday activities such as beating rowdy villagers, and they frequently lost them and requested new ones without any sign of supernatural fear.[72] Besides, the 'supernatural' status that the Dutch accorded the rattan staffs was a double-edged sword. In February 1646, the *capitang* Tabeillimo of Taurinap village explained to the colonial government that he no longer possessed his staff because he had 'thrown it away out of fear'.[73] The Indigenous *capitangs* also used the symbolic power vested in them by their colonial overlords to strengthen their own village's power relative to that of others, such as when two Dorenap elders successfully exacted

[68]Gelders Archief 0467, Familie van der Capellen, no. 110 (unfoliated MS).

[69]Blussé, 'Dueling Wills', 70.

[70]Chiu, *Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 113–16.

[71]*Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, 468 (H, fo. 295r).

[72]Andrade, 'Political Spectacle and Colonial Rule', 82–5; Chiu, *Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 116–17.

[73]*Dagregisters Fort Zeelandia*, II, 470 (H, fo. 298v); cf. Homi Bhabha's notion of 'cultural hybridity' as formulated in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994).

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Japanese silver and deer skins from the Asock village in the name of the Dutch in 1645.[74]

So, even though the Formosan *landdag* had no legislative power and its participants were essentially selected by the VOC, Indigenous people found ways to make it serve their own interests, which occasionally went against those of the Dutch coloniser or against those of other villages. In a sense, then, the colonial government was not administering a 'sleeping draught' to the inhabitants of the island so much as to its own officials and the VOC, who were lulled into a false sense that a venerable Dutch tradition of dialogue among different political levels could simply be transposed and reinvented purely to serve the ruler's interests.

Conclusion

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the people of the young Dutch Republic justified their revolt against Spain through the cultural and historical construction of a national identity based in part on self-rule through deliberative assemblies. But the Dutch themselves soon entered into a long period of colonisation around the known world, imposing their rule on local Indigenous communities in the Americas and the Caribbean, Africa and Mauritius, South and East Asia, and the Indonesian Archipelago. Among these overseas colonies were a select number where the Dutch instituted assemblies that were based on representative bodies in the metropole. This article has examined two prominent examples, the *landdagen* of New Netherland (North America) and Dutch Formosa (Taiwan). The shared contemporary label of *landdag* makes these assemblies apt to compare, not only to each other, but also to their namesakes in the Dutch Republic such as the *landdag* of Guelders.

While these three bodies were different in many respects, for contemporary commentators in the Dutch political influence sphere they inhabited a shared conceptual space in the European imaginary. In one respect, these similarities had a basis in reality. From the local elites in New Netherland who petitioned the States General for a common assembly similar to that of their New-English neighbours in 1649 to the clerk of Fort Zeelandia in Formosa who compared the selection of Indigenous village elders to the election procedures of Dutch *vroedschappen*, from the seniority-based voting order in the States of Holland to the seniority-based right to preside at the New Netherland *landdag*, the ways in which cultural awareness affected the operation of these political bodies show many connections. This is not to mention the similarities in political culture and political thought among Indigenous groups who were not represented at these colonial assemblies, such as the historically motivated voting order at the Haudenosaunee Grand Council. In another respect, though, highlighting the connections between assembly cultures was a political tool. It was a way both for the Dutch to make sense of the unknown, to find common ground in diplomatic exchanges with newly encountered peoples, and to attract new colonists through an inflated sense of similarity. At the same time, certain cultural differences were magnified to dehumanise the Indigenous inhabitants and thus to deny them the same rights as members of the colonial European land communities.

[74]Ying Li 李穎, 'Taiwan Local Conference System in Dutch Colonial Period (荷據時期台灣地方會議制度)', *Journal of Yichun College* (宜春學院學報), 37 (2015), 69–71, at 73.

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These cultural connections and their contemporary use raise questions that parliamentary historians may want to address in future. One such question relates to the 'Europeanness' of representative institutions. The examples discussed here demonstrate that global parliamentary culture as it arguably exists today is not a straightforwardly European or Western invention. Moreover, as the other contributions to this special issue demonstrate, there was no singular European experience of representative politics – neither in Europe nor in overseas territories. The *landdag* of New Netherland was not only a partial product of Anglo-Dutch negotiations, and the 'Dutch' inhabitants of the colony consisted of people from various European backgrounds. The cases of Formosa and New Netherland also make clear (if further evidence were needed) that the introduction of European governmental institutions was a by-product, occasionally even a tool or catalyst, of violent territorial encroachment and the destruction of Indigenous political cultures.

Such questions have a certain societal urgency. There is still a degree of triumphant Western mythmaking about the historical roots of democratic traditions, which hides some sinister aspects of their history, European colonialism for one thing. Taiwan is a curious example in this regard. This article was written in 2024, which marked the 400th anniversary of the Dutch colonisation of Taiwan, or Formosa as they called it in imitation of the Portuguese. This occasion not only inspired academic historical conferences, but was also marked through public events such as the 2024 Taipei International Book Exhibition.[75] At the opening ceremony of a similarly inspired exhibition in 2009 commemorating the Dutch arrival in Taiwan, Chi-nan Chen, minister of the Council for Cultural Affairs of Taiwan, openly credited the Dutch with bringing the *landdag* to Formosa, along with a 'wave of democratic thought and democratization'.[76] Of course, Chen's effective glorification of the colonial *past* was politically and ideologically motivated by the abiding fear of Taiwan being absorbed by China. Remarkably, Chen overlooked or at least minimalised Indigenous Formosan political institutions. After all, one of the reasons why the *landdag* of seventeenth-century Formosa was installed relatively successfully was that the ethnically and linguistically diversified communities that had inhabited the island before the arrival of the European newcomers already had their own traditions of representative gatherings at the village level. Surely those pre-colonial assemblies deserve just as prominent a place in the Taiwanese historical canon as the Dutch *landdag* in the political imaginary of policymakers such as Chen. Even more so, because recent Taiwanese scholarship proposes a more nuanced interpretation, wherein the Dutch introduction of the *landdag* was essentially disruptive of Indigenous traditions, but that it also became a platform where Dutch and Formosans came into contact with each other in ways that were politically significant for both the colonised and the colonisers.[77]

[75]https://publishingperspectives.com/2024/02/the-netherlands-in-taiwan-400-years-of-shared-history/ (accessed 10 Sept. 2024).

[76]https://www.nlpi.edu.tw/JournalDetailC003313.aspx?Cond=7a78b89d-072a-4180-b986-32aee9145881 (accessed 10 Sept. 2024).

[77]Li, 'Taiwan Local Conference System in Dutch Colonial Period'; Wei-chung Cheng 鄭維中, *Helan shidai de Taiwan shehui: Ziranfa de nanti yu wenminghua de licheng*《荷蘭時代的台灣社會:自然法的難題與文明化的歷程》(Taipei, 2004), 110–12, 121. The

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Today's mythmakers in Taiwan and elsewhere might be better served by tracing the ur-examples of their countries' assembly culture to the everyday resistance of Indigenous leaders (be they Sirayan, Mapuche or Potiguar) against colonial overlordship. The invitation to parliamentary historians, then, is to pay close attention to those political traditions and their early connections and collisions with European equivalents – an undertaking somewhat similar to that of early modern authors such as Hugo Grotius, though perhaps in this case the Dutch would emerge as closer to the imperialist Romans than the freedom-loving Germanic chieftains.

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