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Fighting for the Spoils

Cape burgerschap and faction disputes in Cape
Town in the 1770s

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Abstract

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The Cape of Good Hope was rocked by a period of political turmoil at the end of the 1770s and beginning of 1780s. Coenraad Beyers published an extensive study about this period and labelled the protesters: Cape Patriots (*'Die Kaapse Patriotte'*). In his view they were pre-Afrikaner burghers who, driven by ideological arguments, opposed a colonial VOC tyranny. This thesis aims to revise this analysis, while seeking to demonstrate that late eighteenth century Cape society was marked by a complex and intertwined network of status groups.

The burgher protests are used as a case study to illustrate that the Cape settlement was part and parcel of the Dutch empire. The protesters emphasised that their *burgerschap* was on par with that in cities in the Dutch Republic. The first part of the thesis compares Cape and Dutch *burgerschap* and argues that the Cape burghers were justified in stating that they were burghers of a city belonging to the United Netherlands. It furthermore becomes clear that the Cape burghers had developed a robust burgher identity. This certainly contributed to the outbreak of the conflict, but was not the determining factor.

Because the Cape settlement was essentially a Dutch city, many elements of political and social life derived from the Dutch Republic. One of these was that at the Cape a ruling elite consisting of higher VOC officials and prominent burghers had developed with close familial and entrepreneurial links between them. Like the Dutch city patriciates they guarded access to their inner circle carefully. However this situation also provoked challenges. This aspect is investigated in the second part of the thesis. This is done by a prosopographical analysis of the protesters, who are compared to the rest of the burgher population residing in the Cape District in 1779, as well as a close study of burgher officials and entrepreneurs. It is confirmed that the clash of the late 1770s was in fact a dispute between the ruling faction of VOC officials and elite

burghers and one consisting of prominent rural and urban burgher entrepreneurs. This tussle for economic and political power followed the tradition of many eighteenth century Dutch political conflicts.

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Acknowledgements

Work for this thesis started in the early 1990s, although I did not know that then. Soon after I arrived in Cape Town, I was looking for a way to continue my historical studies. After some searching I ended up with Nigel Worden, who, after learning that I came from the Netherlands, ever so subtly pushed me towards the eighteenth century archival records. That is how I became part of the 'Social Identities in VOC Cape Town' project, which eventually provided the framework in which this thesis was done. Over time the research work was increasingly pushed aside for income-producing business and in the end disappeared into the background. In 2008 I had a conversation with my sister Lieke Zielhuis and I mentioned to her that it would be nice to get back into my historical research. She replied very simply: "If you want that, you must do it". Not wanting my bluff to be called, I again contacted Nigel Worden and he welcomed me back into the fold. Therefore I must thank Lieke for the challenge and the push which made me pick up where I left off so many years ago.

The National Research Foundation of South Africa provided financial support, which made it possible to take time off from work.

Much of the research here is based on archival records and we are fortunate enough to reside in a city where access to these archives is so readily available. I want to thank the staff at the Western Cape Archives and Record Service in Cape Town. I have always found it a pleasure to work there and the service provided is commendable.

As mentioned earlier this thesis is part of the VOC Social Identities project and it has been comforting to know that other historians were on hand to provide support when needed. I would like to thank Gerald Groenewald, Antonia Malan, Susan Newton-King, Nigel Penn, Robert Shell and Kerry Ward. Their feedback, comments, and sometimes just plain interest in my work have been much appreciated.

I studied history in Leiden and a not inconsiderable portion of this thesis is based on work produced by lecturers I have had the pleasure of being taught by. There are two I specifically want to mention. One of the first classes I had, was taught by Professor Daan Roorda and the first thing he mentioned was that every historian had to have '*zitivlees*'. I have not found a proper English translation for this, but it comes down to

having the ability to sit for long hours while reading and writing. It is something I have never forgotten and have remembered many times while working on this thesis. It is fitting that Professor Roorda's thesis about "party and faction" has been a major inspiration for my work.

In Leiden I was also taught by Professor Robert Ross, who is of course a foremost expert on the history of South Africa and the Cape and his enthusiasm and encouragement were undeniably a contributory factor in steering me towards studying the history of this wonderful country. He may not remember this, but I had the impression that he wanted me to do a PhD in Leiden after I finished my graduate studies in 1988. Unfortunately I had enough of studying at the time and chose a different path. Hopefully I have made up for that decision now.

I have been fortunate and privileged to have had a supervisor like Professor Nigel Worden. One will be hard pressed to find a historical study about the Cape specifically, which does not make mention of his support and inspiration. He pushes without provocation, teaches without arrogance, and makes suggestions without taking away responsibility. On top of that he seems to have endless patience and he has undoubtedly a good sense of humour. And being a Dutch Calvinist at heart, I have to say that his work ethic is enormously stimulating. I am deeply grateful to him.

Although far away, my family has been very encouraging and supportive throughout. They never failed to ask how the work is progressing. I suspect that a main motive may have been that my graduation would give them an opportunity and occasion for another visit to South Africa. I do not think I say too much when I say that one of the biggest fans of this country was my father, Huig Baartman, who was also very interested in its history. Unfortunately he passed away in 2003. I know he would have been extremely proud. He is one of my main role-models and I would like to dedicate this thesis to him.

Lastly I want to thank my partner, Garth Jellars. I am sure that at times he must have been fed up with these burghers and their squabbles. But he has never uttered a complaint about me not giving attention to business or not being able to attend family gatherings. Without his backing and blessing I would not have been able to write this thesis.

Glossary

Dispensier	VOC official responsible for purchase and distribution of grain for the Company
Equipage meester	VOC official responsible for provisions of the Company
Gulden	Guilder – Dutch currency unit
Heemraad	Burger member of rural government (like Burgher Councillor in city)
Heeren XVII	Board of directors of the VOC
Kassier	VOC official responsible for collection and payment of Company money (paymaster)
Negotie overdrager	VOC official responsible for transferring trade bills
Opgaaf	Annual return of population and production
Pacht	Lease or tender to supply a product (e.g. meat or liquor) to the VOC
Pachter	Lease or tender holder
Plakkaat	Decree or law
Posthouder	VOC official in charge of a Company post outside Cape Town
Quotisatie	Tax assessment based on income and possession
Regent	Member of the Dutch ruling elite
Rijksdaalder	Rixdollar – Dutch currency unit
Schelling	Dutch currency unit
Schepen	Alderman
Stuijver	Dutch currency unit (farthing/penny)
Vrijbrief	Letter of freedom

Introduction

On 20 January 1779 the burgher Carel Hendrik Buijtendag was arrested by the administration of the Cape of Good Hope and banished to Batavia, the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Asia. The arrest sparked a period of political unrest in the Cape settlement lasting well into the 1780s during which Cape burghers demanded certain political and economic reforms from the VOC government. These protests are commonly referred to as the Cape Patriot movement since the South African historian Coenraad Beyers published his study '*Die Kaapse Patriotte*' in 1929.¹ Almost forty years later the second, extended edition of this work appeared and the term "Kaapse Patriotte (Cape Patriots)" became firmly entrenched in South African historiography.² Beyers made an association between the turmoil at the Cape and the Dutch Patriot movement as is evident from this term. He used this connection because of his desire to place the Cape protests against the background of '*the history of the origin of the Afrikaner nation*'.³ In doing so he made them more part of nineteenth and twentieth century developments while largely ignoring the role and influence of preceding Dutch and Cape history. Beyers' main focus was furthermore on the contents of the documents produced by the Cape burghers rather than on the actual people involved in and behind the unrest. The result was a study which explained the Cape conflict in terms of pre-Afrikaner burghers who, driven by ideological arguments, opposed a colonial VOC tyranny.

The work presented here places the conflict where it belongs, in the eighteenth century, and focuses mainly on the decade of the 1770s leading up to its eruption. It views the Cape protest movement from the perspective of both Dutch and Cape history and concentrates on the protesters rather than the rhetoric. It exposes the complexities of the conflict and the more down-to-earth and straightforward motivations of the protesters. In so doing this study seeks to re-assess the story of the

¹ C. Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte, 1779-1791* (Cape Town 1929).

² C. Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte gedurende die laaste kwart van die agtiende eeu en die voortlewing van hul denkbeelde* (Pretoria 1967).

³ '*die wordingsgeskiedenis van die Afrikanernasie*' - Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 19.

burgher protests of the late 1770s, while shedding some light on the intricate social and political world of the Cape settlement in the late eighteenth century.

On the sea voyage between Europe and Asia the Cape was the place where most, if not all, travellers spent a certain amount of time. Moreover many explorers made a point of visiting the Cape and its hinterland. They have left us with numerous accounts of their journeys and experiences.⁴ Siegfried Huigen writes about these travellers, e.g. Sparrman, Thunberg, Le Vaillant and Mentzel: 'Everything between heaven and earth attracted their interest. They usually published their findings, and in this way they sometimes reached a large audience'.⁵ The Cape must have been well-known to a wider public during VOC and Dutch rule. Yet until recently the Cape settlement has received relatively little attention in the historiography of both the VOC and the Dutch empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When it was discussed in 1991 Robert Ross still noted that the 'history of the Cape before 1795 has become separated from that of the rest of the Dutch empire, to their mutual disadvantage'.⁶ The Cape was an area which did not really fit in with the rest of the Dutch colonial empire and has been described as 'something unique – save for short-lived New Netherland - in the possessions of the Dutch East and West India Companies',⁷ 'an atypical part of the VOC's empire',⁸ and in all respects different from the settlements in Asia.⁹ Climatic conditions were ideal and healthy for the residents which was not the case in other Dutch Asian settlements and there was no serious threat from a large local population or from neighbouring European nations – in short, despite challenges experienced by the earliest settlers, there was not as much hardship and conflict to write about as there was for other parts of the empire. The Cape also did not offer the lucrative spices and other trade goods so essential to the financial well-being of the

⁴ An overview can be found in: M. Barend-Van Haefte en B. Paasman, *De Kaap: Goede Hoop halverwege Indië. Bloemlezing van Kaapteeksten uit de Compagniestijd* (Hilversum 2003). More recent, more comprehensive and containing an excellent bibliography of these texts, is: S. Huigen, *Knowledge and Colonialism: Eighteenth-century Travellers in South Africa* (Leiden 2009).

⁵ Huigen, *Knowledge and Colonialism*, vii.

⁶ R. Ross, 'The First Imperial Masters of Colonial South Africa', in: *South African Historical Journal* 25 (1991), 177-183, 178.

⁷ C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600-1800* (Harmondsworth 1973), 277.

⁸ Ross, 'The First Imperial Masters', 178.

⁹ F.S. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (Zutphen 1991), 80.

VOC and could thus by some be regarded as less important than the Asian settlements of the Dutch empire. But without the Cape as a welcome stop-over where VOC personnel could recover from the harsh conditions at sea, the mortality rate of men aboard the VOC ships could possibly have been much higher than it was in the eighteenth century.¹⁰ The Cape was for that reason alone of major significance to the success of the Company. Nevertheless it seemed to have been problematic for historians to give the Cape its due as part of the Dutch empire and may therefore not have been given the attention it deserves. There were some notable exceptions. In his study *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, published in 1965, C.R. Boxer dedicated a chapter to developments at the Cape of Good Hope, although it must be noted that it was a separate one.¹¹ Also the Dutch historian Gerrit Schutte paid particular attention to the Cape and especially the conflict between burghers and VOC in his work *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de Koloniën*.¹²

In South Africa itself the VOC period of the Cape was studied extensively by mainly Afrikaner historians as witnessed by a steady stream of publications which appeared especially throughout the twentieth century. 'However this work was studiously ignored by Anglophone South African historians', according to Nigel Worden, who describes and explains these differences in his article on 'New approaches to VOC history in South Africa'.¹³ This started to change in the late 1970s and 1980s when the eighteenth century history of the Cape began to receive attention among a wider group of researchers and in 1979 one of the major works on South African history since 1652 was published: *The shaping of South African society 1652-1820*.¹⁴ Despite its important contribution to the historiography of the Cape settlement one has to note that it was 'remarkably peripherocentric'.¹⁵ It included more chapters on the

¹⁰ Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 274-275.

¹¹ Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 273-301.

¹² G.J. Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de Koloniën. Een onderzoek naar hun denkbeelden en optreden, 1770-1800* (Groningen 1974).

¹³ N. Worden, 'New Approaches to VOC history in South Africa', in: *South African Historical Journal* 59:1 (2007), 3-18, 5.

¹⁴ H. Giliomee and R. Elphick (eds), *The shaping of South African society 1652-1820* (Cape Town 1979). A revised and extended edition appeared in 1989: H. Giliomee and R. Elphick (eds), *The shaping of South African society 1652-1840* (Cape Town 1989).

¹⁵ Ross, 'The First Imperial Masters', 182.

outer districts of the Cape than on the urban centre itself. This can be explained by considering the South African context where much emphasis was placed on the rule of white settlers over others and a lot of research was done on the history of groups like the slaves, the Khoi, the San, and other indigenous peoples, and the influence this had on South African society. Hand in hand with this development went the trend that not much attention was given to the urban environment of Cape Town itself, because more focus was placed on the rural areas and the frontiers of the Cape colony.¹⁶ Quite rightly Robert Ross asked the question: 'can we understand the nature of frontier expansion, the reasons for the subjugation of the Khoisan, and especially the characteristics of Cape rural slavery, if we do not know a lot more about the economic, administrative and social core of the colony, which was located in Cape Town?'¹⁷

The answer to this question came in the form of the Cape Town History Project launched in the 1990s, which focussed on the urban history of the "Mother City" and culminated in the publication of *Cape Town. The making of a City*.¹⁸ It furthermore became increasingly appreciated that although Cape Town was a small place it was also a city full of different people with diverse backgrounds, who classified themselves and each other in terms of gender, race, class, occupation, legal status, religion, nationality and many more criteria. All these varied classifications led to different hierarchies and networks, which were by no means coincident and resulted in a complex society. The Cape Town History Project was followed by the VOC Social Identities Project, which tried 'to understand the complexities of Cape colonial society in a much more nuanced way'.¹⁹

¹⁶ Other studies were published following this trend: R. Elphick, *Kraal and Castle Khoikhoi and the founding of white South Africa* (New Haven 1977); N. Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge 1985); R. Shell, *Children of bondage* (Johannesburg 1994); S. Newton-King, *Masters and servants on the Cape Eastern frontier, 1760-1803* (Cambridge 1999); N. Penn, *The forgotten frontier: colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's Northern frontier in the 18th century* (Cape Town 2005); W. Dooling, *Slavery, emancipation and colonial rule in South Africa* (Scottsville 2007) and L.J. Mitchell, *Belongings. Property, family, and identity in colonial South Africa (an exploration of frontiers, 1725-c. 1830)* (New York 2008).

¹⁷ Ross, 'The First Imperial Masters', 182.

¹⁸ N. Worden, E. van Heyningen, V. Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town. The making of a City* (Cape Town 1998).

¹⁹ N. Worden (ed.), *Contingent lives. Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC World* (Cape Town 2007), x.

Despite the fundamental changes in the historiography of the Cape settlement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Cape was generally still seen in isolation of the rest of the Dutch empire. It must be acknowledged that Beyers was one of the few Afrikaans historians who made the link between the happenings in the Cape and those in the Dutch Republic and made good use of Dutch historiography. He even went to the Netherlands during the 1920s to study his subject. However Beyers could for a long time be regarded as an exception and even the 1989 edition of the *Shaping of South African Society* only included two chapters which viewed the Cape in a wider context. Robert Ross writes about the Cape of Good Hope and the world economy and Gerrit Schutte about Company and colonists at the Cape. Schutte concluded his chapter with: 'The settlement at the Cape was, after all, only one of the territories of the VOC, and the VOC formed part of the Republic of the United Netherlands. This means that Cape structures and events should be seen in the context of the Netherlands and of common Dutch colonial patterns.'²⁰ This is a significant observation, because it simply will not do to deny the fact that by its position alone Cape Town was placed at the centre of the major parts of the Dutch seaborne empire in Europe, Asia and America. More and more this is now being realised and a major contribution made towards this development was made by the *Contingent Lives* conference in 2006 and the accompanying book which appeared in 2007.²¹

Contingent Lives contains a number of notable examples of studies which look at the Cape less as an island but rather as part of larger and wider structures. In 2005 it was determined that The National Archives in London housed some 38,000 Dutch private and commercial letters from ordinary people based in places like Batavia, Colombo, Paramaribo and Cape Town. This find indicates that residents of various parts of the Dutch empire corresponded with each other and must have exchanged news and ideas. It means that we do not only have to rely on the official correspondence going back and forth between the Dutch Republic and the overseas settlements to form an

²⁰ G. Schutte, 'Company and Colonists at the Cape, 1652-1795', in: Elphick and Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, 283-323, 317.

²¹ N. Worden (ed.), *Contingent lives. Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC World* (Cape Town 2007).

idea of daily life in the overseas territories, while at the same time being able to make comparisons between the various settlements based on private letters.²²

A well-known addition to Cape society came at the end of the seventeenth century in the form of the immigration of a large group of French Huguenots. Maybe less familiar to South African historians is that the Huguenots also emigrated to North America. This opens the door to some intriguing comparisons. Thera Wijsenbeek concludes that the Huguenots lost their identity during the eighteenth century both in the American and Cape melting pots.²³

Only recently it has been established that increase in ship traffic on the Cape trade route definitely had a positive effect on the growth of the economy of the Cape settlement, most notably on wine and wheat farming close to Cape Town and the tertiary sector (accommodation of ship crews).²⁴

Particularly groundbreaking has been the work of Kerry Ward, who has placed Cape Town firmly in the 'networks of empire' and shown how the slave trade, as well as religious and political exile and punitive transportation of people to and from the Cape had its influence on the shaping of status, religion and ethnicity in Cape Town.²⁵

These are just a few of the many links and comparisons that are now made between the Cape and other parts of the Dutch empire, and indeed other parts of the world, and illustrate how the Cape was very much a part of international structures and events. It must be pointed out that various studies produced by historians on places like Batavia, Galle, Fort Cochin and New Netherland have made it possible to compare the Cape settlement to those in other parts of the Dutch empire and the world.²⁶ The

²² R. Van Gelder, 'Letters, journals and seeds: Forgotten Dutch mail in the National Archives in London', in: *Contingent lives*, 538-545.

²³ T. Wijsenbeek, 'Identity lost: Huguenot refugees in the Dutch Republic and its former colonies in North America and South Africa, 1650 to 1750: a comparison', in: *Contingent Lives*, 91-109.

²⁴ W.H. Boshoff and J. Fourie, 'The significance of the Cape trade route to economic activity in the Cape colony: a medium-term business cycle analysis', *Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers* 23/2008.

²⁵ K. Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge 2009).

²⁶ See for example comparative studies like: R.F. Betts, R. Ross and G.J. Telkamp (eds), *Colonial cities: essays on urbanism in a colonial context* (Leiden 1985); U. Bosma and R. Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the*

Cape was not isolated and the shaping of Cape and South African society and its residents was influenced by intercontinental configurations.

Even though the work on Cape history by researchers is rich and diverse, there is still much focus on social groupings like slaves, convicts, free blacks and common VOC personnel (soldiers and sailors). There has been less interest in the elite of the Cape settlement, although admittedly the groups that formed part of this elite, the (free) burghers and the higher VOC officials, were not totally ignored. In the early 1980s studies about the Cape gentry by Leonard Guelke and Robert Shell and by Robert Ross appeared.²⁷ Schutte wrote about the VOC personnel at the Cape in his above-mentioned chapter in *The Shaping*. More recently exciting and important work has been done by Gerald Groenewald on the world of the burgher entrepreneurs in Cape Town and the complex network of relations which existed among them as well as between them and VOC officials. One of his findings is the importance of kinship and social capital to the creation of a burgher elite at the Cape.²⁸

This thesis has many elements of the recent trends described so far: it focuses on Cape Town and its elite groups and views events in the Cape in a wider, albeit mostly Dutch, context. There is a long tradition in the Netherlands of the study of the patriciate and

Indies: a history of creolisation and empire, 1500-1920 (Singapore 2000); L. Blusse, *Visible cities. Canton, Nagasaki, and Batavia and the coming of the Americans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts 2008); and J. Jacobs, *Een zegenrijk gewest. Nieuw Nederland in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1999).

Then there are various studies on single settlements: J.G. Taylor, *The social world of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison 1983); L. Wagenaar, *Galle, VOC-vestiging in Ceylon. Beschrijving van een koloniale samenleving aan de vooravond van de Singalese opstand tegen het Nederlands gezag, 1760* (Amsterdam 1994); A. Singh, *Fort Cochin in Kerala 1750-1830. The social condition of a Dutch community in an Indian milieu* (Ph.D. thesis Leiden 2007); J. Venema, *Beverwijck. A Dutch Village on the American Frontier, 1652-1664* (Hilversum 2003).

²⁷ L. Guelke and R. Shell, 'An Early Colonial Landed Gentry: Land and Wealth in the Cape Colony, 1682-1731', *Journal of Historical Geography* 9:3 (1983), 265-286; R. Ross, 'The rise of the Cape Gentry', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1983) 193-217.

²⁸ G. Groenewald, 'A Cape bourgeoisie?: Alcohol, entrepreneurs and the evolution of an urban free-burgher society in VOC Cape Town', in: Worden, *Contingent Lives*, 278-304; G. Groenewald, 'An early modern entrepreneur: Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen and the Creation of Wealth in Dutch Colonial Cape Town, 1702-1741', in: *Kronos: Southern African Histories* 35 (2009), 7-31; G. Groenewald, *Kinship, Entrepreneurship and Social Capital: Alcohol Pachtters and the Making of a Free-Burgher Society in Cape Town, 1652-1795* (PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2009).

elite, the so-called regents (*regenten*), in Dutch cities.²⁹ An enormous amount of research has been done and published from the 1980s onwards.³⁰ There is also a considerable amount of material available on burghers and the concept of *burgerschap* in the Dutch Republic.³¹ The Dutch research has been used extensively by Ad Biewenga in his study about the Cape.³² Even though he is focused on the rural areas surrounding Cape Town, he shows that many Cape institutions and aspects of society were replicated from the Dutch Republic. As a Dutch historian he is well aware of the body of material available and used much of it as a source of comparison. With the veritable riches available it is difficult to understand why historians in South Africa generally show so little interest in these works and the application of the existing theories on the political and social history of Cape Town. A reason for this is likely the lack of familiarity with Dutch historiography and, perhaps more importantly, with the Dutch language, which is a barrier I do not have as a native Dutch speaker.

It is my argument that, despite the many influences from the European, Asian and African worlds, Cape Town of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was essentially a Dutch city, especially with regards to the political-administrative organisation and institutions. This came about mainly because of the connections and similarities between members of the Cape elite and their counterparts in *patria*.

²⁹ This goes as far back as the early twentieth century with works as: J.E. Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578-1795*, 2 volumes (Haarlem 1903-1905) and P.D. de Vos, *De vroedschap van Zierikzee* (Middelburg 1931).

³⁰ There are numerous studies of individual places and towns in the Dutch Republic. I can only list a few of these here: L. Kooijmans, *Onder Regenten. De elite in een Hollandse stad, Hoorn 1700-1780* (Amsterdam 1985); J.J. de Jong, *Met goed fatsoen. De elite in een Hollandse stad, Gouda 1700-1780* (Amsterdam 1986); M. Prak, *Gezeten burgers. De elite in een Hollandse stad, Leiden 1700-1780* (Amsterdam 1986); J.C. Streng, *Stemme in staat. De bestuurlijke elite in de stadsrepubliek Zwolle, 1579-1795* (Hilversum 1997). A comprehensive bibliography is available on this website: <http://home.tiscali.nl/~t845911/republic/regents.html> (last accessed 7 October 2011).

³¹ An excellent overview of this research is provided in J. Kloek and K. Tilmans (eds), *Burger. Een geschiedenis van het begrip 'burger' in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam 2002); Other material includes: H. Hendrix and M. Meijer Drees, (eds.) *Beschaafde burger: Burgerlijkheid in de vroegmoderne tijd* (Amsterdam 2000); M.R. Prak, 'Burghers into citizens: Urban and National Citizenship in the Netherlands during the Revolutionary Era (c.1800)', in M. Hanagan & C. Tilly (Eds.), *Extending citizenship, reconfering states* (Lanham 1999) pp. 17-35; R. Aerts, and H. Te Velde, *De stijl van de burger* (Kampen 1998).

³² A. Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop. Een Nederlandse vestigingskolonie, 1680-1730* (Amsterdam 1999).

The first section of this thesis sets out this argument by using the case study of the burgher protests which rocked the Cape at the end of the 1770s and early 1780s. Chapter 1 gives an overview of what happened during the turmoil in this period and introduces some of the main role-players. It furthermore illustrates in what way the protesting burghers placed themselves opposite the VOC administration and how they continuously emphasised their unique position as burghers and highlighted their burgher rights.

The protesting burghers at the Cape certainly regarded themselves as being equivalent to burghers in Dutch cities. The background behind this reasoning and the question whether this is a justifiable standpoint is investigated in the second chapter. It examines the history of the position of cities and burghers in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and shows their paramount importance to the political and social world of the Republic at the time. This is then related to other countries and parts of Europe. But more importantly connections are made between the way Dutch cities and overseas settlements were set up, not only in the physical sense, but more specifically in the way the overseas settlements became governed.

Dutch administrative practices found their way all over the empire via the big Dutch trading companies, the West India Company (WIC) and the VOC. One of these was the institution of *burgerschap*, which was exported to New Netherland in America and to the Asian settlements. It is important to explore and establish how and to what extent Dutch *burgerschap* was used as a frame of reference by both administrators and burghers. This is done in various ways. Firstly the practical formalities surrounding *burgerschap* in Dutch cities and Cape Town are compared by looking at the various ways in which one could become a burgher, the actual burgher oath one had to swear, and the advantages one gained by becoming a burgher. Secondly the burghers need to be compared to other groups, e.g. free blacks, living in Cape Town in the eighteenth century. This should provide insights into the level of self-awareness and identity which existed among burghers, but also into the criteria used for access into the burgher group. In the Dutch Republic having *burgerschap* meant possessing a special status and being a member of a status group was the determining factor for one's

position in Dutch society. This made one's status more important than other criteria (e.g. individual position, class or race). The question is if Cape society in the eighteenth century, like Dutch society, was based on status rather than based on race as often is presumed.³³ Lastly Cape *burgerschap* is compared to Dutch *burgerschap* according to the manner in which burgher protests were undertaken and how the authorities responded to it in the eighteenth century. The burghers in the Dutch Republic had over time developed a well- established manner of protesting. Similarities between the protest practices in Cape Town and cities in the Dutch Republic would further strengthen the argument that Cape Town was very much a Dutch city.

This first part of the thesis deals more with the ideological side of the burgher protests of the late 1770s and seeks to determine whether the Cape burghers were indeed justified in taking the position that they were on par with burghers of Dutch cities. It cannot be denied that this is a significant part of the story of the burgher protests and the shaping of Cape burgher identity in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless one of my arguments is that the emphasis placed on the ideological motive of the protest movement in South African historiography has clouded the view on other intentions of the protesting burghers and aspects of Cape political and social life at the time. This is for the most part due to the historian Coenraad Beyers, whose study of the protest movement has remained largely unchallenged, and who labelled the protesters 'Cape Patriots'. The opening lines of the second, extended edition of his work are:

'The researcher of the history of the origins of the Afrikaner nation will especially find that his attention is involuntary captivated by the ongoing agitation and turmoil which is detected among a considerable portion of the colonists of South Africa during the last quarter of the 18th century; namely,

³³ The discussion on race, class and status in Cape society and their origins is an ongoing one. I would however like to point to one interesting article on the subject: H. Giliomee, 'Eighteenth century Cape society and its historiography: Culture, race and class', in: *Social Dynamics* 9- 1 (1983), 18-29. He concludes: 'Drawing on a common medieval heritage the colonists themselves added a customary definition of man's rank in society according to the estate in which he was born.' (p.13). This is a rather astute observation and all the more remarkable, because in later work Giliomee seems to focus more on race as an identifying criteria for determining one's place in eighteenth century Cape society. See on this subject as well: R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: a tragedy of manners* (Cambridge 1999).

*predominantly among those burghers who commonly called themselves Patriots.*³⁴

The first part of this remark - which is one of the central arguments of his book - that the burgher protests were the first stirrings of Afrikaner nationalism, will be commented on later. The second claim, that these protesting burghers called themselves Patriots³⁵, is crucial to my research which aims to shed light on who these burghers actually were and what motivated them. There can be no doubt that Beyers argued that the Cape protesters were the same kind of Patriots as the Dutch ones and not some separate or different kind of Patriots. He made this clear when he quoted the Dutch historian Nicolas Japikse while commenting on his work: 'The Cape also had its Patriot movement'.³⁶ However there are several arguments which can be made against Beyers' claim.

The timing of the Cape and Dutch protests was completely different. The Patriot Movement was a Dutch phenomenon which occurred in many cities in the Dutch Republic in the 1780s. It was essentially a protest movement of Dutch burghers against the position and centralist rule of the Stadholder, the Prince of Orange, and the oligarchy of regents. It pleaded for political reforms, more rights for the burghers and for a restoration of the local autonomy of the cities.³⁷ Even though the unrest in the Dutch Republic had been brewing since the appointment of Willem V as Stadholder in

³⁴ 'Die ondersoeker van die wordingsgeskiedenis van die Afrikanernasie vind onwillekeurig sy aandag in besondere mate geboei deur die aanhoudende gisting en beroering wat daar by 'n aansienlike gedeelte van die koloniste van Suid-Afrika gedurende die laaste kwart van die 18de eeu te bespeur is; te wete, hoofsaaklik bij die burgers wat algemeen die naam van Patriotte gevoer het.' - Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 19.

³⁵ Beyers repeats this remark at the end of his book where he writes: '*die burgers wat die naam van Patriotte aangeneem het*' - Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 291.

³⁶ 'Ook de Kaap heeft zijn patriottenbeweging gehad' - Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 21.

³⁷ The literature on the Dutch Patriot movement is extensive: C.H.E. de Wit, *De Nederlandse revolutie van de achttiende eeuw 1780-1787* (Oirsbeek 1974); S. Schama, *Patriots and liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (New York 1977/Amsterdam 2005); W.P. Te Brake, 'Popular Politics and the Dutch Patriot Revolution', in: *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (March 1985), 199-222; M. Prak, 'Citizen Radicalism and Democracy in the Dutch Republic: The Patriot Movement of the 1780s', in: *Theory and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Feb. 1991), 73-102; M.C. Jacob and W.W. Mijnhardt (eds), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century. Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (London 1992); S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots Republikenisme: Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)* (Amsterdam 1995); A. Wilschut, *Goejanvervellesluis: de strijd tussen patriotten en prinsgezinden, 1780-1787* (Hilversum 2000). A compelling biography of the life and times of one of the main Patriots, Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol is: Hella S. Haase, *Schaduwbeeld of Het geheim van Appeltern. Kroniek van een leven* (Amsterdam 1989).

1747 and increased ever since, the Dutch Patriot Movement only started to become active after 1780, a fact on which most historians agree, placing it in the period 1781 to 1787. Some link it to the start of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in December 1780, but more often the publication of the inflammatory pamphlet *'Aan het volk van Nederland'* ('To the people of the Netherlands') in September 1781 is mentioned as the starting point. Then 'After a period of politicization and initial mobilization primarily in opposition to the Prince of Orange (1782-1784), the Patriots only gradually radicalized their demands and challenged the old-regime oligarchy ... (1784-1786)'.³⁸ The Cape protests began in 1778 and were therefore well underway by the time the uproar in the Netherlands really started.

One of Beyers' arguments in favour of his argument that the Cape Patriots were associated to the Dutch Patriots was that the leaders of the Cape protesters linked up with prominent Patriots in the Netherlands and sought their support.³⁹ However all the material he used to support this claim referred to the second delegation of Cape burghers, which was sent to the Dutch Republic in 1784 as response to the decision of the VOC Directors in 1783, and not to the first one. Also most comments made by contemporary Dutch publicists about the troubles at the Cape of Good Hope started to appear after 1783 and looked back in hindsight while trying to find similarities between the Cape protests of 1778/79 and what the Dutch Patriots stood for in the 1780s.⁴⁰ Beyers failed to note the significance of this. The Cape movement after 1783 was a different one from the 1778/79 protests. Beyers examined the 1783 movement and may very well have been right in stating that it was inspired by the Dutch Patriots, but then he made the error of transplanting his findings to the earlier movement without really having anything to support this or making a proper comparison of the people involved in both protests. He regarded the protests from 1779 to the late 1780s as one ongoing movement. I argue that the burgher protests at the Cape came in two waves: the first one of 1778 had an economic character with different groupings

³⁸ Te Brake, 'Popular politics', 202.

³⁹ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 211-213; see also Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten*, 69.

⁴⁰ Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten*, 75-84.

fighting for control, whereas the second one, which began in 1784, was indeed more ideological and therefore could more justifiably be named the Cape Patriot movement.

In none of the documents, pamphlets, letters and requests, which they produced during the first years of the political turmoil at the Cape, did the burghers use the term “Patriots” to describe their movement. The first time one comes across the word Patriots is in a letter from the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, Baron Joachim Van Plettenberg, to the *Heeren XVII* dated 1 April 1780 where he refers to the protesting burghers as ‘*the so-called Patriots, or the actual disgruntled*’.⁴¹ The next time is on 20 March 1781 in the Governor’s official response to the burgher complaints: ‘*that those residents of this settlement, who have showed their dissatisfaction for a while now, appropriated the honourable name of Patriots*’.⁴² Van Plettenberg clearly was unhappy that the protesters dared to call themselves patriots. This is somewhat surprising, because it would assist his cause if the Cape protesters were similar to Dutch Patriots, who fought against everything that he represented as nobleman and regent. He was after all a high official of the VOC and appointed in that position by the ‘*opperbewindhebber*’ (supreme governor) of the Company, the Stadholder Willem V. The Governor would have wanted to portray the protesters in a negative light and being like a Dutch Patriot would assist his argument. Yet he used the words “*honourable*” and “*Patriots*” in the same sentence and therefore must have thought it was something positive. It is thus more probable that he used the term in the meaning of one who loves and supports one’s country and did not refer to the Dutch political protest movement. In contrast to Beyers’ claims, the Cape protesters of 1778/79 never called themselves or were called Patriots in the meaning of the Dutch protesters of the 1780s.

Lastly, the Cape protesters of the 1770s seemed more likely to be against the Dutch Patriots and it was Beyers himself who illustrated this point. He described how the

⁴¹ ‘*de sogenaamde Patriotten, ofte de eijgentlijke malcontenten*’ – Western Cape Archives and Record Service (WCARS), C 2695, 495 (1.4.1780).

⁴² ‘*dat die geen van ‘s Lands ingezeetenen Leden deeser Volkplantinge, dewelke seedert eenigen tijd een openbaar misnoegen betoont, en uit dien hoofde sig selven den eerwaardigen toenaam van Patriotten toegeeeigent hebben*’ - WCARS, C 2692, 10 (20.3.1781).

troubles at the Cape started in May 1778 when mysterious packets appeared one morning in the streets of Cape Town.⁴³ The packets contained a letter, which accused the VOC administration at the Cape of trampling on the rights of the burghers and called on them to defend these rights. The letter was accompanied by a pamphlet entitled '*De magt en de vrijheden eener Burgerlijke Maatschappij verdedigt door de gevoelens der voornaamste Regtsgeleerden, opgedraagen aan 't oordeel der Caabsche Burgerij*' or 'The power and the liberties of a civil society defended by the foremost legal minds, consigned to the judgment of the Cape burghers'.⁴⁴ Beyers explained that this pamphlet was practically word for word copied from a work which first appeared in the Dutch Republic in 1754 entitled '*Het Gedrag der Stadhoudersgezinden verdedigt door Mr. A. V. K. Rechtsgeleerden*' or 'The behaviour of the supporters of the Stadholder, defended by Mr. A. V. K., lawyer'.⁴⁵ This was written by the lawyer, printer, publisher and writer Elie Luzac, who was an outspoken supporter of the Orange Stadholder.⁴⁶ The pamphlet maintained that if it so happens that the people were not satisfied with their situation they could appeal to their government to redress the state of affairs, but this had to be done in a lawful and legal manner. Significantly it ended with the burghers reserving the right to present their case directly to '*the honourable gentlemen of the States General of the United Netherlands, who are, next to God, the only ones we recognise as our sovereigns, and in particular His Royal Highness*' and with the motto of the United Netherlands: '*Eendragt maakt magt*' (in unity is strength).⁴⁷ The contents of these publications made it clear that the Cape protesters had nothing in common with the aims of the Dutch Patriots. On the contrary, they were anti-Patriot in the sense that they recognised the authority of the Stadholder and the sovereignty of the central political bodies of the Dutch Republic – as opposed to the independence of local governments. Yet even though Beyers was well aware that the pamphlet was copied from the Orangist Luzac, nowhere in his

⁴³ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 25; WCARS, C 2689, 13, 16-18 (22.5.1779).

⁴⁴ The full text of this pamphlet can be found in Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 299-309 and WCARS, C 2689, 18-27 (22.5.1779).

⁴⁵ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 214-215, 299.

⁴⁶ J.I. Israel, *De Republiek: 1477-1806* (Franeker 2008), 1193; Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten*, 8.

⁴⁷ '*Hoog Mogende Heeren Staaten Generaal der vereenigde Nederlanden, die wij naast God alleen erkennen voor onse Souverainen, en in bijzonder aan sijne Doorlugtige Hoogheid*' (the Orange stadholders Willem V) - WCARS, C 2689, 18, 27 (22.5.1779).

study did he acknowledge the implications for the political views of the burgher protesters of 1778/79, namely that these were not based on Patriot principles.

The Cape protesters were not Dutch Patriots or Cape Patriots. Then why was Beyers so adamant that they were? Beyers was guided in his views by his over-arching desire to see the burgher protests as the first stirrings of Afrikaner nationalism. His view was that just as the Dutch Patriots stood up to, what they considered to be, an oppressive regime, did the Cape burghers, as forerunners of the Afrikaners, oppose the tyrannical colonial rulers. Beyers left no doubt about this claim as he concluded:

*'This way of thinking at the Cape became most apparent among those burghers who chose to call themselves Patriots. It is also among them that we discover a pure unfolding of the national consciousness which saluted South Africa as its own, beloved fatherland. We further note that from among their ranks later the noble person of Piet Retief and even later the unforgettable son of South Africa, the State president of the former South African Republic, Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, emerge.'*⁴⁸

Another historian who discussed the Cape burgher protests was George Frederickson, who did so in his comparative study of white supremacy in America and South Africa.⁴⁹ On the one hand he suggested that the protesters might have been influenced by the enlightened views of the American Revolution and the natural right of burghers to stand up against their government if it failed to carry out its duty, which ideas were part and parcel of the Dutch Patriot movement. But he also stated that the demands made by the burghers in 1779 were nothing more than 'a catalogue of practical complaints and proposals that amounted primarily to a demand for free trade as a

⁴⁸ *'Die geestestroming aan die Kaap openbaar hom die sterkste by die burgers wat die naam van Patriotte aangeneem het. By hulle word ons ook gewaar 'n skone ontvouing van die nasionale bewussyn wat Suid-Afrika begroet as die eie, dierbare vaderland. Ook bemerk ons dat dit uit hul geledere is dat later die nobele figuur van Piet Retief en nog later die onvergeetlike seun van Suid-Afrika, die Staatspresident van die voormalige Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, te voorskyn tree'* - Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 291. At first glance it seems that the photo of Paul Kruger opposite page 39 of *Die Kaapse Patriotte* is out of place in a study of an eighteenth century political movement, but this quote puts it in context and shows that it certainly had a meaning for the author.

⁴⁹ G.M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy. A comparative study in American & South African History* (New York 1982), 146.

cure for economic privation'. He acknowledged that the Cape burghers, especially those who travelled to the Netherlands to plead the burgher cause, may have been influenced by the 'new language of democratic rights and popular sovereignty', but at the same time he was 'doubtful if such notions penetrated deeply into the consciousness of the ordinary burghers at the Cape'. Despite his misgivings he still used the label "Cape Patriot movement" to describe the burgher protests.

In his biography of the Afrikaner people Herman Giliomee described the turmoil at the Cape as 'the struggle of the Cape Patriots between 1778 and 1787, which in turn drew inspiration from the Patriot movement in the Netherlands during this period'.⁵⁰

Giliomee followed in the footsteps of Beyers by treating the burgher protests of the late 1770s and those of the 1780s as if they were all part of the same movement, by linking them to the Dutch Patriots, and by labelling the whole movement as "Cape Patriots". His argument is weakened when he makes the mistake of quoting from a '1784 document of the Cape Patriots', which actually was produced by a group of wealthy farmers among whom was Hendrik Cloete, who was candid about his loathing of the protesting burghers and was anything but a Cape Patriot.⁵¹ Then, despite Giliomee depicting the Cape protesters as having grand ideals and aims, he stated that 'although they quoted from or circulated documents by Enlightenment thinkers, the Cape Patriots were preoccupied with local concerns'.⁵²

The Cape protesters as described by these historians emerge as a group of burghers in two minds. On the one hand they credit them with lofty ideals and on the other they claim that their demands were mundane and down to earth. This divergence stemmed from the need of wanting to show the "Cape Patriot" movement as the embryonic beginning of Afrikaner nationalism. Giliomee ended his section on the Patriots with the words: 'It was here that the model of a racially exclusive white burgher community

⁵⁰ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners. Biography of a people* (Charlottesville/Cape Town 2003), 54.

⁵¹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 56. This episode will be dealt with in chapter 6. There are more sloppy mistakes in this section of Giliomee's book. One of them is getting the name wrong of the famous Dutch Patriot Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol (Giliomee: Joan Dirk van der Capelin tot den Poll). And, more seriously, he names the Independent Fiscal at the Cape *Hendrik* Boers, while it was of course *Willem Cornelis* Boers.

⁵² Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 54.

with special political and social privileges crystallized'.⁵³ But it is impossible to marry the dawn of Afrikaner nationalism with the straightforward demands of the Cape burgher protesters, because they were completely different movements, which will become clearer in the second part of my thesis. The outcome of trying to force two different matters together is this contradictory view on the burgher protests. The 'Patriot' label introduced by Beyers and the excessive prominence given to the ideological arguments of the protesting burghers must be regarded as fundamentally flawed. In this thesis the protesters are therefore named precisely what they were: protesters.

A feature of labels is that they tend to stick - useful in most cases, but unfortunate in this one. Since the appearance of Beyers' work the burgher protests of the late 1770s and beyond have been lumped together and consistently labelled in South African historiography as "The Cape Patriot movement" without much questioning by historians. Furthermore, because of the highlighting of the 'Patriot' label a simplified picture of this political conflict has often been presented in South African historiography. The protests were reduced to a struggle between two clear-cut parties, burghers and VOC, and have been described as a fight for the rights of burghers against an autocratic and absolute VOC government. This was certainly the case in the earlier mentioned work of Frederickson and Giliomee.⁵⁴ In his chapter in the *Shaping of South African Society* Gerrit Schutte discussed the protest movement of the late 1770s as one of the conflicts between 'freeburghers and VOC officials' and described the protest leaders as a 'colonial elite that came into conflict with officials from abroad'.⁵⁵ More recently Yvonne Brink wrote about the role Afrikaans played 'in empowering the burghers and thus enabling them to resort to overt action against VOC oppression in a rebellion known as the *Patriotbeweging*'.⁵⁶ The consequence of this basic and uncomplicated view on the burgher protests is that the role-players,

⁵³ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 57.

⁵⁴ It is remarkable how two historians writing from a different political perspective can still come to the same conclusions.

⁵⁵ Schutte, 'Company and colonists', 314, 315.

⁵⁶ Y. Brink, 'Changing perceptions of free burgher status and identity at the Cape during the period of VOC rule', in: Worden, *Contingent lives*, 414-427, 426. See also Y. Brink, *They came to stay. Discovering meaning in the 18th Century Cape country dwelling* (Stellenbosch 2008).

both the protesters as well as the ruling elite, have not been studied in detail.⁵⁷ Even Coenraad Beyers did not go much further than a short description of the '*men at the top of the Burgher movement*'.⁵⁸ Other South African historians have not done better since then.

The second part of this thesis therefore seeks to research the people and groups involved in the protests in detail. While the first section deals with the comparison of administrative institutions and *burgerschap* between Dutch cities and Cape Town and seeks to illustrate that Cape Town was a Dutch city in many respects, the second part aims to show that the parallels ran deeper and went further in the sense that the resulting political practice was also similar. This is based on the argument that the burgher protests of the late 1770s were an expression of long established Dutch customs and practices of political rule and conflict and thus more a fight between factions than purely an ideological uprising against the VOC administration. More down to earth political-economic motives were behind the protests.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Dutch cities were governed by regents, who formed networks of power in order to stay in control. These networks, or factions, functioned through a give-and-take exchange between patron and clients and were founded predominantly on kinship relations. There often were disputes between factions for political control of the cities and the regents then called on their clientele of burghers for support. The system of patrimonial rule and faction conflict is introduced in chapter 3.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Gerald Groenewald uses the term "depersonalised" to describe the way in which Cape economy during the VOC period has been studied and this term might also be applicable to the study of the burgher protests. Groenewald, 'A Cape bourgeoisie?', 280, n.17.

⁵⁸ *manne aan die Spits van die Burgerbeweginge* - Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 111.

⁵⁹ The foremost study on the subject of factions in the Dutch Republic is D.J. Roorda, *Partij en factie. De oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland. Een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (Groningen 1961). Other works are: S. Groenveld, *Evidente factiën in den staet. Sociaal-politieke verhoudingen in de 17e-eeuwse Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Hilversum 1990); P. Dreiskaemper, *'Redeloos, radeloos en reddeloos', de geshiedenis van het rampjaar 1672* (Hilversum 1998); J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: its rise, greatness and fall 1477-1806* (Oxford 1999); W. Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III: een politieke biografie* (Hilversum, 2001); J. Adams, *The familial state: ruling families and merchant capitalism in early modern Europe* (Ithaca NY 2005). (See also the literature mentioned in footnote 28)

That the Cape was no stranger to the Dutch way of political life is demonstrated by the story of the W.A. van der Stel affair which took place at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The administration of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel was an almost typical example of patrimonial rule. He built networks based on family links and mutual interests and to a large extent abused his power, but thought nothing of it because he had an ingrained sense of entitlement as a regent. The resulting conflict has been described by Hermann Giliomee as 'a feud between two sets of elites who had fallen out in a fight over the spoils'.⁶⁰ And in his description of the Van Der Stel affair Nigel Penn several times named the opposing parties the 'Van der Stel faction' and the 'anti-Van der Stel faction'.⁶¹

Networks were operational throughout Cape society and not restricted to the political world. Danelle van Zyl describes how the faction and clientele system featured in the personal letters written by Cape residents at the end of the eighteenth century. They were careful to cultivate their networks based on personal and especially familial relationships. They had no hesitation in offering and seeking reciprocal favours via their networks.⁶²

Because this was the accepted norm in the eighteenth century it is all the more surprising that this has not received more attention. Despite his above-mentioned view on the Van Der Stel affair, Giliomee continued to describe the conflict mainly in terms of an uprising of burghers against VOC officials. Some historians will concede that other eighteenth century political conflicts at the Cape had elements of a faction fight.⁶³ But yet when they get to the protests of the 1770s they fall back on Beyers' view that these were a case of a suppressed burgher minority fighting in unison against the VOC for political liberation and democratic rights. It would make more historical sense to assume that the well-established political routine of Dutch and Cape history

⁶⁰ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 24.

⁶¹ N. Penn, *Rogues, rebels and runaways. Eighteenth-Century Cape Characters* (Cape Town 1999), 22-31.

⁶² D. Van Zyl, "Gij kent genoeg mijn gevoelig hart". *Cape Dutch emotion around the turn of the nineteenth century* (MA thesis, University of Leiden, 2009), 37-38.

⁶³ One of these is also Nigel Penn who wrote about the 'ungraceful struggle for the governorship' between Daniel van den Henghel and Hendrik Swellengrebel which ensued in the second half of the 1730s and indicated that this had certain ingredients of a faction fight – Penn, *Rogues, rebels and runaways*, 109-110. See also Schutte, 'Company and colonists', 294-297.

would continue throughout the eighteenth century and accordingly to also regard the conflict of the 1770s as a faction dispute.

To be able to determine if this was indeed the case, it is necessary to examine the role-players in the political turmoil in closer detail. The manner in which this is done is described from chapter 3 onwards. Fortunately the protesters themselves are easily identifiable because of a protest petition signed by 404 burghers in May 1779. These protesters need to be compared to the rest of the burgher population of 1779, so that certain questions about their background, relationships and circumstances can be answered. There is no burgher list available for this period and therefore one was compiled using primary sources available in the Western Cape Archives and Record Service in Cape Town. This has led to the building of a database of burghers living in the Cape District (and to some extent also the Stellenbosch District) between roughly 1773 and 1785. The database provides all kinds of information on the burghers – from personal data to facts about their occupation, possessions, administrative and militia functions - and is used to perform a prosopography of the burghers involved in the protests. With the help of the database chapter 3 determines the size of the group of protesters in relation to the rest of the burgher population, and draws conclusions on the social and economic status of the protesters. Members of the VOC administration tried to portray the protesting burghers as a small, unimportant, lowly and misinformed section of the burgher population and it would be appropriate to see if the actual data support this notion. A further reason is that according to the Dutch experience of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries burgher protests were largely undertaken by burghers from the higher and middle strata and not exclusively by the lower ranked people. If Cape Town was a Dutch city, as has been discussed in the first part of the thesis, it could very well follow that the Cape protests likewise involved higher ranking burghers.

The final three chapters seek to substantiate the above claim by looking in detail at some major actors in the protests: the Burgher Councillors, the burgher militia and the burgher entrepreneurs. The institutions and functions of the Burgher Councillors and burgher militia drew heavily on the experience of Dutch cities. A further matter which

will be discussed is the importance of these institutions for the shaping of burgher identity. Particular attention will be given to the important aspect of patrimonial rule. The individual backgrounds and alliances of the Burgher Councillors and officers of the burgher militia will be identified and examined in detail resulting in the emergence of an intriguing and highly developed complex of networks based largely on family connections. The question whether this also meant that opposing factions were instrumental in the conflict is a vital aspect of this investigation. All the Burgher Councillors and militia officers belonged to the most prominent section of burgher society and greatly depended on the goodwill of the VOC government. Assuming that some of them were indeed at the forefront of the protest movement, then the question why they chose to oppose that same government will need to be answered.

The chapter on the burgher entrepreneurs tries to dig deeper into the motives behind the burgher protests. It discusses various kinds of entrepreneurs, both those based in the rural areas surrounding Cape Town as well as in the city itself, like meat *pachters*, wine farmers, alcohol *pachters*, bakers and smiths. My argument is that as businessmen this group of wealthy farmers and urban based traders and craftsmen was unlikely to be driven by lofty liberation ideals (with which the Cape protesters were often credited), but far more by their own personal business interests, while exploiting a general feeling of frustration among burghers. This finding would make the two conflicts on opposite ends of the eighteenth century - the W.A. van der Stel affair and the burgher protests of the late 1770s - in actual fact very similar fights between two factions for economic and political control. Even Governor Van Plettenberg had to admit this was probably the case when he shed his light on the true reasons for the burgher protests, which were according to him: *'the overbearing views of some, and the self interest of others, while playing on the dissatisfaction with, and the aversion to some Company Servants, which has smouldered for some time and has captivated the feelings of many Residents.'*⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *'de heerssuchtige vues van eenige, en het eigen belang van andere, sig bedienende van het misnoegen, en de afkeerigheid tegens Compagnies Dienaaren, die seedert eenigen tijd onder de Assche gesmeult en de gemoederen van veele Inwoonderen voor ingenoomen hebben'* - WCARS, C 2692, 21 (20.3.1781).

Cape Town was not an island, but an integral part of the Dutch empire. Even though it was in many respects a cosmopolitan city, the major Dutch influence on its administration and residents during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot be underestimated. This thesis uses the political unrest of the late 1770s as a case study to draw lines of comparison between Dutch and Cape *burgerschap* and burgher identity (chapters 1 & 2). The Dutch background and history had consequences for the way politics were practised at the Cape. Governor Van Plettenberg has not received many positive reviews as governor of the Cape. As a result of the burgher protests he is seen as an administrator who did not control his officials properly and handled the unrest with little fortitude. The above quote however displays that he had a good insight into the political scene of the Cape. He realised that people and their relationships, which were often based on personal interest, had more impact on the Cape political landscape than ideological rhetoric. This aspect of the burgher protests is investigated in the remainder of the thesis, which focuses on the role of factions in the burgher protests. First the protesters are compared to the general burgher population (chapter 3) and then some of the main role-players are closely examined (chapters 4, 5 and 6). In the end we may agree with Van Plettenberg's view on the political conflict and conclude that it was all about people fighting for the spoils. In that sense the burgher protest of the late 1770s followed the pattern of similar tumultuous events in the eighteenth century, both at the Cape as well as in the Dutch Republic.

1. The burgher protests

During a May night in 1778 a number of packages containing a letter and a pamphlet were distributed in the streets of Cape Town.¹ The pamphlet² argued that it was the highest duty of every individual to improve the welfare of himself and his fellow human beings to the best of his ability and knowledge. A government was an instrument in the hands of the people designed with the specific purpose to achieve this goal. The government was supposed to look after and improve the general well-being of the population and safeguard the individual liberty to enable every member of society to look after his own interests. But it did not mean that, just because this task was delegated to the government, the individual could relinquish his responsibilities. The people would have to make sure at all times that the government executed its given tasks properly. Should this not be the case and *'when a nation sees its citizens deteriorate and decay and be submitted to the most extreme danger, all signs of a bad delivery, and everybody is being hurt, a total destruction is sure to follow'*³, then the people had the right and duty to stand up and protest. This should not happen in a violent manner, but follow the laws and rules of state and country.

The letter accused employees of the ruling Dutch East India Company (VOC) of running businesses and shops and owning farms, which were in direct competition with those of burghers. It was a practice which was a contravention of the orders of the Company

¹ WCARS, C 2689, 13, 16-18 (22.5.1779). Seven packets were handed over to the government. There is no record of how many were actually distributed. The secret night-time drop was a common way for protesters in Dutch cities to get their message in the open without having to fear censorship or persecution. See for example W. Frijhoff, *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam, deel II-2. Zelfbewuste stadstaat 1650-1813* (Amsterdam 2005), 325; S. Schama, *Patriots and liberators. Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (London 2005), 64; J.K.H. van der Meer, *Patriotten in Groningen 1780-1795* (Groningen 1996), 10.

² The pamphlet was entitled *'De magt en de vrijheden eener Burgerlijke Maatschappij verdedigt door de gevoelens der voornaamste Regtsgeleerden, opgedraagen aan 't oordeel der Caabsche Burgerij'* or 'The power and the liberties of a civil society defended by the foremost legal minds, submitted to the judgment of the Cape burghers'. The full text of this pamphlet can be found in WCARS, C 2689, 18-27 (22.5.1779) and has been reproduced in Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 299-309.

³ *'wanneer een Volk zijn Burgerstaat siet vervallen van binnen, verswakken van buiten, en bloot gesteld aan de uijterste gevaaren, alle kentekenen van eene ongelukkige besorging, waarop elk meer of min gekrenkt, eijndelijk een geheel ondergang moet volgen'* - WCARS, C 2689, 26 (22.5.1779).

dating back to 1706⁴. This was much to the detriment of the burgher trade, because these Company servants used their positions and privileges to squeeze out the burghers and position themselves as '*Masters of the Trade*'.⁵ The burgher businesses suffered greatly and many burghers lost their source of income and had no other choice than to look for financial support from church and charity. This situation clearly went '*against the will of the Company and the privileges granted to us*'.⁶ The burghers were called to stand up and defend their rights, and '*Those who will be the most zealous in this matter will earn our respect and esteem, and will be named protector of the Burgher Liberties*'.⁷ The documents concluded with an appeal to the Cape burghers to sign a petition in which the Governor and the administration were asked to address the adverse conditions for the burghers. Should that not have the desired effect then the burghers would look for recourse from higher authorities and present their case directly to the Dutch States General and the Stadholder '*who are, next to God, the only ones we recognise as our sovereigns*'.⁸

Government officials were shocked at the content of these documents, which were '*so full of malicious and rebellious language that one had to regard it as the filthiest libel*'.⁹ At the time they did not discover who was behind the distribution of the pamphlets. It was not until 5 February 1795 that some clarity was obtained about this, when a letter appeared in newspapers in Amsterdam. This letter was written by Johannes Henricus Redelinkhuijs and in it he made an extraordinary statement. He claimed that he had been '*the instrument of the first Revolution in my native Country*' in 1779 together with

⁴ These orders were issued after a similar complaint of the burghers against the Company government was made, which eventually led to the dismissal of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel. G. Schutte, '*Kompanjie en koloniste aan die Kaap, 1652-1795*', in: H. Gilliomme and R. Elphick (eds), '*n Samelewing in wording: Suid-Afrika 1652-1840*' (Cape Town 1990) 289-331, 310-315.

⁵ '*Meesters van de Negotie*' – WCARS, C 2689, 16 (22.5.1779).

⁶ '*tegen de wille van de Maatschappij en tegen de Voorregten aan ons vergunt*' - WCARS, C 2689, 18 (22.5.1779).

⁷ '*Die sig hier betoonen de ieverigste te zijn sal sig verseekert kunnen houden van onse agting en eerbied, en sal bestempeld worden met den naam van beschermer der Burgerlijke Vrijheeden*' – WCARS, C 2689, 18 (22.5.1779).

⁸ '*die wij naast God alleen erkennen voor onse Souverainen*' - WCARS, C 2689, 27 (22.5.1779).

⁹ '*zoo vol kwaadaartige en oproerige expressien, dat men 't zelve onder de vuilste Lasterschriften moet stellen*' - G.J. Schutte (ed.), '*Briefwisseling van Hendrik Swellengrebel jr oor Kaapse sake 1778-1792*' (Cape Town 1982), 83.

Barend Hendrik Taute.¹⁰ What did he mean by that and why did he not write 1778? To answer these questions it needs to be pointed out that Redelinkhuijs published two versions of his pamphlet. The first one was in Dutch and in this version the year of Redelinkhuijs' involvement in the burgher protests was printed as 1779. A few weeks after the Dutch version an English translation of the letter was published and there the year of his involvement was given as 1787.¹¹ That was a big difference and the year 1787 definitely seemed out of place. The confusion can be explained by the fact that in the English version a printing error was made and the last two numbers of the year were mistakenly turned around. Thus it actually meant to read: 1778. Redelinkhuijs may have wanted to correct the year of his involvement in the English translation, but unfortunately a new mistake was made. If that is indeed the case then his claim about being the instrument of the first revolution begins to make sense, because he may have wanted to indicate that he was behind the distribution of the (rather inflammatory) documents in May 1778.

This is substantiated by the fact that in June 1778 several secret burgher meetings were organised in Cape Town. One of the conveners of these meetings was Barend Hendrik Taute, of whom a personal invitation has been recorded in the collection of documents regarding the Cape burgher protests.¹² Taute invited the burghers to a gathering held on 24 June 1778 in the garden *Domburg* belonging to one Jacob Schreuder¹³, where about two hundred burghers met '*to discuss measures to be taken to protect their burgher rights*'.¹⁴

Indications are that Redelinkhuijs and Taute worked together to start some kind of "revolutionary" movement at the Cape in 1778. Judging by the pamphlet distributed

¹⁰ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 350 (5.2.1795).

¹¹ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 353 (26.2.1795).

¹² WCARS, C 2689, 28 (24.6.1778).

¹³ '*in den Tuijn van Jacob Schreuder*' – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 49. The gardens were agricultural properties situated in the immediate vicinity of Cape Town. According to a 1785 map of Cape Town the garden of Schreuder was situated directly to the south east of the Company Gardens and close to the centre of town. A. Malan, *The Cultural Landscape of Eighteenth Century Cape Town* (unpublished paper, Cape Town 2009).

¹⁴ '*ten Eijnde de nodige Maatregelen te neemen om hunne burgerlijke regten te handhaven*' - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 49; WCARS, C 2689, 28 (24.6.1778).

by them in May 1778, their movement had an ideological character and was motivated by a desire to protect burgher rights. In 1795 Redelinkhuijs still had the same opinions when he wrote his letter to the Cape burghers and called on them to '*break the chains by which you have been tied down ever since the beginning of the Colony*'.¹⁵ But their revolutionary tendencies did not resonate with the Cape burghers at all and most did not agree with the two men. A high-placed Company official commented that because '*the opinions among them [the burghers] were at the time divided these meetings were severely disrupted*'.¹⁶ Apparently not all the burghers agreed on the course to follow and the movement seemed to lose momentum. Nothing concrete resulted from the meetings and the government thought that the burgher efforts had come to naught. The Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, Baron Joachim van Plettenberg, reported to his superiors, the *Heeren XVII*, that these '*unusual gatherings gradually stopped and we thought that peace and quiet had returned*'.¹⁷ The government and the Cape settlement settled back into their normal routine until in January 1779 a violent incident disturbed the supposed calm and laid bare the essence of the difference of opinion about burgher status and rights between burghers and the administration.

At the centre of the commotion was the 'beast of the Bokkeveld'¹⁸, the burgher Carel Hendrik Buijtendag, a man with a bad reputation and violent temper, who, after many years of conflict and argument with neighbours and authorities, was banished from the Stellenbosch district to Cape Town where in February 1777 he bought a house and a plot. It could be that 'the transition from Bokkeveld farmer to Cape Town burgher [was not] an easy one for Buijtendag and he must have taken out some of his frustrations on his wife and children'¹⁹ and possibly also on other town residents. When eventually his wife laid a complaint against him on 5 or 6 January 1779 the Independent Fiscal

¹⁵ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 354.

¹⁶ '*de gevoelens onder hen te dier tijd gandsch niet eens zijnde wierden die bijeenkomsten zoo zeer gestoord*' – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 83.

¹⁷ '*ongewoone beweegingen en bijeenkomsten ... gaandeweg zijnde koomen te cesseeren, men over zulks niet anders hadde gedacht, dan dat alles sig wederom tot voorige ruste soude hebben geschikt*' - WCARS, C 2689, 13 (22.5.1779). A similar comment was made by another VOC official – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 83.

¹⁸ As named by Nigel Penn. For a detailed history of Buijtendag and his escapades in the outer districts see: Penn, *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways*, 131-146.

¹⁹ Penn, *Rogues, rebels and Runaways*, 146.

decided that enough was enough. He brought the case before the Political Council on 20 January and requested that Buijtendag, because of his '*continuous improper behaviour*'²⁰, be taken into Company service and banished from the Cape. The Council agreed and decided that Buijtendag should be arrested, recruited as a soldier into Company service and sent to Batavia. Boers wasted no time in executing the sentence.²¹ The same day the *geweldig*²² Hendrik Matthijsen appeared on the Buijtendag doorstep and demanded that Buijtendag come with him to the Fiscal. Buijtendag was not at home at the time and the *geweldig* left. However the two men ran into each other in town and Buijtendag promised that he would go to the Fiscal, but he first wanted to go home to change and have something to eat. While Buijtendag was enjoying his lunch, Matthijsen again came to his house and this time he was not prepared to listen to any more excuses. He grabbed Buijtendag, threw him violently against the floor and ordered his *Caffers*²³ to tie him up. They then dragged Buijtendag through the streets of Cape Town to the harbour accompanied by his wailing daughters, while '*his hands were tied and the Caffers pushed, shoved and punched him*'.²⁴ Buijtendag was placed on board the ship *Honcoop*, which left for Batavia that same day.

Upon hearing about Buijtendag's arrest the Burgher Councillors - Cornelis van der Poel, Christiaan George Maasdorp and Gerrit Hendrik Meijer - immediately went to see Governor Van Plettenberg to protest against his ill-treatment.²⁵ They pointed out to the Governor that Buijtendag was '*a burgher by birth*'²⁶ and by virtue of that status he was not allowed to be treated in such a violent manner, certainly not by the *Caffers*, who were Company employees and not burgher law enforcement. His privileged

²⁰ '*aanhoudende buijtenpoorige Levenswijze*' – WCARS, C 157, 75 (20.1.1779).

²¹ WCARS, C 157, 75-76 (20.1.1779).

²² He was the subordinate of the Fiscal in charge of police. In the light of what follows it is perhaps ironic that the Dutch word for violence is *geweld*.

²³ The slaves and bandits, who assisted the executioner and who under the leadership of the *geweldig* acted as policemen in the city. Even Fiscal Boers had to admit: '*it is true, the Caffers are very bad and the scum of humanity, who almost all are criminals themselves and therefore any familiarity with them is not in the least honourable*' – WCARS, C 2693, 143 (2.2.1781).

²⁴ '*bij de handen met touwen gekneveld, ... vermits de Caffers hem stootte, duwde, sloegen en wat dies meer is*' - WCARS, C 2689, 111 (12.4.1779).

²⁵ WCARS, C 2689, 113 (21.1.1779).

²⁶ '*een geboore burger*' – WCARS, C 2689, 113 (21.1.1779).

position and honour as a burgher was severely compromised. They furthermore claimed that the Burgher Councillors should have been consulted about the decision by the Political Council, because this case involved a burgher. But the Governor countered that the Cape *burgerschap* grant contained as one of its conditions that a burgher could be taken back into Company service if he misbehaved. The Company therefore acted well within its rights. Buijtendag was no longer a burgher, but now a Company servant and subject to the rules of the Company. The Burgher Councillors warned that this set of events would lead to great unrest among the burgher population. Van der Poel stated that *'what had happened to Buijtendag today, could happen to somebody else, even to him, tomorrow'*²⁷, pointing out the complete arbitrariness that the burghers were subjected to by the Cape government. None of the arguments persuaded the Governor and the Burgher Councillors left without achieving anything.

Governor Van Plettenberg later had to admit that the Burgher Councillors had been right. The arrest of Buijtendag led to renewed commotion among the burgher population.²⁸ Again meetings were organised, but this time the movement seemed to be more widespread and it reached further than just Cape Town. On 30 March 1779 the Burgher Councillors and the *Heemraden* of the Stellenbosch and Drakenstein District, with the backing of some 400 burghers, submitted a request to the Governor and Political Council. They asked for permission to send a delegation of burghers to the Dutch Republic to *'present the condition of the burghers of this colony and the violence caused to the burgher Carel Hendrik Buijtendag, which had violated the rights of the burghers'* to the directors of the VOC.²⁹ In their answer to the burgher request of March 1779, the Governor and Political Council pointed out they were surprised that the burghers wanted to bypass the chain of command and go directly to the Directors with their complaints. After all, they were the appointed government of the Cape, which was there to look after the interests of the entire population and any grievance

²⁷ *'het heeden aan Buijtendagh, geschied morgen aan een ander, en soo konde sulks aan hem selfs geschiede'* – WCARS, C 2689, 113.

²⁸ WCARS, C 2689, 13 (22.5.1779).

²⁹ *'... voor te stellen den teegenswoordigen Burgerstand deeser Colonie en het geweld aan ... burger Carel Hendrik Buijtendag gepleegd, waardoor de Burgerije vermeend geschonden te zijn'* - WCARS, C 2689, 14 (22.5.1779).

should be addressed to them first. And even if there was anything that they could not deal with, then it was still only up to them and nobody else to refer the matter to the higher authorities. The request was subsequently denied.³⁰

But the burgher movement was at full steam and unstoppable. The request was followed by a petition - dated 7 May 1779 and signed by 404 burghers - to send a delegation of four people to Holland *'to submit to the judgment of the Lords Directors the current disputes and the concerns of the burghers as well as the fair accusations against the government and certain other people'*.³¹ The four people elected to represent the burghers were the former Burgher Councillor Jacobus van Reenen, the former Lieutenant in the burgher militia Barend Jacob Artoijs, and the burghers Tieleman Roos and Nicolaas Godfried Heijns.

At the time nobody was allowed to leave the Cape and travel to Holland without permission of the government. Therefore the four delegates had to inform the Political Council of their travel plans and ask for passage on one of the ships returning to Holland. Each of the delegates submitted their own separate requests.

Barend Jacob Artoijs had asked to be relieved of his burgher duties and for his resignation as Lieutenant of the burgher Cavalry as early as 1 December 1778, because he wished to return to Holland in the following year. He gave no specific reason for his trip. The Political Council granted his request and gave him permission to travel on one of the Company's return ships for the normal fee.³²

³⁰ WCARS, C 2689, 16 (22.5.1779); C 157, 149-154 (30.3.1779).

³¹ *'de thans sweevende geschillen en de belangen van onse Burgerstaat als meede de billijke beswaaren tegens de Ed Achtb. Regeering deeser Colonie ende eenige andere Personen...in den schoot van de Hoog Achtb. Heeren Majores in Patria eerbiedig ter needer te werpen'* - WCARS, C 2689, 75-76 (7.5.1779).

³² WCARS, C 1172, 42-43; C 156, 396 (1.12.1778). Artoijs also stated that, as he was born in Cape Town, he might want to return in future and he requested that he then would like to be re-instated as burgher lieutenant. Governor Van Plettenberg wrote to Hendrik Swellengrebel in May 1780 that he felt personally betrayed by Artoijs, because Artoijs had assured the Governor on his departure for Holland, that he would not busy himself with matters concerning the Cape burghers or their protests – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 121.

For Tieleman Roos the matter was more problematic. He asked the Political Council permission to go to Holland on 19 January 1779. He stated that he had recently started to plant tobacco and he wanted to take a few specimens to Holland to get the opinion of some experts, while at the same time trying to gain knowledge on how to prepare the tobacco.³³ The Political Council however replied that they were aware that Tieleman Roos was a troublemaker in the parish of Drakenstein and one of the people, '*who continuously fans the fire of discord in that parish*'.³⁴ The Council thought that the tobacco story was just a cover-up and he would go to Holland to take his issues with the Drakenstein church council to the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church and maybe even the Directors. Therefore they refused his request. On 6 April 1779 Roos tried again to get permission to go to Holland. This time he solemnly swore that he would not go to the Church authorities with any issues concerning the Drakenstein parish, nor would he make trouble '*about other matters concerning the Colony*'.³⁵ After he made this promise the Council had no further valid reason to refuse his request.

Jacobus Van Reenen en Nicolaas Godfried Heijns asked for consent to travel overseas on 13 April 1779 in separate requests without offering a specific explanation for their trip and both were given permission to do so.³⁶

The delegates did their best not to raise any suspicion about the main reason they were travelling to Holland. As was apparent from the case of Tieleman Roos, permission to travel was not automatic and if they were known to be rabble-rousers the administration would surely have refused their requests. Based on the provided information the Political Council had no choice but to allow the delegates to leave the Cape. However the members of the administration were not ignorant of what was going on and suspected ulterior motives. Therefore the Governor wrote a letter to the

³³ WCARS, C 1173, 17-18; C 157, 64-68 (19.1.1779).

³⁴ '*die het vuur van Twist en Tweedragt onder voorsz: Gemeente bij continuatie komt aan te blaasen en gaande te houden*' - WCARS, C 157, 66-67 (19.1.1779). Tieleman Roos was since 1771 deeply embroiled in a fight with the Drakenstein Dutch Reformed Church Council, church leaders and Company, because he disagreed with the appointment of a certain church elder. See for more on this story Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 118-126.

³⁵ '*nopens andere Zaaken de Colonie alhier betreffende*' - WCARS, C 157, 165-170; C 1173, 140-142 (6.4.1779).

³⁶ WCARS, C 1173, 150-151 & 153-154 / WCARS, C 157, 196 (13.4.1779).

Directors on 22 May 1779 about the agitation among the burgher population and his misgivings regarding their plans.³⁷

Eventually the delegates made it to Holland. Artoijs left the Cape on 3 March 1779 on board the *Amsterdam*, which arrived in Holland on 3 July 1779.³⁸ The other three sailed together on the *Morgenster*. Once in Holland the delegates first made sure that they were officially recognised as representatives of the Cape burghers by handing over the proof of their election as delegates - the petition of 7 May 1779 – to mayor Temminck of Amsterdam, who submitted this to the VOC Chamber of Amsterdam on 27 September 1779 to have it recorded.³⁹ The four men then set out to prepare their *Memorie* to be presented '*at the meeting of the Seventeen in Amsterdam*'⁴⁰ and finalised it on 9 October 1779. On 12 October they submitted it with supporting material to a notary public in Amsterdam, Kier Van Der Piet, and the next day they swore an oath to the truth of these documents before the town council of the City of Amsterdam. After all these formalities the big day arrived on 16 October 1779: finally the four delegates appeared in person in the meeting of the *Heeren XVII*. They informed the meeting that they had come '*to expose the miserable state of the Colony and the maltreatment of the burghers by certain Company servants*'.⁴¹ They presented the Directors with '*a bulky Memorial and appendices*'.⁴²

In the introduction to the *Memorie* the Cape delegates wrote that '*as representatives of the entire burgher population*' [of the Cape of Good Hope]⁴³ they wished to set out to the Directors firstly the '*legitimate complaints about the deteriorating state of the burghers and free colonists and [secondly] the fair objections against the oppression and illegal trade of certain Company servants*'⁴⁴; and lastly they wanted to propose to

³⁷ WCARS, C 2689, 13-14.

³⁸ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 89.

³⁹ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 30.

⁴⁰ '*ter vergaadering van Seeventien binnen Amsterdam*' – WCARS, C 2689, 76-94 (16.10.1779).

⁴¹ '*om de elendige situatie der Colonie, en de verongelijkingen, die de Burgers van sommige Compagnies Dienaren moesten lijden aan deese Vergadering open te leggen*' – WCARS, C 2696, 101 (22.10.1779).

⁴² '*seekere volumineuse Memorie en Bijlagen*' – WCARS, C 2696, 102 (22.10.1779).

⁴³ '*als gesamentlijke Representanten van den geheelen Burgerstaat*' – WCARS, C 2689, 29 (9.10.1779).

⁴⁴ '*regtmatische klagten over den quijnenden staat der Burgers en vrije Colonisten [at the Cape of Good Hope] alsmeede de billijke beswaaren...teegen de onderdrukking en ongepermitteeren particulieren Handel door diverse Uwer Wel-Edele Groot Achtbaare Bediendens*' – WCARS, C 2689, 29 (9.10.1779).

the Directors '*the best and most necessary means to improve the situation*'.⁴⁵

Accordingly the *Memorie* consisted of three parts.⁴⁶

The document started with a description of the adverse economic situation of the burghers at the Cape.⁴⁷ The fertility of the soil at the Cape had enabled the farmers to produce enough grain, wine and other produce to supply the Cape settlement and the ships of the Company as well as to fulfil the demand from Batavia. The prices for their produce paid by the Company were good and costs relatively low. Farming proved to be a profitable business and more and more burghers went into agriculture, so that it spread quickly from Cape Town and surrounds far into the outer districts. After a while the Company began to lower prices paid for agricultural produce. The farmers were not concerned about this in the beginning, because they were promised that all their produce would be bought. However these conditions changed. The demand from Batavia diminished, the costs of material increased, and the number of farmers kept growing. Besides all this there were unstable trade circumstances. These were better when a lot of foreign vessels visited the Cape, but declined when there was no such trade. And while the prices paid for farm produce decreased further, the Company demanded a high tax.

The burghers in Cape Town itself made their living from trade. They sold agricultural and fresh produce to passing ships and bought European and Indian goods from the sailors, which in turn they sold to the residents in town and the farmers in the outer districts. Company employees were supposed to leave to the burghers '*this way of making a living as a privilege*'.⁴⁸ This was according to instructions of the Directors issued in 1706: no Company servant was allowed to engage in trade of grain, cattle or wine. They had to be satisfied with their salaries and could not interfere with the privileges of the free burghers. The *Memorie* pointed out that despite these orders there were several powerful VOC officials, who dominated the most profitable trade

⁴⁵ '*de beste en noodwendigste middelen tot redres*' – WCARS, C 2689, 29 (9.10.1779).

⁴⁶ The full text of the *Memorie* can be found in WCARS, C 2689, 29-72; it is discussed in Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 32-61 and Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten*, 64.

⁴⁷ WCARS, C 2689, 30-35 (9.10.1779).

⁴⁸ '*deese kostwinning als een vrij voorrecht*' – WCARS, C 2689, 32 (9.10.1779).

with the passing ships while using their influence and access to warehouses, boats and slaves of the Company. The burghers were then forced to buy the most essential goods from these officials against high and unaffordable prices. The VOC officials took the bread out of the mouth of the burghers and this meant that *'they will be reduced to extreme poverty'*.⁴⁹

The *Memorie* continued: *'the signs of the state of decay of the free colonists are evident'*.⁵⁰ In the town many houses were standing empty, because two or three families were forced to move in with each other. In the country many farmers pulled out of agriculture and started to try their hand at cattle-farming. They moved further from Cape Town and lived under harsh and dangerous conditions, while they eked out a meagre living from the supply of cattle for slaughter and the sale of butter and soap. From their little earnings they had to pay a high rental for their farms to the Company and prices for their material soared. The situation had grave consequences. The farmers hardly had money to feed and clothe their families. Many families shared one dwelling and pooled their earnings and costs. The children did not get a good education, because the parents could not afford proper teachers. Perhaps one of the worst results, according to the burghers, was that the young men had to remain unmarried *'or dwell with the Hottentots and this mixing will lead to an offspring which should be feared more than the Bosjesmans Hottentots are now'*.⁵¹

Thus the *Memorie* presented a picture of declining trade leading to a surplus of produce, and low prices in combination with high costs which were determined by the Company. These conditions lead to increasing poverty and growing discontent among the burgher population. Whether the conditions described by the protesting burghers in their *Memorie* were as bad as they portrayed will be commented on in chapter 6. For the moment what needs to be pointed out is that there was an apparent perception

⁴⁹ *'zij tot de uijterste armoede sullen geraaken'* – WCARS, C 2689, 33 (9.10.1779).

⁵⁰ *'De blijken van den thans kwijnenden staat der vrije Colonisten zijn sigtbaar'* – WCARS, C 2689, 33 (9.10.1779).

⁵¹ *'of sig onder de Hottentotten ophouden, uit welke vermenging met ter tijd een nageslagt kan geboren worden, dat mogelijk nog erger, dan de Bosjesmans Hottentotten, tegenwoordig sal te dugten zijn'* – WCARS, C 2689, 34 (9.10.1779).

that things were bad among some burghers and the resulting disgruntlement could very well have fuelled the protest fires.

The dire economic situation was exacerbated by the oppression and undesirable behaviour of certain Company servants, according to the *Memorie*, and that was the topic of the second part of the document. This section consisted of 16 articles in which the burghers complained about several VOC officials, who abused their position to harm the burgher population.⁵² The writers made a point of stating that they wanted to avoid being accused of jealousy or personal gripes, but that they exposed these Company servants '*forced by the utmost distress and out of love for their fatherland and fellow burghers*'.⁵³ They undertook to present the plain and simple truth and refrain from abusive remarks.

It is noteworthy that the burghers did not say anything about Governor Van Plettenberg. In none of the protest documents he was accused of any wrongdoing. This could be attributed to the fact that the burghers thought rather positively about him. In the letter which was distributed in Cape Town in May 1778 he was referred to '*as a gentleman who is known to be polite and friendly and who will surely do his duty and give us satisfaction*'.⁵⁴ It is however more likely that not criticising the Governor might have been a strategic move on the part of the protesters. He was after all the personification of the Company and the highest representative of the *Heeren XVII*, the governing board of the VOC, and to offend him would certainly not have helped the case of the protesters. It is furthermore an indication that the protesters wanted to show that they had no intention to overturn the government of the Company, which they accepted as the lawful one. They merely wanted to expose what they considered to be the objectionable behaviour of certain individuals.

The first VOC official about whom the burghers complained was the Independent Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers. '*In the execution of his duties as Fiscal he is so arbitrarily*

⁵² WCARS, C 2689, 35-63 (9.10.1779).

⁵³ '*uit hooge nood en liefde voor hun Vaderland en Medeburgers*' – WCARS, C 2689, 35 (9.10.1779).

⁵⁴ '*een Heer bij ieder onser bekend voor minzaam en vriendelijk, welke ons gewisselijk voldoeninge sal geeven volgen zijn pligt*' – WCARS, C 2689, 18 (22.5.1779).

oppressive and irresponsible towards the burghers and settlers, that anyone with the least sense of liberty, cannot think about this without getting emotional'.⁵⁵ The burghers stated that because of this the settlers were not free as they were supposed to be, but virtually equal to slaves – a status which was considered far below the one of burgher. The Fiscal's behaviour flew in the face of the privileges and security of the burghers. The *Memorie* provided a number of examples of this, the most important being the arrest of Carel Hendrik Buijten dag. Besides this Boers fined the burghers excessively for minor offences and went as far as confiscating their goods, even though they were sometimes innocent of any offence. In those cases he blackmailed the burghers into paying him a bribe while threatening that he would punish and publicly shame them. To be tried and punished in public was a tremendous humiliation to the burghers in Cape society and something they wanted to avoid at all costs.⁵⁶ It was furthermore alleged that Boers made sure there was some financial benefit in it for him, and that is why he was much more lenient towards slaves, because they did not have any money.⁵⁷

The *Memorie* continued to target several other Company officials. Most were accused of arbitrary behaviour towards the burghers and trying to make as much money as possible by forcing the burghers to accept lower prices or taking kickbacks for using their services or the right to sell their products to the Company. There were several high VOC officials who owned farms and gardens - the burghers mentioned the *Secretaris* Oloff Marthini Bergh, the *Dispensier* Adriaan Van Schoor, the *Kassier* Gerrit Hendrik Cruijwagen, the *Negotie overdrager* Jan Fredrik Kirsten and the Landdrost of Swellendam Daniel Van Rijneveld - where they grew vegetables and fruit, which they sold to burghers and visitors to the Cape. Some of these men owned cattle and wine

⁵⁵ 'Deese gedraagd sig in de administratie van zijn Ampt, omtrent de Burgers en Colonisten van de Caab, zo willekeurig overheerschend, onderdrukkend en onverantwoordelijk, dat al wie slegts eenig het minste gevoel van vrijheid in sig selven overig heeft, daar aan niet sonder ontroering kan denken' - WCARS, C 2689, 35 (9.10.1779).

⁵⁶ R. Ross, *Status and respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: a tragedy of manners* (Cambridge 1999), 16-19.

⁵⁷ WCARS, C 2689, 35-41 (9.10.1779); Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 37.

farms and they sold meat and wine ‘*even per bottle in public wine-houses or so-called shops*’.⁵⁸

One of the biggest culprits was the *Kassier* Gerrit Hendrik Cruijwagen. He was in partnership with several other Company officials, like the *Posthouder* at False Bay Christoffel Brand, the *Boekhouder* in the Company warehouse Hendrik Justinus De Wet and the *Boekhouder* in the Company *Cassa* Abraham Chiron. Their partnership was known as the firm “*Cruijwagen en Compagnie*”, which ‘*dominated the local as well as the foreign trade*’.⁵⁹ Cruijwagen himself was the biggest and richest trader in Cape Town, who openly had a warehouse where he kept all kinds of goods, which he would sell in the smallest quantity possible.⁶⁰ Christoffel Brand used his position as *posthouder* at False Bay to buy the best and most profitable goods from the passing ships there and then he used the Company’s carts to transport them to Cape Town to deliver them to his partners.

Another official who abused his position was the *Equipagemeester* Damiaan Hugo Staring. He was the only person allowed to visit ships which harboured in Cape Town during the first three days and he would use that opportunity to buy whatever he could from the crew. He did this together with the *Boekhouder* Hendrik Moller and the former Burgher Councillor Jacob Alexander La Febre. Together they were partners in the firm “*La Febre and Co*”. The burghers had no choice but to buy whatever they needed from this company at high prices or go without.⁶¹

And so the complaints continued. Company officials were accused of abusing their position to their own financial advantage. Time and again it was made clear that these

⁵⁸ ‘*sels bij de Vles in publicque Wijnhuijsen of sogenaamde schaggerijen*’ - WCARS, C 2689, 50 (9.10.1779).

⁵⁹ ‘*soo dat deesen sig dus ook in het groot ten eenemaal meester maken, van de soo inlandse als vreemde Negotie*’ - WCARS, C 2689, 49-50 (9.10.1779); Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 43-44.

⁶⁰ In another statement by several burghers of December 1780 it was claimed that Cruijwagen “*een plaisier plaats houd waar van hij groentens, vrugten, en brandhoud verkoopt, veele Ambagts Slaaven houd en verhuurd, als Metselaars, Timmerluijden, Kleedermaakers en Schoenmaakers, een open Pakhuijs houd, bij het gros, en in het klijn uit en nog doet of schoon men in gemoede overtuijgd is, dat deese Cruijwagen een swaare Capitaal besit*” – WCARS, C 2691, 254-255 (n.d., 12.1780).

⁶¹ WCARS, C 2689, 52 (9.10.1779).

officials were openly breaking the rules of the Company by owning land and property, by selling their produce and engaging in private trade, and by undercutting the burgher artisans by using the services of craftsmen of the Company for private work. The burghers felt that the Company officials in so doing caused great harm to their financial well-being and interfered with privileges exclusively meant for them.

The last part of the *Memorie* consisted of recommendations to improve the situation for the burghers.⁶² These proposals and requests were concentrated around two main topics: firstly the economic and secondly the judicial and administrative position of the burghers.

Foremost for the burghers was that the *Heeren XVII* should renew the orders dating back to 30 October 1706, namely that no Company employee, from the highest to the lowest and without exception, was allowed to engage in any form of private trade either directly or indirectly and neither for themselves nor on behalf of others⁶³, that no Company employee would associate or go into business with each other or with burghers, and that no Company employee was permitted to own or rent land in their own name or use another person as a front. The burghers made a number of requests which focussed on cutting out the middleman - i.e. an official buyer from the VOC - and to deliver their products and farm produce directly to the Company themselves. They did not want any involvement from Company officials in the trade, because this led to higher costs as they had to pay fees and in many cases they had to grease the palm of the official to be able to deliver their produce. The control over the delivery and distribution of products should rather be transferred to burghers. The Company could still determine the prices it paid for the products, like wine and grain, but because the

⁶² WCARS, C 2689, 63-72 (9.10.1779); Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 49-61.

⁶³ The *Memorie* did provide examples of cases where burghers were used as a front by Company officials. One such case involved the tender for the contract to deliver building material for the building of the New Hospital announced by the Governor in 1776. This was a very lucrative contract, which could keep a burgher in business for several years. The successful bidder was the burgher officer Johannes Matthias Bletterman. It turned out later that the actual work was done by the Company officials Barend Hendrik and William Ferdinand Van Rheede Van Oudtshoorn and the Superintendent of the Hospital Marthinus Van Oordt. They only used Bletterman as a frontman to be able to get the contract. Apart from a financial reward, Bletterman was appointed to the prestigious office of Orphan Master on the recommendation of the brothers Van Rheede Van Oudtshoorn. WCARS, C 2689, 55-56 (9.10.1779).

high costs of having to pay many employees and feed and clothe slaves would be reduced, it was expected that these prices would be reasonable and to the satisfaction of all concerned. The burghers furthermore requested that they would be allowed to freely sail to Dutch and foreign vessels in the harbour and sell their fresh produce directly to the crew. But they would only do so if there was a surplus after the Company was sufficiently provided. It was also suggested that the burghers should be allowed to have their own ships with which they could import products from Europe to be sold on auctions to the highest bidder, while they could use these ships as well to send their produce to Europe and the Asian settlements, again after first having satisfied the demand of the Company at the Cape.

Regarding the position and rights of burghers the *Memorie* referred directly to the case of Carel Hendrik Buijtendag. It asked that no burgher would be arrested by the *Geweldiger en Caffers*, who were in the service of the VOC, but only by other burghers and that he then '*by virtue of the Burgher rights*'⁶⁴ would be kept in prison at the Burgher watch house and not in the VOC Castle. It should be prohibited that any burgher, both those born as burgher and those having gained burgher freedom after serving out their contract with the Company, could be forced to (re-)join the Company or be banished to Batavia '*because that was contrary to the Burgher rights*'.⁶⁵ Should it be necessary to banish a burgher, then he should be sent directly to Holland, but only after a full and proper investigation by the Burgher Councillors. Another suggestion was that the Council of Justice should consist of an equal number of burghers and Company employees, while the longest serving Burgher Councillor would be vice-president of this body. With these proposals the burghers aimed for more influence over and greater burgher participation in the judicial processes concerning burghers.

It was furthermore proposed that there would be seven Burgher Councillors (instead of three) and that only two of these would resign every year to allow for greater consistency and stability. The Burgher Councillors would then freely elect two replacements, whose final appointment would still be subject to approval by the

⁶⁴ '*uit Kragte van het Burgerregt*' – WCARS, C 2689, 64 (9.10.1779).

⁶⁵ '*als zijnde sulks strijdig met het Burgerregt*' – WCARS, C 2689, 64 (9.10.1779).

Governor. More importantly the seven Burgher Councillors would be allowed to take part in the meetings of the Political Council - an exclusive VOC domain - when this body discussed burgher affairs or matters regarding the general welfare of the Cape settlement. The rank and status of burgher officials should be of the same level as comparative VOC employees, e.g. a Burgher Councillor would have to be equal to a *Koopman*, which was the second highest rank in the VOC hierarchy.

After the presentation of the *Memorie* to the board of directors of the VOC the chairman replied that the complaints would be investigated.⁶⁶ The documents were handed to the Chambers of Amsterdam and Zeeland, which would head the investigation. A letter was sent to the Cape administration asking the Governor and various officials to reply to the accusations and proposals made by the burghers. But in December 1780 the fourth Anglo-Dutch war broke out, which led to delays in correspondence between the Cape and the Republic. Besides that the administrative processes of the VOC did not move fast and therefore it was only in December 1783 that the official decision by the *Heeren XVII* reached the Cape.⁶⁷

In this decision the accused Company officials were largely acquitted of the charges brought against them. Very few other changes were announced. A major one was that the Council of Justice would consist of six Company employees and six Burgher Councillors and that the Deputy Governor would be the chairman. VOC officials would thus still be in the majority. Members of the council, including the Burgher Councillors, would be appointed on a permanent basis and no longer be changed annually. But a free election of the burgher representatives was out of the question. The Directors also maintained that the burghers had the right to appeal sentences by the Council of Justice in Batavia and not in the Republic as the burghers had wanted.

Regarding the trade and economic proposals of the burghers the Directors decided to confirm the 1706 orders, which placed restrictions on the partaking of individual VOC

⁶⁶ WCARS, C 2696, 102 (16.10.1779).

⁶⁷ WCARS, C 2696, 115-128 (16.10.1779). The decisions of the Directors were discussed in the Political Council on 25 May 1784: WCARS, C 166, 365-404.

officials in economic life. However the burghers were not given more control and conditions of trade remained the same. Any further decisions were postponed until after the end of the Anglo-Dutch war.

The burghers were not satisfied with this reply, because few concessions were made by the VOC. In the meantime political turmoil had erupted in the Dutch Republic in the form of the Patriot movement. In 1784 some Cape burghers decided to take the struggle for their rights further and organised themselves in a body called the 'appointed people's representatives', which in February 1785 selected four new delegates to go to Holland: Martinus Adrianus Bergh, Johannes Roos, Johannes Henricus Redelinkhuijs and Johannes Augustus Bresler. These delegates linked up with the Patriots in the Republic and actively sought their support.⁶⁸ It was therefore this renewed Cape burgher movement which could more rightly be called the Cape Patriot movement.

As a consequence of the burgher unrest several VOC officials, even though they were vindicated by the *Heeren XVII*, decided to leave the Cape. One of the first to offer his resignation was Governor Van Plettenberg, who wrote to the directors on 20 April 1781 that '*the current division among the countries Residents, sooner and better will be stopped and abated by another Governor than the undersigned*'.⁶⁹ Van Plettenberg was however asked to stay on until the end of the Dutch-English war and he was replaced by Governor Cornelis Jacob van de Graaff on 14 February 1785. Other VOC officials who asked for permission to leave the Cape were the *Equipagemeester* Damiaan Hugo Staring and Independent Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers. They left in 1782 and 1783 respectively.⁷⁰ Therefore even if the Cape protesters were not successful in their attempts to change economic and administrative rules and regulations significantly, they did have an impact on the composition of the local government.

⁶⁸ Schutte, 'Kompanjie en koloniste', 318; Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 211-213.

⁶⁹ 'de heerschende verdeeltheit onder 's Lands gesamentlijke Inwoonders, door eenen anderen Gouverneur eerder en beeter sal kunnen gestuit en weg genomen worden, als door den Ondergetekenden' – WCARS, C 2692, 84 (20.4.1781).

⁷⁰ A. Staring, *Damiaan Hugo Staring. Een zeeman uit de achttiende eeuw. 1736-1783* (Zutphen 1948), 103-105, 113-114.

The Cape protest movement of the late 1770s and the documents it produced illustrated that to be a burgher was an essential aspect of the protests. The protest documents, from the 1778 letter and pamphlet to the 1779 *Memorie*, were interspersed with references to the unique position and identity of burghers. The complaints were made on behalf of the '*entire burgher community*'. Mention was made of the special burgher privileges and prerogatives. Several times it was stated that the situation for the burghers at the Cape '*was contrary to the burgher rights*'. Clearly having burgher status was important to the protesters and they perceived it to be special and different from other groups in Cape society. This perception was based on the Dutch background and history of the Cape. The next chapter will investigate if this view was indeed justified.

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2. The Dutch connection with Cape *burgerschap*

'Will our wives and children not have reason to accuse us of being cowards, if we allow our laws and privileges to be raped and we forget that we are free Burghers of a colony belonging to the liberated united Netherlands, which owes its being and reputation to its heroic burghers'.¹ With this statement contained in the letter dropped secretly in Cape Town in May 1778 the protesters expressed two things which were important to them: firstly that they were *burghers* and secondly that their status was the same as that of burghers of cities in the Dutch Republic. Not only did they underline their burgher identity and position, but apparently this status derived its standing from a comparable institution in the United Netherlands. *Burgerschap* was not a Cape invention nor was it a uniquely Cape phenomenon. Its roots were based in a long Dutch history and tradition. Because this was a main argument in the burgher protests, it is imperative to examine this Dutch background and connection more closely before making comparisons between Dutch and Cape *burgerschap* to ascertain if the protesters were indeed making their claims rightfully.

Simon Schama wrote: 'At the center of the Dutch world was a burgher, not a bourgeois'.² He went on to state that the Dutch resident was a citizen or *burger* in the political and legal sense first before being a *homo oeconomicus* despite the Dutch being famous for their trading empire. The upshot of his statement is that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Dutch world became increasingly and highly urbanised³; that *burgerschap* was an official status and had taken on a specific

¹ '... zullen onse Vrouwen en Kinderen niet reedenen hebben om hun over ons te beklagen, ja zelfs voor lafhartige en blootaarts uit te schellen, om reeden, dat wij onse Wetten en Privilegien hebben laten verkrachten en vergeeten hebben te zijn vrije Burgers van een Colonie van de vrije gevogte vereenigde Nederlanden, welke haare weesen en aansien verschuldigd is aan haare heldhaftige Burgeren' - WCARS, C 2689, 18 (22.5.1779).

² S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York 1987), 7.

³ In 1500 about 15.8% of the population of the Netherlands lived in cities with 2500 residents or more. By 1800 this number had increased to 37%. The province of Holland, which dominated the Dutch Republic in many ways, was the most populous area: almost half of the total Dutch population lived there and 60% of these people lived in towns. In contrast, the number of city dwellers in France only reached 12% of the population. The Republic was the most urbanized area in Europe. M. Prak, 'The Dutch Republic's City-State Culture (17th-18th centuries)', in: M.H. Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of*

meaning; and that it was the burgher who completely dominated public affairs. In everyday life the concept “burgher” had a specific political-legal meaning and burgher rights provided tangible economic, political, legal and social benefits. Not everybody could call himself a burgher, at least not until the end of the eighteenth century. *Burgerschap* was associated with and reserved for city residents, thereby excluding the rural population, and within the cities it was intended for a privileged minority.⁴

Dutch towns were of overwhelming importance to Dutch economic, social and cultural life in the new political reality that had come into existence at the end of the sixteenth century: the Dutch Republic, a unified federation of seven provinces in the Northern Netherlands.⁵ The governing body within the Republic was the States-General, which had an executive council, the Council of State. The States-General derived its authority from the provinces. Each of the seven provinces was represented and they all had one vote irrespective of size or population. The presidency of the States-General rotated among the provinces. The provinces had their own provincial ‘*Staten*’ or States, in which the various towns and cities in that province were represented. The cities were key political players simply because they had significant financial and economic power and could therefore not be ignored. Though they were never politically independent, the complex interplay between the various political structures within the Republic made the period between 1580 and 1800 ‘the period of the urban domination of the state which made the Dutch Republic so unique in Europe’.⁶

thirty City-State Cultures (Copenhagen 2000), 343-358, 343; W.W. Mijnhardt, ‘The Dutch Republic as a Town’, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 31, 3 (1998), 345-348, 345.

⁴ Mijnhardt, ‘The Dutch Republic’, 347; E. Kuijpers and M. Prak, ‘Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling: burgerschap in Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw’, in: J. Kloek and K. Tilmans (eds.), *Burger. Een geschiedenis van het begrip ‘burger’ in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam 2002), 113-132, 113.

⁵ Information on the Dutch Republic can be found in: S. Groenveld, H.L.Ph. Leeuwenberg, N. Mout and W.M. Zappey, *De kogel door de kerk? De opstand in de Nederlanden en de rol van de Unie van Utrecht 1559-1609* (Zutphen 1979); J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its rise, greatness and fall 1477-1806* (New York 1995); M. ‘t Hart, ‘The Dutch Republic: the urban impact upon politics’, in: K. Davids and J. Lucassen, *A miracle mirrored: the Dutch Republic in European perspective* (Cambridge 1995) 57-98; M. Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century: the golden age* (Cambridge 2005); A.T. Van Deursen, ‘The Dutch Republic, 1588-1780’, in: J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (eds.), *History of the Low Countries* (Oxford, New York, 2006), 143-218; M. Prak, ‘The Dutch Republic’s City-State Culture’, 343-347.

⁶ Mijnhardt, ‘The Dutch Republic’, 345.

Notwithstanding the fact that the organisation of the United Provinces formed a new political constellation, the architects of this 'political freak'⁷ found it imperative that old, trusted practices were retained or returned after the upheaval of the uprising against the Spanish rulers. It resulted in a mix of old and new customs and institutions and meant that many old terms remained in force even though they sometimes were given a new meaning. This restorative conservatism contributed strongly to the prominent position of cities and burghers. Urban autonomy dated back to the medieval period and it was not deemed necessary to break with this tradition. Age old privileges were maintained or revived and any attempt to limit the powers of the autonomous cities was met with fierce resistance. The Dutch cities each had their own concerns and only worked together because it was beneficial to them as parts of economically-based networks. They would support the new political set-up, because the relative political unity of the United Provinces provided a stable structure in which they could further their own interests while maintaining their autonomy. This political reality prompted at least one contemporary observer to describe the Republic as a federation of 'about fifty republics, all very different the one from the other'.⁸

In the complex political world of the Republic the burghers of the cities were the smallest but definitely not the least components. The term *burger* came from the Latin concept *civis*, which meant being a member of an established political community or *civitas*. From the early medieval period onwards regional rulers started to award privileges to communities – like the right to a certain political and judicial autonomy – in return for, among others, the duty to pay taxes and tolls, which the rulers needed to finance their administration. Gradually the need to highlight the difference between privileged and non-privileged people and to associate it with a circumscribed space, like a city, became stronger. Hand in hand with this development went the increasing desire of cities to assert their autonomy. It was in this time that the inhabitants of cities received their own designation. At first they were called *poorters*, which came from the Middle Dutch word *port*, meaning city. The

⁷ Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century*, 4.

⁸ Prak, 'The Dutch Republic's City-State Culture', 353.

term *burger* only later found its way into the Dutch language and meant resident of a *burcht* (castle or stronghold) or city. What is important to remember is that being a burgher developed into a defined status linked to certain privileges.⁹

Because of the prominence of autonomous cities in the Dutch Republic and the fact that *burgerschap* was tied to residency of these cities, there was no such thing as a national Dutch *burgerschap* or citizenship; on the contrary, *burgerschap* was a local phenomenon. Even though many of the settlers inhabiting the overseas territories came from an area known as the United Dutch Provinces, which was referred to them as '*patria*', this common origin was still very much a work in progress. Besides the local character of *burgerschap* there were many different languages, different customs, different dress and different systems of coinage and measures. Therefore it is arguable if there was something like a unified "Dutch" culture.¹⁰ Another point to be kept in mind is the question to what extent the Dutch overseas settlements could be called "Dutch". Many of the employees of the two most important Dutch trading companies, which founded the majority of these settlements: the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC), were from other European territories like the German countries, Scandinavia, the Southern Netherlands and Switzerland. Despite this it must be recognized that there was some sort of common background: most settlers were Protestant and northern European and shared 'the same social system with the same norms and values'.¹¹

The residents of the overseas settlements, whether they were Dutch or from other European countries, came from a similar city-state culture which was not only well-developed in the Netherlands but was also found in large parts of Germany, Switzerland and Italy.¹² The cities in these countries looked at each other for examples

⁹ P. Leupen, 'Burger, stad en zegel: een verkenning voor de Noordelijke Nederlanden', in: J. Kloek and K. Tilmans (eds.), *Burger. Een geschiedenis van het begrip 'burger' in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2002), 19-31.

¹⁰ A.-M. Cantwell, 'Landscapes and Other Objects: Creating Dutch New Netherland', in: *New York History* (Fall 2008), 315-345, 316.

¹¹ Cantwell, 'Landscapes and Other Objects', 316.

¹² See for a description of City-States: M.H. Hansen, 'The Concepts of City-State and City-State Culture', in M.H. Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty City-State Cultures* (Copenhagen, 2000), 11-34 (a definition of city-states can be found on page 19).

and inspiration. The Swiss tried to copy Dutch army reforms and Venice was an important role-model for Dutch republican theories.¹³ The resemblance between the European cities and overseas settlements becomes clear from Lauro Martines' portrayal of daily life in Italian Renaissance cities:

'...a space in which the power of the state was omnipresent. Here, every resident was touched, and touched daily, by decisions that had been made in a government palace never more than a few hundred metres away from most citizens. The sights and sounds of that authoritative presence were everywhere - in trumpeting heralds, uniformed guardsmen, court summonses, resounding official bells, grand arrivals and departures, and the livery of rushing officials and messengers. In addition to the property taxes and 'forced loans' paid by citizens, all contracts and comestibles carried a tax; dress of the more expensive sort was regulated by law; every night brought curfews; torture was common; capital punishment was knowingly turned into a public spectacle; and the intrusiveness of government couriers put much of the private business of families into the eyes or ears of neighbours.'¹⁴

It is as if Martines is describing eighteenth century Cape Town. Many elements of this description were found to be relevant and applicable to the daily life of the residents of places like Batavia and Cape Town, where the rituals and show of power and status, public punishment and sumptuary laws were very similar.¹⁵

Even the physical environment that the settlers with a European background encountered in the Dutch territories was familiar to them. The eighteenth century traveller Francois Valentijn wrote about Fort Cochin in Kerala, India: 'because of high buildings, churches and towers, it resembles a European city'.¹⁶ Similarly there are many specific references to the typical "Dutch" appearance of these settlements. A visitor to the Dutch settlement Zeelandia on Formosa (Taiwan) in 1670 described it

¹³ Prak, 'The Dutch Republic's City-State Culture', 354.

¹⁴ Lauro Martines, *April Blood. Florence and the plot against the Medici*, (London, 2004), 4.

¹⁵ Worden, *Cape Town*, 72-73; R. Ross, 'Structure and culture in pre-industrial Cape Town: a survey of knowledge and ignorance', in: W.G. James & M. Simons (eds), *The Angry Divide. Social & economic history of the Western Cape* (Cape Town 1989), 40-46, 41.

¹⁶ A. Singh, *Fort Kochin in Kerala 1750-1830. The social condition of a Dutch community in an Indian milieu* (Ph.D. thesis, Leiden 2007), 17.

'...as perfectly and beautifully built as any city in Holland...The streets had been paved with square bricks...'.¹⁷ The rice paddies and sugar cane fields around Zeelandia were called *polders*. The town of Batavia, the VOC's headquarters in Asia, was 'laid out as a Dutch [town], with houses in a row and manifold canals bordered by shady trees'.¹⁸ Cape Town developed just like that with 'a strict grid pattern of streets with regular square 'blocks' occupied by dwelling houses'.¹⁹ And when one compares maps of Batavia and Cape Town of the eighteenth century one is struck by the similarities between the two cities: the VOC castle built on the coast line with the even house blocks and streets behind it. Even the way in which mountain streams were channelled through Cape Town resembled the Dutch urban canals and they had the same names: Cape Town had its *Heerengracht* just like Amsterdam. And these were not the only names which were copied overseas. The Dutch colonists in New Netherland named their outposts after Dutch places: Nieuw Amsterdam, Beverwijck, Haerlem, Breuckelen, and Amersfoort.

It was not a coincidence that many of the Dutch settlements had a similar appearance. Their descriptions give an impression of orderliness and were part of the notion of the 'ideal city', which became known and widespread in seventeenth century Holland and had made its way there from Italy. At Leiden University an influential course on fortification and town development was taught. The newly acquired knowledge was applied by town planners in the extensions and new quarters of Dutch towns: streets, canals and houses were built in a rectangular chessboard pattern.²⁰ The same was done in overseas settlements. Ron van Oers studied Dutch town planning overseas in the American, African and Asian territories and concluded that the Dutch were less concerned with having elaborate status buildings - like big churches or government palaces - and more with making their settlements as cost-effective as possible, which meant among other things that they had to be easily defensible and well-organised.

¹⁷ J.L. Oosterhoff, 'Zeelandia, a Dutch colonial city on Formosa (1624-1662)', in R.F. Betts, R. Ross & G.J. Telkamp (eds.), *Colonial Cities: essays on urbanism in a colonial context* (Leiden, 1985) 51-63, 51.

¹⁸ L. Blusse, 'An insane administration and insanitary town: the Dutch East India Company and Batavia (1619-1799)', in R.F. Betts, R. Ross & G.J. Telkamp (eds.), *Colonial Cities: essays on urbanism in a colonial context* (Leiden, 1985), 65-85, 66.

¹⁹ Worden, *Cape Town*, 40.

²⁰ Oosterhoff, 'Zeelandia', 51-52.

The strict geometrical design fitted this purpose. Van Oers furthermore stated that this design was 'symbolic of an ordered, well-managed society, hierarchical but democratic, it was emblematic for the hard working god fearing Dutch Calvinists'.²¹

What he implied with this statement was that the Dutch did more than make their overseas territories look like cities in the Dutch Republic, but that they also wanted to show and instil their values. There was an obvious link between the fatherland and the overseas territories, which was witnessed by certain physical resemblances. But these there were not the only ties with *patria*. The economic relations as well as the personal links of settlers with family and friends back home must have played a role in the way these settlers experienced and set up their overseas settlements. They did not just let go of their Dutch legacy and even though situated on a remote corner of the African continent, the society and political life of Cape Town and other overseas places were not so far removed from the Dutch and European heritage.²² Donna Merwick remarked that the first Dutch settlers, who arrived across the Atlantic in *Nieuw Nederland* in the early seventeenth century, 'did not act out of universal rules, but out of seventeenth-century Dutch culture'.²³

The pre-eminent position of the cities in the United Provinces also permeated the two Dutch trading companies, the WIC and VOC. Both were organised in chambers, each of which were based in a Dutch city or area. The VOC had six chambers: Amsterdam, Zeeland, Delft, Rotterdam, Hoorn and Enkhuizen. Of these Amsterdam and Zeeland were the most important and these were the chambers where the administrative apparatus of the VOC was based. Even though the *bewindhebbers* or directors in these chambers mostly came from the name-giving cities, they both had

²¹ R. van Oers, *Dutch town planning overseas during VOC and WIC rule (1600-1880)* (Zutphen 2000), 156.

²² It needs to be pointed out that I am not claiming here that the Dutch simply transplanted their complete culture, values and beliefs to exotic territories, because there are many arguments to be made against this. One only has to think of the (in)famous Dutch tolerance and ideas of political freedom as opposed to the violent behaviour and attitudes of Dutch colonialists towards slaves and native people overseas. Frances Gouda makes this point in a concise and clear manner in her introduction to *Dutch Culture overseas: colonial practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Singapore 2008), 1-9. Another interesting study about this topic and situated in a different part of the Dutch empire is: D. Merwick, *The Shame and the Sorrow. Dutch-Amerindian Encounters in New Netherland* (Philadelphia 2006).

²³ D. Merwick, *Possessing Albany, 1630-1710. The Dutch and English Experiences* (Cambridge 2002), 7.

representatives from other cities as well. In the Amsterdam chamber the cities of Haarlem and Leiden, which had significant interests in the overseas trade, managed to acquire a seat on the board after 1645. It was the original intention when the VOC was founded in 1602 that the appointment of new directors in the chambers would be the responsibility of the respective Provincial States. But almost immediately the province of Holland transferred this authority to the cities, while the same thing happened in Zeeland in 1646 after a fierce battle between the Provincial States and the cities. The close connection between the cities and the companies was furthermore strengthened by the fact that many company directors had one or more functions in the administration of the participating cities. Only twenty years after the forming of the VOC the following complaint was heard: 'if we complain to the regents and the magistrates of the towns, there sit the directors, ... if to the admiralties, there are the directors again. If to the States-General, we find that they and the directors are sitting there together at the same time.'²⁴ This did not change as time went on: throughout the period of activity of the WIC and the VOC the vast majority of the directors were recruited from the *regenten*, the Dutch ruling elite. Only two of the twenty-nine men who were directors of the VOC chamber Delft since 1750 did not have a position in the city government. And the directors of the chamber Rotterdam each had on average about ten functions in the city administration in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Thus neither the WIC nor the VOC were strangers to the city-based nature of Dutch society and it follows that elements of that basis were prevalent in the overseas settlements. In the same vein one could argue that, because these places were established, governed, and to a considerable extent inhabited by Dutch people, it would be reasonable to assume that the Dutch heritage played an important role. Besides the extensive powers that both trading companies were invested with they had the authority to exercise judicial and administrative functions in their settlements. 'In their overseas possessions the Dutch replicated all the well-developed municipal

²⁴ Boxer, *Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 50. The original Dutch quote can be found in Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*, 34. Both Boxer and Gaastra discuss the close links between regents and directors and more recently this has been well set out in: H.J. den Heijer, *De geötrooierde compagnie: de VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap* (Deventer 2005).

institutions of their burgher society in the home country, such as town halls, hospitals, courts of justice, churches, reformatory institutions, and alms houses.²⁵ The ideas and practice around the burgher concept and the special status of burghers were part and parcel of this. Before focussing on the Cape, we will have a look at the practical implications for other Dutch overseas settlements.

In New Netherland the WIC gave up the monopoly on the fur trade in 1639, which was followed by an influx of colonists. Many of these were not employed by the WIC, but free residents, although the settlement was still governed by and under control of the WIC appointed governor-general and his council. The government stamped its authority on the settlement by asking the residents to take an oath of allegiance to the Dutch States-General, the Prince of Orange, the WIC and the local administration. In return the residents were given certain rights. One of these was the privilege to exercise a trade or a craft, which anybody who had not taken the oath could not do. The residents furthermore seemed to have a judicial advantage. The administration of New Amsterdam declared that the property of a resident who had taken the oath could not be confiscated to pay a debt. The status these residents had was comparable to that of Dutch city burghers and they were sometimes referred to as such, but it was not until 1657 that New Amsterdam established a formal *burgerschap*. The direct motivation for this were complaints about the so-called 'schotse' merchants, who operated during trading season and were able to keep their costs low, because they did not own property in the town, did not pay taxes, and did not contribute to the defence of the settlement. By keeping their expenses low they could trade their wares cheaper, which put the permanent residents at a serious disadvantage. The WIC directors acknowledged that there was a problem and looked for ways in which to rectify the situation. They fell back on customs which they knew from the Dutch Republic and introduced a formal *burgerschap*. In fact, they even went as far as adopting the Amsterdam system of having a 'klein' (limited) and 'groot' (extended)

²⁵ L. Blusse, *Visible cities. Canton, Nagasaki, and Batavia and the coming of the Americans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts 2008), 39.

burgerschap.²⁶ Limited burgher right was awarded to all residents of New Amsterdam who had lived there for one year and six weeks, everybody born in the city, everybody who married a burgher daughter who had been born in the city, and to all those who wanted to keep an open shop or exercise a trade, thereby linking *burgerschap* to an economic advantage. The new burghers had to pay twenty guilders for this right and were obliged to pay certain taxes and perform burgher watch duties. This dealt with the itinerant merchants, who were from now on required to become '*klein burgers*' if they wanted to do business. Extended *burgerschap* entitled the residents to be eligible for functions in the city government and be exempted from guard duties and the '*groot burger*' could not be arrested by the lower courts of justice. This type of *burgerschap* was awarded automatically to all members of the provincial government, *burgemeesters* and *schepenen*, ministers and the highest officers of the burgher militia. Others had to pay fifty guilders for great *burgerschap* and it was declared hereditary along male lines.²⁷

Besides the fact that Dutch tradition was followed in the regulation of *burgerschap* and burgher rights, a further typical Dutch development was the distinction that was created between insiders and outsiders. Burgher rights became exclusively associated with residency of New Amsterdam. In 1664 the burghers of New Amsterdam successfully petitioned for the ruling that merchants of Nieuwer Amstel, one of the other settlements in New Netherland, first had to buy *burgerschap* of New Amsterdam before they could sell their goods in the city. A few months before that the burghers of Beverwijck made sure that everybody, who did not own property there, had not lived in the place for more than a year and six weeks or had acquired burgher rights there, was excluded from trading with Christians. There were other ways in which cohesion within the burgher communities of the various places in New Netherland was promoted. The burghers were obliged to serve in burgher militia as part of taking responsibility for the common welfare. The militia derived directly from the

²⁶ Amsterdam was not the only city with a *klein* and *groot burgerschap*. The same was the case in the eastern city of Zwolle. J.C. Streng, *Stemme in staat: de bestuurlijke elite in de stadsrepubliek Zwolle 1579-1795* (Hilversum 1997), 91-92.

²⁷ J. Jacobs, *Een zegenrijk gewest. Nieuw Nederland in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1999), 279-338; J. Venema, *Beverwijck. A Dutch Village on the American Frontier, 1652-1664* (Hilversum 2003), 105-114.

schutterijen (civic militias) in Dutch cities and had similar rules and regulations. There are no clear records that regular social events were held by members of the burgher guards in New Netherland, but it is likely that there were events like militia meals and shooting contests and once a year there was a grand parade in which the various burgher companies marched together. Other common and social festivities made their way across the ocean from the Dutch Republic to the American colonies. With the introduction of burgher rights and the burgher watch grew a sense of local pride and sentiment. Dutch local patriotism, so prevalent in the Dutch Republic, had found its way to the settlements of New Netherland.²⁸

It was evident that the WIC and its directors and local administrators took cognizance of well-established practices in the cities of the Dutch Republic around burghers and *burgerschap* and introduced these in the North American Dutch settlements. However by 1664 New Netherland was taken over by the English and became anglicised. Even though New Netherland can serve as an example of how Dutch practices made their way overseas, it is virtually impossible to determine how Dutch *burgerschap* would have developed further and can be compared with the strong burgher identity among the burghers of the Cape of Good Hope. It may be more useful to look for similarities with the Asian territories of the VOC of which the Cape was after all an integral part.

In Batavia, the headquarters of the VOC in Asia, and in other Dutch settlements in Asia the establishment of a burgher group preceded the one at the Cape. The first burghers in Asia were given their freedom in 1616 in the eastern part of the Indonesian territories: the Moluccas, Ambon and Banda. Once Batavia was firmly in Dutch hands (after 1619) most burghers chose Batavia as their place of residence.²⁹ The city grew steadily and by the second half of the seventeenth century Batavia was a city with many different inhabitants: Company employees from various parts of Europe (except for the highest who were mostly Dutch); free burghers; mixed people; Asians; Chinese;

²⁸ Jacobs, *Een zegenrijk gewest*, 310-315; Venema, *Beverwijck*, 108-114.

²⁹ For information on the burghers in Dutch East Asia and Batavia: L. Blusse, 'An insane administration and insanitary town'; J.G. Taylor, *The social world of Batavia. European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison 1983), 9-12; P.J.M. Nas, 'The Origin and Development of the Urban Municipality in Indonesia', in: *Sojourn 5-1* (1990), 86-112; U. Bosma and R. Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: a history of creolisation and empire, 1500-1920* (Singapore 2000), 35-42; Boxer, *Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 241-250.

and many slaves. The city began to expand beyond its walls and officials had 'to devise laws and institutions that could control the city's inhabitants. Quite naturally, the model they chose was that of the Dutch municipality, just as in the design of the earliest buildings and layout of the city they strove to recreate the appearance of a Dutch town.'³⁰ However the Dutch laws had to be changed and adapted to local circumstances and a mix of inhabitants for which there was no precedent in the Netherlands. This became apparent in the way the VOC administration dealt with the burghers (and other inhabitants for that matter).

As far as economic policy was concerned the VOC followed a different path to the WIC and never abandoned its trade monopoly. In the early years the burghers still enjoyed some freedom with regards to maritime trade, but from 1632 this became increasingly limited. Eventually the VOC Directors decided that they did not want to establish colonies of burghers in the East Indies, which would have meant that they had to be given a share of the lucrative trade and would have competed with the VOC monopoly. The burghers were then only allowed to engage in such business as the Company permitted. Subsequently the lucrative trade with the Moluccas, India, China and Japan was closed to the burghers and goods such as textiles, diamonds and spices became the exclusive domain of the VOC. Simultaneously many high Company employees set up their own trading businesses, which was officially not permitted, but condoned by the VOC. It was an unequal struggle for the burghers and some returned to the Netherlands while others rejoined the service of the Company. The burghers who stayed in Batavia tried to eke out a living supplying the Company headquarters and the town with produce, which again was difficult because most of the land around Batavia was owned by high VOC officials, who leased it to Chinese cultivators. For some the only thing left to do was to join the service sector as innkeepers, shopkeepers and artisans. In fact, in 1674 the vast majority of burghers declared that they made their living in this way and only a minor group described themselves as free merchants.³¹

³⁰ Taylor, *The social world of Batavia*, 20.

³¹ Bosma and Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 36.

In the settlements of Galle and Colombo in Ceylon the economic opportunities for burghers were even more limited than in Batavia. In Colombo the Company held the monopoly on the most important trade with India and made sure that burghers were excluded. The small amount of trade allowed to them - mainly in rice, textiles and saltpetre – was gradually lost to indigenous traders with whom burghers financially could not compete.³²

On the political field the VOC similarly wanted to protect its own interests. This meant that it was not inclined to set up independent town councils, like the ones in Dutch cities, because these could be a threat to its commercial power. The burgher community in Batavia was subject to strict control by the VOC government. On obtaining their freedom from the Company the burghers had to swear an oath of loyalty and obedience to the laws of the Company, they had to perform military duties in burgher militia, and they could not marry or return to Holland without permission. And if they did not behave they could be punished or taken back into the service. The Batavian burghers were however given certain functions in the administration of the town. They could be appointed to the aldermen's bench (*schepbank*). The council of aldermen was established as early as 1620 and consisted of burghers and Company men. But the president always was a high Company official and member of the Political Council, the VOC government. Its duties were to collect taxes, maintain the canals, organise fire prevention and other functions like these. Aldermen typically were appointed for two years. Burghers could also get the positions of *heemraad*, orphan master (*weesmeester*), weigh master (*weegmeester*) or church warden (*kerkmeester*). These functions derived directly from similar institutions in Dutch cities, but only in name; the burghers of Batavia never had the same authority or status as the burghers of towns in the Dutch Republic. Batavia was and remained firmly in the grip of the VOC and its officials.³³

The Batavian burghers attempted to redress the economic and political restrictions placed on them. In 1649 they requested that a *vroedschap* or town council be installed

³² Bosma and Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 40.

³³ Taylor, *The social world of Batavia*, 10; Nas, 'Origin and Development', 89.

with the aim to have their interests represented properly and without interference from Company officials. They sent the request directly to the Dutch States-General and thus bypassed the Governor-General and the *Heeren XVII*. The burghers of Colombo likewise frequently tried to get greater privileges from government. In these cases the officers of the militia acted as spokesmen. The first petition was submitted in 1678 when there were just over one hundred burghers living in Colombo. They claimed that they were in a desperate state, because the Asian merchants had managed to wrest lucrative trade from them. The burghers, because they were Dutch or from Dutch descent, thought themselves entitled to preferential treatment. This petition was followed by many others, but seldom did the VOC give in to their demands. The *Heeren XVII* stressed that the Company had to remain in control even if it meant that the burghers would decide to leave. If they wanted to stay, they simply had to show obedience and no change in their circumstances was brought about.³⁴

Because of the economic and political restrictions placed on them and their inability to compete with their Asian competitors, *burgerschap* of Batavia and other Asian settlements was not very appealing and the number of burghers remained low throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The number of burghers in Batavia remained largely stable at around three hundred.³⁵ It was the more sizable group of Chinese inhabitants who came to offer the necessary skills as craftsmen, fishermen and farmers and they were allowed to trade freely with areas which were outside the control of the Company. They actually fulfilled more the traditional role of burghers, but did not have any political power. This situation ended when they were almost completely wiped out in the massacre of 1740.

Burgerschap was a concept which was exported from the Dutch Republic to the overseas settlements. An important difference was that the places and cities overseas were not governed by a town council formed by regents who originated from the

³⁴ Bosma and Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 38-42.

³⁵ In 1632 there were 229 burghers and 1560 Company employees (Bosma and Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 29). In 1673 the burghers numbered 340 on a total population of 7286 (outside the walls of Batavia - Taylor, *The social world of Batavia*, 10). The unhealthy living conditions in the East also proved to be a threat to the Europeans and may have contributed to their low numbers and wish to repatriate instead of establishing themselves. See for this Blusse, 'An insane administration and insanitary town'.

burgher population, but by officials representing large commercial enterprises. However these officials did have links with and were rooted in the Dutch regent group and political world. Both the WIC and the VOC looked at the example of Dutch *burgerschap* for ways of dealing with people released from their service and adapted it to the local situation. A crucial aspect of *burgerschap* was burgher identity. The burghers in New Netherland never had much of a chance to develop their identity, because Dutch administration was short-lived. The burghers in Asia were economically and politically suppressed and failed to develop a self-conscious identity. From the Cape protest movement at the end of the 1770s we can conclude that the situation there was different and that a burgher identity indeed developed over time.

The Cape settlement was established in 1652 as a place where VOC ships travelling between Europe and Asia could be repaired and the ship crews could recover. The Cape did not produce any profitable spices like the Asian settlements and soon after its establishment it became clear to the VOC officials that the Company itself could not deliver enough fresh produce and meat to satisfy the demand of the passing ships and Batavia. In other words, running a station like the Cape could be a costly affair without lucrative trade possibilities and while having to maintain a large and expensive VOC work force. For the solution to the problem the VOC directors did not have to look far: they followed the example of the Asian settlements and from as early as 1657 Company servants were released from their duties and settled as free residents. The burgher group was created. The burghers were supposed to focus on agriculture and provide the fresh produce and meat needed for the settlement and the passing ships of the Company. It would be cheaper for the VOC to have burghers working for themselves and paying their own costs than having to pay for VOC labour and keeping of slaves. Besides this the burghers were expected to contribute to the military defence of the settlement and were organised in burgher militia, which meant that the Company garrison and military expense could be reduced. Of course there were expenses incurred in settling and governing the burghers, but these could be offset against the various taxes which could be collected from them. From early on the burghers did not limit themselves to the agricultural sector. A number of them settled in Cape Town and made a living by performing some form of skill, enterprise or service:

they traded in all kinds of products; many burghers were craftsmen, like bakers, bricklayers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, painters and carpenters; a large number provided lodging and catering for seamen.³⁶

The climate at the Cape was healthier for the burghers and because they were given more access to land and experienced no competition from a local population, conditions were generally better than in other parts of the Dutch Asian world. The size of the burgher group increased steadily. These burghers did not have much of a burgher role-model to look up to in the American or Asian settlements, but there was one present and available in the Dutch fatherland. By the time that the conflict in the 1770s erupted burghers had developed a notion that they were awarded burgher rights of Cape Town and that these were linked to certain privileges, which could and should not be undermined by arbitrary decisions of Company officials. They had a specific view on their position, which they regarded as a special status comparable to that of burghers in the Dutch Republic. Independent Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers, one of the highest and most influential VOC officials at the Cape at the time, made clear what he thought of this claim by stating that *'one makes a big mistake if one wants to compare the residents of a settlement like this with the privileged burghers of our great cities in the Republic'*.³⁷ Boers voiced the opinion of the VOC administration that the *burgerschap* of Cape burghers was definitely not the same as that of Dutch burghers. Was this difference of opinion between the VOC officials and the protesting burghers merely one of semantics, in other words a difference in interpretation of the concept *'burgerregt'* and tied to that burgher status and identity, or were there more concrete reasons for the Cape burghers to argue that their status was special? To be able to answer this question one needs to compare the Dutch and Cape practice around *burgerschap*. The following section aims to illustrate that Dutch *burgerschap* and status was a relevant frame of reference for the protesting burghers at the Cape by studying the practice of Cape *burgerschap* in greater detail while comparing it to

³⁶ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 136-137; R. Ross, 'Die Kaap die Goeie Hoop en die wêreld ekonomie, 1652-1835, in: H. Giliomee and R. Elphick (eds.), *'n Samelewing in Wording, Suid-Afrika 1652-1840* (Cape Town 1982), 249-286, 250; Schutte, 'Kompanjie en koloniste', 295-296.

³⁷ *'Men bedriegt sig seer merkelyk wanneer men eene comparatie geliefd te maken tusschen Ingesetenen van een Colonie als deese, en tusschen de gepriviligeerde burgers van onse groote Steden in de Republicq'* - WCARS, C 2693, 136 (2.2.1781).

burgerschap in Dutch cities. This will be done by looking at the ways of becoming a burgher; the burgher oath; the advantages of having burgher status; and by comparing burghers to other status groups in the city.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were four main ways to become a burgher in the United Provinces: birth, marriage, purchase and grant.

To attain burgher status by birth was not as straightforward as it seems, because different cities applied different rules. Until the end of the eighteenth century the city of 's Hertogenbosch applied quite broad criteria: all people born or even just baptised within the town automatically received *burgerschap* and could never lose it. Amsterdam and Deventer were more restrictive: only legitimate children of burgher parents were assured of automatic *burgerschap* in these cities. Either way, *burgerschap* acquired by birth had to be confirmed at a later age. This registration process involved being able to prove that one's father was indeed a burgher followed by the swearing of a burgher oath.³⁸

The situation in Cape Town seemed to be the same as in Amsterdam, i.e. children born to burghers automatically inherited burgher status: Carel Hendrik Buijtendag was a born burgher, a fact to which the Burgher Councillors testified in their complaint to the Governor when Buijtendag was arrested. That burgher status was hereditary is also apparent from requests of sons of burgher families who went to work for the Company and wanted to be restored as burgher after the end of their contract. One of the sons of *Heemraad* Hendrik Cloete, the *assistent* Pieter Laurens Cloete, started to work for the Company in April 1781, but requested in March 1787 to be restored to his '*previous burgher freedom*', because he wanted to assist his father in his business.³⁹ Another example was Johan Meijndertz Cruijwagen junior, the son of Burgher Councillor Cruijwagen. He entered Company service in 1777 and was promoted to *assistent* in 1779. By 1789 he was too busy with his business affairs and

³⁸ M. Prak, 'Burghers into Citizens: Urban and National Citizenship in the Netherlands during the Revolutionary Era (c. 1800)', in: *Theory and Society*, 26, 4 (1997), 403-420, 404-405.

³⁹ '*voorige burgerlijke vrijdom*' – WCARS, C 174, 285 (19.3.1787); Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 186.

requested the Political Council for his release from the service and to restore him to his '*inherited burgher right*'.⁴⁰ What follows from the above is that apparently being a VOC employee and burgher was incompatible. Even though one was born as burgher, one would lose this status on entering the Company service and had to officially request the administration to get it back, although it did not seem problematic. The point is that one could not be both VOC employee and burgher. The fact that there was a clear distinction (but not an impenetrable wall) between status groups in Cape society will become evident more often later in this chapter.

Marrying a burgher daughter meant that the husband was in a position to acquire burgher rights in most cities of the Dutch Republic. Many men were therefore looking to marry into a burgher family and the standing of burgher girls and women on the wedding market was considerable. The rules in Amsterdam stated that the newly wedded husband, if he wanted to become a burgher, had to register as such within two weeks after the wedding. If he died unregistered within that two week period any child conceived and later born would not be recognised as burgher. This implied that burgher rights were not transferable through the mother even if she was a burgher daughter.⁴¹

In Cape Town there was also a connection between marrying a burgher woman and becoming a burgher. There are numerous examples of Company employees who married into a burgher family and applied for burgher rights at more or less the same time. Willem Cornelis Arendsz became a burgher on 30 July 1774 and married his burgher bride Maria Maasdorp on 28 August 1774. Andries Willem Beck became a burgher on 11 October 1779 and married Maria Cecilia van der Merwe on 31 October.⁴² However even though marrying a burgher daughter must have opened up the possibility to attain *burgerschap*, there are no indications that these events were automatically linked. This is illustrated by the fact that many higher VOC officials were known to be married to burgher women but remained in Company service. These

⁴⁰ '*aangebooren burgerregt*' - WCARS, C 184, 306-308 (11.12.1789).

⁴¹ Kuijpers and Prak, '*Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling*', 120.

⁴² These and other examples can be found in the attached database (discussed in detail in next chapter).

higher ranking officials were aiming to make a career in Company service and did not want to become burghers, but they may have wanted to marry into a wealthy and connected burgher family for personal gain. However in case of lower-placed VOC employees without many career prospects within the Company, marrying into a well-off burgher family meant that they had the opportunity to settle and try their luck outside the service as a burgher. For both the higher and lower VOC employees marrying into a burgher family was a way to gain access to a potentially useful kinship network. Another argument for the fact the marrying a burgher daughter and becoming a burgher were not linked automatically is that one still had to take the extra step to inform the Company of one's intentions to leave the service and apply for *burgerschap*.

If one could not find a burgher bride, there was always the possibility of buying *burgerschap*. The purchase price varied from city to city and was often determined by the market. *Burgerschap* of Amsterdam was hugely desirable in the Golden Age and the city fathers could therefore ask the hefty sum of fifty guilders, part of which went to the city orphanage and care for the poor.⁴³ Nijmegen was not far behind with forty-eight guilders, but in most Dutch towns modest amounts in the order of ten to twenty guilders were paid for burgher rights. The majority of Dutch cities allowed most people to buy *burgerschap*. There were a few cities, like Deventer and Nijmegen, where only members of the Dutch Reformed church were able to purchase *burgerschap*.⁴⁴

At the Cape neither the requests for burgher rights nor the letters of grant issued by the administration mentioned anything about costs, but there are indications that there was some payment involved. The Resolutions of the Political Council mentioned that Haije Jansz Swarsenburg (or Swartzenberg) was restored to his former burgher

⁴³ As has been mentioned, Amsterdam introduced a *groot burgerschap* in 1652, which one could acquire for the small fortune of 450 guilders. However this attempt to boost the city coffers ended in a failure and was terminated again in 1668. Only one person actually bought *groot burgerschap*, while it was granted to or inherited by just eleven others. Kuijpers and Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling', 116-117.

⁴⁴ Prak, 'Burghers into Citizens', 405.

rights in 1770.⁴⁵ It was specifically recorded that Swarsenburg was too poor to be able to afford the costs of a new *vrijbrief* (letter of freedom) and therefore the Council decided that the original letter of freedom issued to him in 1762 would do.⁴⁶ It is however not stated how much he would have had to pay for a new *vrijbrief*. A copy of the minutes of the Political Council referring to their decision to release an employee from Company service had to be attached to the *vrijbrief*. The burgher normally had to pay for this copy as well, which was recorded in the Resolutions in 1780 when the procedure to be followed by people who obtained burgher freedom was outlined. The new burgher had to register himself with the Burgher Councillors and as proof he needed an extract of the minutes of the Political Council. This copy could be obtained against a payment of stamp duty of six *stuivers*.⁴⁷ Thus getting the burgher rights of Cape Town was apparently not free, but the total cost is not clear.

In some cases *burgerschap* was granted to outsiders. This happened to ministers of the Dutch Reformed church on entering the service of a local parish, but also to groups of refugees, especially when they had skills which could be useful.⁴⁸ The Dutch were more pragmatic than principled with regards to their *burgerschap* admissions. If it was beneficial to the city community to welcome outsiders, they would do so. A well-known example of this practice in the Cape settlement was the granting of *burgerschap* to the French Huguenots, who arrived at the Cape at the end of the seventeenth century and were in demand for their knowledge of wine farming and brandy distilling.

The granting of *burgerschap* to outsiders did not always go without opposition and in those cases *burgerschap* became an instrument of social regulation. Fees could be raised to a level that would make it difficult for outsiders to acquire *burgerschap*, which would prevent a city being flooded by poor people and beggars placing a heavy burden on welfare institutions. Sometimes specific groups were targeted. The

⁴⁵ See page 64 for the story of how Swarsenburg lost his *burgerschap*.

⁴⁶ WCARS, C 148, 234-237 (31.7.1770).

⁴⁷ WCARS, C 158, 225-236 (25.7.1780).

⁴⁸ M. Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens and Popular Politics in the Dutch Republic', in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 30, 4 (1997), 443-448, 444.

shopkeepers of 's Hertogenbosch complained in 1775 that they were disadvantaged by the illegal practices of aliens, particularly Jews, who they accused of not paying taxes and selling stolen goods. The shopkeepers demanded that Jews would be banned from *burgerschap* and in 1777 the city council gave in to this demand.⁴⁹

At the Cape it was the financial assistance and certain privileges (e.g. the right to have their own church) granted to the Huguenots which eventually lead to resentment among other burghers and in 1700 it was officially decided to stop the Huguenot immigration.⁵⁰ Almost eighty years later the protesting burghers at the Cape felt that their livelihoods were threatened by some other groups and they specifically requested in their 1779 *Memorie* that no English, French or other foreigners, presumably from European origin, should be allowed to own houses, engage in any burgher trade or become burghers without first having been in Company service.⁵¹ The protesters seemed to have wanted to make sure that there was a level playing field: either one inherited burgher status from one's parents or one arrived at the Cape from Europe as a Company employee and then asked for burgher rights. The reason for this request may have been that they wanted to make sure that any foreigner settling in the Cape settlement had some loyalty towards the local Dutch administration. But it was more likely that the protesting burghers wanted this condition to make sure there were no "freeloaders" benefiting from their burgher privileges or muscling in on their territory. There had to be some control. This request resembles the situation in New Amsterdam, where *burgerschap* became an official status after complaints by the permanent residents about the itinerant or *schotse* traders.

If a person wanted to buy *burgerschap* or married into a burgher family and wanted to become a burgher, it was practice in most Dutch cities that a certain procedure was followed. This started with a request to the city administration. The same was the case in the Cape settlement, although the difference was that here the prospective

⁴⁹ Prak, 'Burghers into Citizens', 407-409.

⁵⁰ T. Wijzenbeek, 'Identity lost: Huguenot refugees in the Dutch Republic and its former colonies in North America and South Africa, 1650 to 1750: a comparison', in: N. Worden (ed.), *Contingent Lives. Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC World* (Cape Town 2007), pp. 91-109, 98.

⁵¹ WCARS, C 2689, 69 (9.10.1779).

burghers were in most cases Company employees. The process of becoming a burgher began with a request to the local VOC government. In the archives of the Political Council many of these requests can be found. The vast majority of these are set up according to a fixed formula, which did not change much throughout the period of VOC rule. A Company employee would introduce himself, state where he came from and when and in what capacity he arrived at the Cape. He continued by declaring that he had now reached the end of his contract and he thought that he would be able to make an honest living in his craft or trade outside the Company service in Cape Town or elsewhere in the settlement. The last sentence would be the humble request 'to release him from the service and favour him with the Burgher rights of this place'.⁵² The phrasing of asking for burgher rights of this place, meaning Cape Town, is quite significant. The applicant did not ask for a general Dutch *burgerschap*, but for a specific local *burgerschap*. We saw earlier that in the Dutch Republic *burgerschap* was a local phenomenon and this apparently had made its way to the Cape as well. It would be fair to say that the new burgher became part of the *Caabsche burgerij*. It is likely that this would have contributed to the perception among the burghers that they were granted similar burgher rights as burghers in Dutch cities.

In most cases the requests were granted and an official letter of grant, the *vrijbrief*, was issued to the new burgher. These letters again were set up according to the same blueprint. They would state that the request 'to be placed as Burgher'⁵³ was approved and the applicant would be allowed to engage in all permitted burgher trades. But the grant also stipulated conditions: the new burgher was not allowed to make any applications for land belonging to the Company, he could be re-enlisted in the Company service should he be needed or misbehave, and he was subject to all rules and laws pertaining to burghers.

At first glance there seems to be a difference between the request and the letter of grant. A person would ask 'for the burgher rights of this place' (Cape Town) and he

⁵² 'hom uijt gemelde dienst te ontslaan en met het Burgerregt deezer plaatse te begunstigen' – For example see WCARS, C 1172, 45-46 (1.10.1778).

⁵³ 'tot Burger te mogen werden aangesteld' – For example see WCARS, (Estate Accounts), MOOC 14-62 (vol.13, 20) (6.2.1772).

would then be 'placed as burgher' on certain terms and conditions, which reflected that the applicant was subject to strict control by the VOC government. That there was not such a distinction, but merely a difference in choice of words, becomes clear from this statement in the Resolutions of the Political Council: '*Dirk Groeneboom on the 20th of August of this year [1776], is favoured with the burgher rights of this place on his written request therefore...*'.⁵⁴ The semantics did not negate the fact that the burgher rights were given in return for duties and obligations. Freedom had its limitations and was conditional. Again this was not unlike the practice in Dutch cities, where one could be removed from the burgher register if one misbehaved or was found guilty of a crime.⁵⁵

There are several examples of instances where the Company enforced its rights of punishing burghers by applying the condition of the *vrijbrief*. In 1770 Haije Jansz Swarsenburg applied to the Political Council to be restored to his *burgerschap*. The first time he received burgher rights was in 1762. But he had lost these in 1765 as punishment for repeated drunkenness and consequent bad behaviour, which caused that he could no longer be tolerated as a member of the burgher community. He was conscripted into Company service for five years and banished to India.⁵⁶ Banishment from the city or district was a punishment which was used in Dutch cities as well as at the Cape as the Swarsenburg case and the Buijtendag incident illustrated. Another case was the one of Michiel Engelhard, who became a burgher in 1776, but was taken back into Company service and banished from the Cape in 1778 for bad behaviour.⁵⁷ Therefore what had happened to Buijtendag and others was not exceptional or even unusual. The VOC government exercised its rights and followed a custom accepted throughout the Dutch empire. Banishment from the Cape did not happen very often and it seemed to have been a last resort for the government in cases where other penalties did not manage to get a specific burgher back on the straight and narrow. In the period 1738 to 1778 the government banished thirty-three individuals, which was

⁵⁴ '*Dirk Groeneboom op den 20: Aug.s desselvigen Jaars [1776], op zijn dientwegen in Scriptis gedaan verzoek, met het Burgerregt deezer Plaatse begunstigd...*' - WCARS, C 157, 159-160 (30.3.1779).

⁵⁵ Kuijpers and Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling', 124; Streng, *Stemme in staat*, 94.

⁵⁶ WCARS, C 2663, 84 (1762); C 1151, 86-88 (31.7.1770); C 143, 438-440 (15.6.1765); C 148, 234-237 (31.7.1770).

⁵⁷ WCARS, C 1166, 26 (4.10.1776); C 157, 46 (5.1.1779) .

less than one per year. What irked the burgher protesters of 1779 was that there was a marked increase in banishing since Governor Van Plettenberg and Independent Fiscal had taken office in 1774. The previous Governor Tulbagh only banished ten burghers in the twenty years that he headed the Cape; Governor Van Plettenberg in contrast sent away eighteen burghers in less than eight years.⁵⁸ This indicates that the Cape administration under Van Plettenberg and with Boers as prosecutor was considerably harsher towards the burghers than previous governments had been.

The process of becoming a burgher or the confirmation of it as an adult if one was born as a burgher would involve the swearing of a burgher oath. In most Dutch cities these oaths included swearing allegiance to the Dutch States-General and the Stadholder, but in all of them the new burgher promised to obey the local government and laws, preserve the peace and to support and protect the city and fellow burghers, if necessary by military means. The oath was a contract between the city and the burgher – the burgher became part of an exclusive and privileged community in exchange for financial, political and social support till ‘death us do part’ as the burghers of `s Hertogenbosch promised. The burgher oath furthermore stressed the importance of local allegiance as opposed to national identity.⁵⁹

In the Cape settlement the burghers took a similar oath to the one in Dutch cities. They promised allegiance and obedience to the Dutch States-General, the Stadholder, the directors of the VOC and the governor, magistrates and authorities of the settlement. They also swore to defend the United Netherlands and ‘this city’ (*‘deese Steede’*) to the utmost even if it would cost them their life.⁶⁰ The oath was taken once a year in October or November at the same time that all burghers came together for the annual burgher militia exercise. The oath was taken by burghers who had received their letters of grant in the previous year and by residents who were born as burghers and had reached the age of sixteen, which was the time when they were required to

⁵⁸ G.M. Theal, *History of South Africa under the administration of the Dutch East India Company (1652 to 1795)*, Vol. II (London 1897), 157.

⁵⁹ Prak, ‘Burgher into Citizens’, 405; Kuijpers and Prak, ‘Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling’, 118; Streng, *Stemme in staat*, 94.

⁶⁰ WCARS, C 2661, 69 (23.10.1725); C 2663, 67 (21.10.1748).

become members of the burgher militia. The significance of this oath is that it reflected a clear link between the Dutch Republic and the Cape settlement and the burghers in both territories. This was apparent from the strikingly similar wording of the burgher oaths in Dutch cities and Cape Town and from the promise that Cape burghers would be loyal to the authorities of and protect the United Provinces. But perhaps an even stronger connection was that the Cape burgher oath unmistakably referred to events in the Dutch Republic itself. The oath of 1725 differed from the oath of 1748 in that according to the first one the Cape burghers did not swear allegiance to the Stadholder, while from 1748 onwards the people and institutions being sworn loyalty to included '*his illustrious highness the Lord Prince of Orange and Nassau as Stadholder*'.⁶¹ The Dutch Republic did not have a Stadholder between 1702 and 1748, a time known as the Second Stadholder-less period. It was clear that if the Cape burgher protesters of the late 1770s had to put their lives at risk for the Republic and its authorities, then they wanted to have their status placed on par with the one of burghers in Dutch cities.

At this point it may be opportune to pay some attention to the position of females in Cape burgher society, which seemed to have been somewhat ambivalent. Women did not serve in the burgher militia and thus did not take a burgher oath. Women who were married to a burgher, would be part of the burgher community and were counted as such in the annual tax returns or *opgaaf*. Yet there were female burghers who did not derive their status from men. They were not married, divorced or widowed. In the deeds records they were even called '*burgeres*' and this also showed that they could own property.⁶² In the next chapter we will find a number of these women on tax lists, which illustrates that they were not exempt from paying taxes. Some women owned businesses and were active in the entrepreneurial world of the Cape. It was quite acceptable in Dutch society for widows to continue the business of their husband after his death.⁶³ Female burghers thus seemed to have rights and duties which were on par with their male counterparts. However women were

⁶¹ '*sijn doorlugtige hoogheijd den Heere Prins van orange en nassauw als Stadhouder*' – WCARS, C 2663, 67 (21.10.1748).

⁶² For instance: Deeds Office, Cape Town, volume 39 (1730), T1950, T1952, T1972.

⁶³ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 60-61.

excluded from political rights and were not eligible for office, nor were they allowed to exercise their voice in specific protest options and one of these was the opportunity to sign political petitions. Accordingly, the May 1779 petition of the Cape protesters was only signed by men. Therefore the focus of this thesis is of necessity on male burghers.

In the Netherlands as well as at the Cape the tangible benefits of *burgerschap* were likely to be a big drawing card for people wanting to become burghers. *Burgerschap* provided legal, economic, political and social privileges.

First and foremost most people would have economic reasons to become a burgher of a city. These could be as basic as exemption from payment of certain tolls and taxes or the right to graze one's cattle on meadows owned by the city. But probably the most important one would be that to be able to practice a craft or trade in a particular city one had to join a local guild in which burghers, who were occupied in the same business, were organised. One could not become a guild member if one did not have burgher rights and therefore anybody who was not a burgher of that city was excluded from the burgher trades. Being a burgher was therefore crucial to economic survival for some.⁶⁴ Although there is no evidence of guild practices at the Cape, it is clear that an important reason for people to apply for *burgerschap* was that they wanted to have the freedom to ply their trade or craft for their own benefit. This desire was expressed in the requests for burgher rights and acknowledged in the letters of grant. It was also a right the burgher protesters of 1779 wanted to protect by trying to exclude foreigners from the burgher trades.⁶⁵

A further significant advantage that burghers had over non-burghers was that they could only be tried by a local court consisting of their peers or in other words: burghers of their own city. This meant that even if a burgher of a city committed a crime somewhere else, he could escape justice by proving his burgher rights of the

⁶⁴ Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 444; Prak, 'Burgher into Citizens', 405; Kuijpers and Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling', 116.

⁶⁵ The economic argument is confirmed in N. Worden, 'Artisan conflicts in a colonial context: the Cape Town blacksmith strike of 1752', *Labor history* 46, 2 (2005), 161.

city he came from and prevent extradition.⁶⁶ It was this burgher right which according to the protesting burghers at the Cape in the late 1770s was one of the most endangered by the VOC administration. In the 1779 *Memorie* they explained that burghers should only be arrested by fellow burghers and banishment from the Cape should only happen after a proper investigation by the Burgher Councillors.⁶⁷ The burghers complained that the sentence of banishment was issued without consultation of the Burgher Councillors. In the Buijtendag incident the Burgher Councillors seemed to have been taken by surprise. Likewise Burgher Councillor Gerrit Hendrik Meijer declared in a supporting statement to the *Memorie* that he knew nothing and was not consulted about the banishment of Michiel Engelhard in 1778.⁶⁸ The protesting burghers wanted more say in the judicial processes concerning burghers. Although it was not mentioned in so many words, the *Memorie* seemed to aim for the establishment of a so-called *schepenbank*, a separate (non-VOC) court through which burghers administered justice over fellow burghers. These institutions were well established in Dutch cities as well as in Batavia. According to some VOC officials at the Cape this was exactly what the Cape protesters wanted and they were not in favour of this.⁶⁹

There was also the political advantage of *burgerschap*: an important burgher right was the right to be elected to political office: member of the *vroedschap* or city council, *schepenbank* or council of justice and *burgemeester* or burgher councillor.⁷⁰ The burghers of the Cape settlement had this right as well with the one difference that burghers could not be elected to the Political Council, the highest policy making body at the Cape, which was exclusively reserved for the highest-ranked Company officials. The uppermost office a burgher at the Cape could achieve was that of burgher councillor and as such he was part of the Council of Justice, but only when it handled cases which involved burghers. A burgher could furthermore be appointed as orphan master or commissioner of civil and marriage affairs. Similar functions did exist in

⁶⁶ Prak, 'Burghers into Citizens', 406.

⁶⁷ WCARS, C 2689, 64 (9.10.1779).

⁶⁸ WCARS, C 2673, 15 (15.4.1779).

⁶⁹ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 98.

⁷⁰ Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 444; Prak, 'Burghers into Citizens' 405-406.

Dutch cities, but there the various boards and councils would consist only of burghers, while in the Cape settlement VOC employees would take up half or more of the seats. It was one of the ways the Company aimed to stay in control of the settlement. The protest movement of the late 1770s wanted to change this. The *Memorie* proposed an increase in the number of burgher councillors, who would also be allowed to take part in meetings of the Political Council when burgher affairs or matters regarding the general welfare of the Cape settlement were discussed.

Lastly *burgerschap* had certain social advantages. A number of Dutch towns had special orphanages for the children of burghers. The *Burgerweeshuis* (Burgher orphanage) in Amsterdam provided a better diet and training to become a craftsman and thus set up orphaned burgher children with a relatively good start in life. Social welfare of the burghers also included care for the elderly in old-age homes and almshouses.⁷¹ At the Cape care for the poor was entrusted to the deacons of the Dutch Reformed Church and orphans were cared for by the orphan chamber, which was modelled on similar institutions in Dutch cities. With regards to poor relief burghers did have an advantage over other groups, because for instance, at the beginning of the eighteenth century it was determined that the financial assistance given to free blacks was half of that provided to burghers.⁷²

Overall in Dutch cities a registered burgher had an exclusive and first-rate status. In this light it is important to note that not all people living in Dutch cities were actually burghers. Besides temporary visitors or foreigners there was also a second legal category: the established residents without burgher rights or the so-called *inwoners* or *ingezetenen*. These inhabitants were not legally protected in the same way as burghers were, they could not be elected to public office, and they did not have access to guilds and could therefore not operate as an independent craftsman or shopkeeper. In all Dutch cities they could however own property and their property rights would be respected. They also had access to basic juridical procedures. The

⁷¹ Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 444; Kuijpers and Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling', 117-118.

⁷² J. Iliffe, *The African Poor. A history* (Cambridge, NY, 1987), 97-98. More on free blacks later in this chapter.

major advantage of *burgerschap* therefore seemed to have been the economic one of membership of the guilds and related to that the possibility of building up a relative independent economic existence and this was probably the main reason for inhabitants to want to become burgher. This became clear in Amsterdam after about 1680 when most guilds issued strict rules against accepting *ingezetenen* in their ranks. As a result the number of inhabitants decreased dramatically, while the number of burghers increased. People were now forced to buy *burgerschap* if they wanted to survive economically.⁷³

Despite the Cape being a VOC controlled settlement, the burghers there still had a privileged status as the only group allowed to be part of the administration. Because of their Dutch (and European) background the burghers in the Cape settlement were probably familiar with the legal category of *ingezetenen*. At the Cape they were confronted with many different types of residents: foreigners, Asians, and Africans and this provoked a reaction by the burghers. The protesters of the late 1770s wanted to make sure that the advantages linked to their status as burghers were protected in this complex society. Earlier it was mentioned that the burgher *Memorie* proposed that no foreigners from other European countries should be allowed to engage in burgher trade or become burghers without first having been in Company service. This article was followed by one that stated that Chinese, Javanese or convicted criminals (*bandieten*) should not be permitted to live among the burgher population, trade or have shops, because -among other reasons- they were '*buyers of stolen goods and would tempt slaves to become thieves*'.⁷⁴

These proposals reflected how burghers saw their own status and identity in relation to other groups at the Cape. Because the vast majority of burghers were of European descent many historians have tended to see the burgher group as one to which access was based on race. This becomes problematic when one considers the position of one of the groups to which the burghers referred in their *Memorie* and which was known

⁷³ Kuijpers and Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling', 125-127; Prak, 'Burgher into Citizens', 407; Streng, *Stemme in staat*, 91-92.

⁷⁴ '*heelers van gestoolen Goederen [and would] Slaven tot Diverijen verleiden*' – WCARS, C 2689, 69 (9.10.1779).

as the free blacks: 'individuals born in slavery and later freed, either through their own efforts or at the behest of an owner or purchaser'.⁷⁵ Not all free blacks were ex-slaves; there were also a small number of (ex-)convicts, men who were banished to the Cape from the Dutch Asian territories for committing a crime, and even the 'occasional free immigrant'.⁷⁶ They were a small group⁷⁷ and were mainly concentrated in Cape Town. Like the burghers the free blacks were not in Company service and were not slaves, they could own property, including slaves, and engaged largely in comparable business ventures and craftsman-ships. From June 1752 they also had to pay taxes, because according to the statute '*they enjoyed all the privileges of burghers*'.⁷⁸ There were differences: the free blacks could not be elected to public office and they did not have representation on the Council of Justice as did the burghers. Apart from the economic aspect, the free blacks in Cape Town therefore showed remarkable resemblance to the *ingezetenen* in Dutch cities.⁷⁹

What is clear from the above is that there was a difference between burghers and free blacks. The question is if this was a matter of race or of status. Some have argued that the distinction between the two groups was based on race. Rob Shell and Richard Elphick write that in the second half of the eighteenth century Cape laws were no longer colour blind. They use two examples to illustrate their point. The second one is a law of 1771 against the buying or bartering of clothing belonging to slaves or convicts. According to Shell and Elphick the punishment for 'whites' was a fine, while free blacks would be treated as slaves and be flogged and sentenced to ten years hard labour.⁸⁰ However, when one reads the original *plakkaat* one discovers that the law

⁷⁵ Definition of Susan Newton-King (unpublished paper). The information on free blacks is obtained from Worden, *Cape Town*, 64-5; R. Elphick and R. Shell, 'Onderlinge verhoudings: Khoikhoi, nedersetters, slawe en vryswartes, 1652-1795', in: Giliomee and Elphick (eds), '*n Samelewing in Wording*, 188-246; R. Ross, *Beyond the pale. Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa* (Hanover and London 1993); Ross, *Status and respectability*; T.J. Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order* (Cape Town 1996).

⁷⁶ Worden, *Cape Town*, 64.

⁷⁷ A 1731 census calculated them at a mere 6% of the total population of the Cape District – Worden, *Cape Town*, 50. By 1773 there were a total of 390 free blacks – H.F. Heese, *Groep sonder grense (die rol en status van de gemengde bevolking aan die Kaap, 1652-1795)* (Cape Town 1984), 29.

⁷⁸ '*alle privilegien en voorregten der burgeren genieten*' - WCARS, (*Plakkaatboek*), C 2282, 68 (1.2.1752).

⁷⁹ It could be observed that the status of free blacks was also quite similar to that of female burghers at the Cape.

⁸⁰ Elphick and Shell, 'Onderlinge verhoudings', 221.

sets out the penalties for buyers and sellers of slave clothing. The buyers could be anybody in Cape Town – no mention of race or other qualification is made – and they were to be punished with a fine for the first two offences and if caught a third time they would be banished.⁸¹ The sellers however would receive the harsh punishment of flogging and ten years hard labour. These sellers would mostly be slaves or free blacks (in this case convicts), simply because they were the ones who received these clothes from the Company.⁸² But this was a co-incidental circumstance and one searches in vain for any deliberate reference to race or colour. It would be a misrepresentation of the facts to present this law as a racially motivated one.

The same applies to the first example they use, which refers to the sumptuary laws issued in 1755. These rules prohibited for instance, that free black women wore clothes and accessories which would surpass the ones worn by respectable burgher women. Robert Ross has convincingly pointed out that these laws were created to preserve the 'distinction and subordination' within society and to make sure that the Company officials stayed on top and every other group below them knew their place rather than to construct a difference between races.⁸³ Ross also made a strong case for eighteenth-century Cape society as not 'divided along racial lines, but rather as containing a multitude of statuses'.⁸⁴ Accordingly free black was not primarily a race classification, but free blacks were just as much a status group as were the burghers or Company employees or women.

Maybe the best demonstration of this argument is that descendants of free blacks and slaves at the Cape could become burghers. This would not have been possible if membership of the different groups was based purely on race. In the archives of the Burgher Council is a tax list of burghers dated 1783.⁸⁵ On this list one finds Abram Ventura (junior) and his brother Adriaan. They were the sons of Abraham van Ventura,

⁸¹ It appears that the "three strikes and you're out" principle was taken quite literally by the Cape lawmakers in this case.

⁸² WCARS, C 2285, 65-67 (19.6.1771).

⁸³ R. Ross, 'Sumptuary laws in Europe, the Netherlands and the Dutch Colonies', in: Worden, *Contingent Lives*, 382-90.

⁸⁴ Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, 72.

⁸⁵ WCARS, BRD 24, *Quotisatie Rolle over den jaaren 1783* (16.9.1783).

the grandson of the slaves Ventura and Helena. Abraham van Ventura was named a free black in 1746 in a request to manumit a slave⁸⁶, yet his sons were burghers. Abraham Ventura junior took the burgher oath in 1770 and became a member of second burgher company infantry.⁸⁷ His brother Adriaan also swore the burgher oath in 1770 and joined the ranks of the fourth burgher company infantry.⁸⁸

Also on the 1783 tax list is Abraham Adehaan, who was the grandson of Abulbas, the Rajah of Tambora, who was banished to the Cape in the seventeenth century. The son of Abulbas, Abraham de Haan (or Ibrahim Adehaan) converted to Christianity and was baptised in 1721. He married Helena Valentijn, a daughter of free blacks. Their son, Abraham, was born in 1731 and married a Dutch woman, Christina Alesia Eversdijk of Amsterdam.⁸⁹ Abraham Adehaan was recorded as having taken the burgher oath on 21 October 1750 and was therefore a burgher.⁹⁰ He was even one of the 404 protesters against the VOC administration in 1779.

A third case was the one of Moses Davids, who was born in 1742 as the son of Martha of the Cape. On 18 October 1758 he took the burgher oath in Cape Town.⁹¹ In 1762 he married Anna Elizabeth Knoetzen, the illegitimate child of Elizabeth Knoetzen and Joachim Prinsloo. In 1779 he was one of the 404 protesters and identified as burgher and in 1783 he is found on the Quotisatie Roll. In 1794 he was nominated to become a teacher in the District of Stellenbosch and named a '*Cape burgher and member of the Dutch Reformed Church*'.⁹²

⁸⁶ J.A. Heese & R.T.J. Lombard, *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagsregisters, Vol.14* (Pretoria 1992), 169-170; H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope. Requesten (Memorials) 1715-1806, Vol.II* (Cape Town and London 1906), 632.

⁸⁷ WCARS, C 2663, 96 (18.10.1770).

⁸⁸ WCARS, C 2663, 96 (18.10.1770).

⁸⁹ M. Morris, *Every step of the way: the journey to freedom in South Africa* (Cape Town 2004), 67; C.C. de Villiers & C. Pama, *Geslagsregisters van die ou Kaapse families (2 volumes)* (Cape Town/Rotterdam 1981), 276.

⁹⁰ WCARS, C 2663, 69 (21.10.1750).

⁹¹ WCARS, C 2663, 78 (18.10.1758).

⁹² Heese & Lombard, *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagsregisters, Vol.2, 33, Vol.4, 348*; Leibbrandt, *Precis, Vol.I, 12*; WCARS, C 222, 358 (14.3.1794): '*kaapschen burger en hervormd Lidmaat*'.

In the above cases it seems that access to the burgher group was obtained because free black status was not inheritable. Free blacks achieved freedom in their lifetime. Any child born after the mother had obtained freedom was thus born free. In those cases where the mother was married, the father also had to be free or born free for the child to be considered born free.⁹³ This was the decisive factor: not that they were from black, Asian or mixed descent, but that they were born free. And as free born they had the right to be classified as burghers, which they later confirmed by taking the burgher oath. The fact that children of free blacks were assimilated into the burgher group this way very likely contributed to the free blacks remaining relatively small in number throughout the eighteenth century.

It thus took at least one generation for free blacks to be classified as burgher. However we know of one case in which a man born as a slave achieved burgher status himself. This concerned Frans Smiesing, the son of Jan Smiesing and Anna van Dapoer, both of whom were slaves in the Slave Lodge in Cape Town.⁹⁴ It is not known exactly when Anna van Dapoer became free, but in 1739 she was described as a free black and requested the Political Council to manumit her two sons, Jan and Frans, who were slaves in the Slave Lodge.⁹⁵ Frans was born in 1729, so he must then have been about 10 years old. He entered the service of the Company in 1745 as a smith's apprentice and in 1751 he requested the Political Council to favour him with the burgher rights of Cape Town.⁹⁶ On 18 October 1751 he took the burgher oath.⁹⁷ Frans Smiesing followed therefore the same route as many Europeans to become a burgher and made the full transition from slave to free black to company servant to burgher. This shows that at the Cape anybody who had been in Company service, no matter where he came from or what his background was, earned the right to apply for burgher rights. Thus apart from being born free there was another opportunity to become a burgher at the Cape and this condition, for obvious reasons, did not exist in Dutch cities. This made Frans

⁹³ See also the discussion on pages 139-140.

⁹⁴ R. Shell and A. Dick, 'Jan Smiesing, Slave Lodge schoolmaster and healer, 1697-1734', in: N. Worden (ed.), *Cape Town between East and West. Social identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (forthcoming publication).

⁹⁵ WCARS, C 1101, 8-9 (n.d., 1739); C 110, 42 (28.4.1739).

⁹⁶ WCARS, C 1118, 81-82 (n.d., 1751).

⁹⁷ WCARS, C 2663, 69 (18.10.1751).

Smiesing a perfect example of the possibilities of social mobility that existed in eighteenth century Cape Town.

In the South African context it is perhaps understandable that free blacks have been discussed mainly in racial terms. However the main determinant for their status in eighteenth century Cape society was that they were “free”, not that they were black. The examples from the Cape illustrate that burgher identity was based more on status than race in the Dutch empire overseas. Thus burghers there should not be seen strictly as Europeans or white, but rather defined as people who were not employed by the VOC or were slaves. There was no stipulation that burghers had to be purely of European descent.

It was not unexpected for people at the Cape - as it was for non-burghers in cities in the Republic - to want to be burghers, because having *burgerschap* meant being member of an exclusive club. It meant having access to privileges and rights which other groups in the city did not have. But perhaps most of all, and especially in the case of lower ranked VOC employees or free black children, getting *burgerschap* meant an improvement in status. The thinking around status was ingrained in Dutch society and this had a lot to do with a certain way of life and belonging to a group, and having that acknowledged by other members of society. It was important for the burghers that they kept up appearances as defined by their status, but also that everybody in society knew where they stood and what they were about. It was regarded as a serious threat to societal order if people should try to rise above or outside their station without the proper right to do so. It was for this reason that the sumptuary laws were acceptable and accepted, because they defined what the various groups were entitled to and were in line with the almost obsessive Dutch interest for etiquette, status symbols and ceremony.⁹⁸ Against this background it must come as no surprise that their status was very important to the protesting burghers at the Cape and that they

⁹⁸ Streng, *Stemme in staat*, 31-33. One visitor to the Cape, Otto Mentzel, observed this pre-occupation with etiquette among the ladies of the Cape: O.F. Mentzel, *A geographical-topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope, Part II* (Cape Town 1924), 107.

stressed the position which set them apart from other groups in Cape society and wanted this recognised by the VOC government.

The claim of the Cape burghers that their status and rights were comparable to those of the burghers of Dutch cities seems to be supported by the evidence presented so far. In fact, it was even confirmed by the Cape administration itself. In September 1768 they issued instructions and regulations for the burgher militia and Burgher Military Council.⁹⁹ One of the rules stated that all persons who left the Company service or who 'came as freeman from The Netherlands or India to the Cape' were obliged to immediately register with the burgher militia.¹⁰⁰ And in October 1734 Pieter Christiaan Been swore the burgher oath in Cape Town and it was specifically remarked that he had arrived in the Cape 'as burgher from the fatherland'.¹⁰¹ This demonstrates that the comparable standing of *burgerschap* of a Dutch city and Cape Town was acknowledged by the Cape authorities. Why then was Fiscal Boers so adamant that Cape burghers could not be compared to Dutch burghers? He was reacting to the Cape protest movement and he certainly did not want to support its credibility. In so doing he did not react very differently from the regents in Dutch cities when they were confronted with burgher demands about their rights. The regents mostly did not want to give in to the demands and very often they replied that they had no knowledge of these rights or could not acknowledge them. And because they were often not recorded properly it was difficult to prove that they existed.¹⁰²

Besides this the VOC administrators at the Cape were reluctant to enhance the standing of the burgher group, because the Cape was the only settlement in the Dutch Asian territories which boasted a large and relatively self-sufficient burgher group. It would not do to further boost their confidence in a time of political turmoil. This fitted into the Company policy that all residents were subject to the interests of the VOC as

⁹⁹ WCARS, C 146, 173-212 (6.9.1768); BKR 8 (6.9.1768).

¹⁰⁰ 'op dien voet als vrijman uijt Neederland, dan wel uijt 't India alhier aankoomen' – WCARS, BKR 8, 8 (6.9.1768).

¹⁰¹ 'als burger uijt het vaderland' - WCARS, C 2661, 79 (16.10.1734).

¹⁰² D.J. Roorda, *Partij en factie. De oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties*, (Groningen 1978), 45-46; J. De Jong, *Een deftig bestaan. Het dagelijks leven van Regenten in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Utrecht/Antwerpen 1987), 32.

the Directors had made abundantly clear with regards to the burghers in Batavia and other Asian settlements. As spokesperson of the Cape VOC government Fiscal Boers merely conveyed the official position. But the reality and practice surrounding *burgerschap* at the Cape proved to be contrary to his statements and the Cape protesters of the late 1770s clearly did not want to be regarded as second-rate citizens, but claimed their rightful position in economic and political life as 'free Burghers of a colony belonging to the liberated united Netherlands'.¹⁰³

A further demonstration of this argument is the practical way in which the Cape burgher protesters took their cue from their Dutch counterparts in constructing the relationship between burghers and administration during the political turmoil. Maarten Prak has written extensively about Dutch *burgerschap* and he points us to Charles Tilly's definition of citizenship, which, as we have seen so far, is applicable to the *burgerschap* of Dutch cities: 'a continuing series of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each has enforceable rights and obligations'.¹⁰⁴ Prak further explains the 'series of transactions' between a state and its citizens and the choices available to them on the basis of the theory developed by Albert Hirschman in *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.¹⁰⁵ The basic concept is that members of an organisation have two options when they are dissatisfied with the organisation and what it has to offer: they can withdraw from the relationship (exit) or they can complain, raise their concerns and try to improve the relationship (voice). In a political situation the first option would be to emigrate and the second to protest and negotiate. This last option presumes that there is a certain measure of loyalty between the organisation and its members and that the organisation (state) will try and promote that loyalty. The exit strategy is an extreme form of reaction and not available to everybody. In a political situation it would be a choice accessible only to the very rich or taken by the poor who did not have much to lose. Therefore voice would be the

¹⁰³ WCARS, C 2689, 18 (22.5.1779).

¹⁰⁴ M. Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic: Coordination and Loyalty in the Dutch Republic', in: A. Holenstein, T. Maissen, M. Prak (eds), *The Republican Alternative. The Netherlands and Switzerland compared* (Amsterdam 2008), 51-74, 56; C. Tilly, 'Citizenship, Identity and Social History', in: C. Tilly (ed.), *Citizenship, Identity and Social History* (Cambridge; New York 1996), 1-17, 8.

¹⁰⁵ A.O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. (Cambridge, MA 1970).

best and most suitable alternative for the middle classes who were not in a position to exit. Voice in the political relationship between state and citizens would normally take the form of riots, rebellions or revolution.

Prak explains that the Dutch Republic experienced many conflicts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but that most were 'limited in scope and relatively non-violent'¹⁰⁶, because they were undertaken by the middle classes of shopkeepers and artisans - sometimes mobilising the *grauw* or common people, sometimes joined by dissatisfied members of the elite – who were not willing to risk high stakes. Another reason for the rather low-key nature of protests in the Republic was that most were organised by guilds or local burgher militias and they expressed their protest or discontent through petitions rather than violent uprisings.¹⁰⁷ 'Petitions were seen as a specific political right that the Republic's citizens were entitled to'¹⁰⁸ and they were a frequent instrument of protest used by individuals as well as organisations throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Usually the petition was part of a lengthy process of negotiation. Even before they were submitted local city councils and representatives of the guilds would meet to discuss the matter at hand and the contents of the complaints. Then the petition would be submitted. The city council would embark on an extensive investigation into the complaints and various parties would be consulted and only after all that had taken place a decision would be taken. Only if the whole process dragged out too long, would the petitioners try and put pressure on the councils, which could sometimes involve more pronounced and physical forms of protest.¹⁰⁹

The above described process was exactly what happened during the Cape burgher protests of the late 1770s. In May 1778 the protesters started by setting out their right to complain because the government was not fulfilling its obligation to take care of the burghers. This was followed by meetings trying to establish what course of action to

¹⁰⁶ Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic', 59. See also the foremost study on this subject: R. Dekker, *Holland in beroering. Oproeren in de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Baarn 1982).

¹⁰⁷ The role of the Cape burgher militias in the protests will be discussed in a later chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic', 61.

¹⁰⁹ Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic', 61.

follow. The meetings were not very successful and for a while the movement dissipated. It took the arrest and treatment of Buijtendag in January 1779 to trigger the protesters into renewed action. Again meetings were held and the protesters started to look for support among the wider burgher population. Independent Fiscal Boers commented that *'They openly use 2 or 3 young, inexperienced upstarts to ride all around the country and let gullible commoners sign papers of which they might never know the content'*.¹¹⁰ These exploits happened more or less at the same time that a form of negotiation with the VOC administration was underway. The burgher protesters asked the administration for permission to send a delegation to Holland to lay their complaints before the board of directors of the VOC. And the government tried to find out from the leaders of the protest movement how far they were prepared to take this.¹¹¹ This did not bring the parties any closer together and in May 1779 a petition was submitted to the Cape administration with the same content as the earlier request and signed by 404 male burghers. Despite refusal by the government to allow a delegation to be sent to Holland, the burghers continued on their course of action and their representatives arrived in Amsterdam in July and August 1779.

It is significant that the negotiations between protesters and VOC officials about the contents and nature of the burgher grievances continued in Holland. Cornelis van der Oudermeulen, a *bewindhebber* (director) in the Amsterdam chamber of the VOC, invited Hendrik Swellengrebel junior, a son of a former governor of the Cape of Good Hope and a regent in the city of Utrecht, to come to Amsterdam and use his connections and knowledge of the Cape to speak to the Cape delegates about the burgher complaints. Swellengrebel has left us with an insightful account of his negotiations in letters he wrote to Governor Van Plettenberg and Independent Fiscal Boers.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *'Men gebruikt openlijk 2 a 3 jonge, onkundige, opgeblazene, die het gansche land rond rijden, om het onnozel gemeen papieren te doen tekenen waar van zij misschien nimmer den inhoud zullen weten'* - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 102.

¹¹¹ WCARS, C 2689, 164 (4.1779).

¹¹² Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 89-94.

The Cape delegates must have caused some stir in Amsterdam and word had spread about the petition they were planning to present to the *Heeren XVII*, which included personal attacks on some VOC officials. Swellengrebel and his fellow negotiators were of the opinion that submitting a petition with these kinds of '*personaliteiten*' would greatly harm the burgher efforts and set them on a path of failure, because they would offend the Company directors. They tried to convince the Cape representatives to limit the petition to '*a general plan of redress for the Colony*'.¹¹³ This was in line with the established practice: petitions 'usually included proposals to remedy particular problems',¹¹⁴ and because this was generally accepted it would be something the opposing parties would be more inclined to talk about. But at the same time Swellengrebel had to persuade the Company and above all its main representative, the powerful First Advocate Frederik Willem Boers (who was a cousin of Independent Fiscal Boers), to accept a petition like that and that was a hurdle he could not overcome. The First Advocate, who was '*the pivot on which the entire Company turns*'¹¹⁵ and Swellengrebel had a tremendous disagreement about the amount of freedom which should be accorded to the burghers. Swellengrebel maintained that burghers should have the security that their person and their goods could not be touched unless a proper (i.e. involving burgher participation) court process was followed. He agreed that banishment was a power given to the city governments, but stated that it should only be used in extreme circumstances, and even then the burghers should still have the right of appeal to higher authorities. First Advocate Boers was vehemently opposed to this, perhaps motivated by his desire to defend the actions of his cousin at the Cape. The two men did not manage to work out their differences. The only thing they agreed on was that Swellengrebel would continue to try and get the Cape delegates to tone down their petition.

But without anything forthcoming from the side of the Company these men possibly became distrustful of Swellengrebel's endeavours and they continued to set out their *Memorie* the way they originally planned. Once *bewindhebber* Van Der Oudermeulen

¹¹³ '*een generaal plan redress voor de Colonie*' - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 89.

¹¹⁴ Prak, '*Challenges for the Republic*', 61.

¹¹⁵ '*het spil, waarop de geheele Comp. draaid*' - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 90.

got word that the Cape burghers were on the verge of submitting their petition, he wanted to undertake a last-ditch effort to stop them and asked for a conference between First Advocate Boers, Swellengrebel, himself and the Cape delegation *'to see if they could put the matters back on the road that was set out by them before'*.¹¹⁶ At first it seemed that the leader of the delegates, Jacobus van Reenen, was willing to accept this. But he was not supported by his fellow delegates. He later informed Van Der Oudermeulen that they had decided to submit their petition unchanged to the *Heeren XVII* and therefore inclusive of reform proposals, but also containing the personal attacks on certain VOC employees based at the Cape. On the day of the submission, 16 October 1779, a clearly disappointed Van Der Oudermeulen wrote to Swellengrebel that he *'should not trouble himself anymore'* and that all they could do now was be observers of events of which *'the consequences can only end in misery'*.¹¹⁷

The process following the submission of the petition was the same procedure of investigation and consultation as was generally followed in cities in the Republic after petitions were submitted. In the meeting of the *Heeren XVII* of 22 October 1779 it was stated that the complaints from the Cape burghers were a matter *'of utmost importance and should be treated with the highest consideration'*.¹¹⁸ The Directors decided to hand all the documents over to the chambers of Amsterdam and Zeeland for further investigation. They also resolved to send the *Memorie* and accompanying material to the Governor at the Cape. The Governor was instructed to give his opinion about the burgher complaints and advise the Directors about the proposed measures. The VOC officials against whom charges were made were asked to reply to the accusations. *'And lastly the Governor was informed that the Lords XVII trusted that he would do everything to restore peace and order and mutual trust'*.¹¹⁹ The Cape delegates remained in the Republic and tried to influence the process and lobby

¹¹⁶ *'en te zien wederom die zaaken op die zelve voet te brengen als die reeds door ons geapplaneert geweest is'* - Schutte, Swellengrebel, 87.

¹¹⁷ *'geen moeite meer doen'* - *'de gevolgen kunnen nu nog wel elendigheden na sig slepen'* - Schutte, Swellengrebel, 87.

¹¹⁸ *'van het alleruiterste gewigt en welke niet dan met de uiterste omsigtigheid konde worden behandeld'* - WCARS, C 2696, 102 (22.10.1779).

¹¹⁹ *'En laatstelijk hem [the Governor] te kennen te geeven, dat deese Vergadering vertrouwd, dat alles sal worden in het werk gesteld, om de rust en vrede, mitsgaders 't onderling vertrouwen te herstellen'* - WCARS, C 2696, 102 (22.10.1779).

officials for a speedy and favourable conclusion. However it took until December 1783 before a decision was finally reached and it was mostly adverse to the burgher demands.¹²⁰

The Cape burghers made clear during their protests that they considered themselves to be just as much part of the Dutch Republic as burghers of cities in the Netherlands and had the same rights and status. A closer investigation of the *burgerschap* and burgher identity in the Republic and at the Cape confirmed that they certainly had a case. The procedural side of the protest movement – organisation of the burgher movement, negotiation between government and burghers, drawing up and submission of petitions and the contents thereof – furthermore confirmed the Dutch connection of the Cape protests. The Cape burghers used avenues which were tried and tested over two centuries and which were known and available to them.

It cannot be denied that the fight for burgher rights certainly played a role in the Cape protests of the late 1770s. This chapter has also demonstrated that this was not inspired by an ideology of enlightenment or Dutch patriot movement, but that it was based on a long established Dutch tradition and history. There was however another side to the conflict and one that is hinted at by the involvement of the negotiators described earlier. Hendrik Swellengrebel was the son of a former Cape governor and his connections with Cape personalities were considered important by a group of moderates among the VOC elite. In the background of his involvement an important role was almost certainly played by his desire to become governor of the Cape.¹²¹ Opposite him and fiercely opposed to the burgher demands was Frederik Willem Boers, arguably the most powerful VOC official and a cousin of one of the main targets of the burghers, Independent Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers. This indicates that faction politics could have played a role in the protests and that perhaps burgher identity was merely used by leaders looking for support, but having ulterior motives for their actions. This aspect will be investigated in the following chapters.

¹²⁰ The orders of the Directors are found in WCARS, C 2696, 115-128 (3.12.1783). They only reached the Cape in 1784 and were discussed in the Political Council on 25 May of that year: C 166, 365-401.

¹²¹ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 8-10.

3. Factions at the Cape: burghers and protesters investigated

The burgher protests which rocked the Cape settlement in the late 1770s illustrated that the burghers regarded themselves as a distinct group with its own identity and privileges comparable to those of burghers of Dutch cities. Once this identity and these burgher rights were threatened, some burghers felt that they should stand up to defend them. In Dutch cities local conflict was often fought out between various interest groups or factions and in many cases these were fights for economic or political control between equal groupings rather than ideologically inspired revolts. The practice around *burgerschap* and identity at the Cape was quite similar to that in Dutch cities, and it could very well be that the dynamics of political conflict involving burghers were then also alike. According to this reasoning the Cape burgher protests, besides being a struggle to protect burgher identity, were furthermore, and perhaps foremost, a faction conflict. For a better understanding of this argument it is again necessary to make a comparison with Dutch society.

All the advantages of *burgerschap* were mobilised in a high level of social networking that developed within burgher society in Dutch cities from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards. Certain burghers were forming alliances with each other with the aim of controlling the burgher privileges, because it would benefit their merchant interests. To achieve this control they needed to have access to public office and political power. Prominent merchant families in cities closed their ranks and made sure that only members of their family group were appointed in the city government. These so-called *regenten* and their families had to hold on to their privileged positions within the city administration, which ultimately gave them status, wealth and power, and to enable them to do this they built up networks formed by family members, friends, business relations, less powerful regents and lower placed employees, who all profited from their relations with the principal regent. The patron made sure that

important and profitable jobs ended up with his family and friends and in return he could count on their support in times of trouble.¹

A central aspect of the political dynamics was that it was based on group loyalty rather than allegiance between individuals. Being a member of a group was of major importance to the burghers. This form of rule is best described as patrimonialism, in which 'rulers rule by granting exclusive politico-economic rights and immunities to self-governing corporate groups, which are liable for certain reciprocal obligations to the ruler.'² Julia Adams points out that in the Dutch Republic this form of rule was distinguished from other types, such as bureaucracy or patronage, by the presence of a strong familial component.³ Regents were out to build dynasties and obtained positions for their sons to set them on a career path which would enable them to inherit leading functions in the city governments. Marriages of daughters were carefully planned to benefit the family aim of holding on to and gaining power. The families and their networks which were linked together through this common interest are defined as *factions*, which became the general clustering of political forces in cities in the Dutch Republic.⁴

It was essential to the interests of the regents as a group and the maintenance of the patrimonial system that a relative peace and order was maintained. All regents profited by keeping the attractive and lucrative offices within the ruling group and this situation would be threatened by infighting and arguments and result in serious damage to the regent families, both financially and socially. To reduce conflicts leading families entered into formal written arrangements, also known as 'contracts of correspondence', through which positions were divided and succession matters arranged. These contracts determined exactly the turns each leading family would take in getting positions in the city council, VOC board of directors or other leading functions. Power was thus concentrated in the hands of only a few families and their

¹ De Jong, *Een deftig bestaan*, 34-35; 't Hart, 'The Dutch Republic', 79-80.

² J. Adams, 'The Familial State: Elite Family Practices and State-Making in the Early Modern Netherlands', in: *Theory and Society* 23-4 (Aug. 1994), 505-539, 506.

³ J. Adams, *The familial state: ruling families and merchant capitalism in early modern Europe* (Ithaca NY 2005).

⁴ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 3; Salomons, 'De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging', 204.

clientele. Sometimes less important families were given a post here or there to keep them pliable and to gain their support. Some families however were not (yet) part of the arrangements and were therefore excluded from power. They could get impatient or maybe they wanted more than was allocated to them. Despite the contracts they formed opposing factions and fierce conflicts could erupt about the control over city councils, public offices and their lucrative offshoots.⁵

In most Dutch towns the *vroedschap* or city council formed the core of local government. Council members were appointed for life and new members were co-opted. The city council handled all major policy decisions. From the ranks of the council members the aldermen and mayors were recruited. The aldermen were the local court of justice and the mayors formed the executive. Together, the aldermen and mayors constituted the magistracy, which was the legislative authority. Whereas the members of the council sat for life, appointment to the aldermen bench and the mayoral offices was temporary and limited to two or three years at a stretch. After standing down, these officials could be re-elected in due course. While awaiting another turn as alderman or mayor, former magistrates would become ordinary councillors again and could take up other offices in the meantime.⁶

Even though the Cape did not have a city council, it did have a government in the form of the Political Council, which could be compared to the permanent *vroedschap* of Dutch cities. At the Cape members of the Political Council were appointed permanently, just as Dutch city councillors, and it ruled the settlement together with bodies like the Council of Justice and Orphan Board, to which members were appointed for terms of two years. Another important similarity was that both Dutch city councils and the Cape Political Council were in practice dominated by relatively closed elites. In Dutch cities these were formed by burghers, while at the Cape they were VOC officials. Yet we have seen in the previous chapter that VOC officials were firmly entrenched in the Dutch practice of regent and familial rule, and therefore they can be regarded as the equivalent of the regents and patriciate of Dutch cities.

⁵ De Jong, *Een deftig bestaan*, 56-61; Adams, *The familial state*, 146-150.

⁶ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 40 / Prak, 'The Dutch Republic's City-state culture', 347.

The resemblance between political institutions in Dutch cities and at the Cape and the resultant similarity in political practices, like patrimonial rule and faction forming, is best illustrated by a well-known episode in Cape history: the W.A. van der Stel affair.⁷

Willem Adriaan Van Der Stel became governor of the Cape settlement in 1699 and succeeded his father Simon in that position. He had not made a career in the VOC, but was catapulted into the highest function at the Cape. The links of the Van Der Stels with the regent world of Amsterdam most likely were instrumental in this appointment. The paternal grandfather of Willem Adriaan had been governor of Mauritius and his maternal grandfather was a mayor of Amsterdam. While living in Amsterdam he himself had been a member of the church administration of the Zuiderkerk and a city councillor in 1691. He belonged to an influential family of regents, which apparently attempted to set up a ruling dynasty at the Cape.

Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel made his own and his families' interests paramount to those of the Cape and the burgher population. He made sure that his family, friends and closely related colleagues were awarded large tracts of land to farm, even though Company officials were legally forbidden to engage in farming. By 1705 about a third of the total farming land of the Cape settlement was in the hands of only twenty Company officials, who all happened to be closely related to the Van Der Stels. The Governor's favours were not just reserved for VOC employees, but did also extend to burghers, like his brother Frans. Other burghers who profited from their relationship with the Governor were the four licensed burgher butchers who were allowed to buy the monopoly to trade in cattle and meat and Johannes Phijffer, who through the manipulations of Van Der Stel was afforded the opportunity to buy the exclusive right to sell Cape wine. It was common knowledge in the small Cape community that these burghers were all the Governor's men.

⁷ Information regarding the Van Der Stel affair can be found in the following material: Schutte, 'Kompanjie en koloniste', 310-315; Penn, *Rogues, rebels and runaways*, 22-30; Y. Brink, *They came to stay. Discovering meaning in the 18th Century Cape country dwelling* (Stellenbosch 2008), 120-121; H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners. Biography of a people* (Charlottesville/Cape Town 2003), 23-26; K. Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (New York 2009), 164-168.

Willem Adriaan Van Der Stel set himself, his family and a few friends up with a cast-iron monopoly on the trade in meat, wine and grain and he did not think there was anything wrong in doing that. His past as Amsterdam regent and councillor and the status that went with it must have conditioned him to act in this manner. At the Cape he was the highest authority and as a highly placed regent he felt he was entitled to exploit all the advantages at his disposal as he and his fellow regents were accustomed to do.

Some burghers did not agree with this practice. Under the leadership of Henning Hüsing, a group of mostly rich farmers drew up a petition against the Governor. Among them were Jacob Van der Heijden, Pieter Van Der Bijl, Ferdinand Appel and the well-known Adam Tas. The wealthy farmers and businessmen felt disadvantaged and threatened by the unfair competition practices of Van Der Stel and his network of business relations. Thus their motivation to form a faction opposing the Governor was more economical than ideological even though they made it seem as if they were just trying to protect the interests of the Company and the Cape by exposing the incompetency of the administration, just as the protesting burghers of the late 1770s would do.

Governor Van Der Stel did not intend to take the threat to his authority, status and business interests lying down. He arrested members of the opposing faction and organised a counter petition, for which he collected 240 signatures, most of whom were people who were favoured by the Governor in one way or another or were dependent on him as a business patron. It all was to no avail. In October 1706 the VOC Directors decided to relieve Van Der Stel of his duties as Governor and called him back to Holland. Furthermore all the Governor's land was restored to the Company as well as the land in the hands of other officials. The Directors issued orders that no Company employee was allowed to trade, directly or indirectly, in corn, cattle or wine. It were these instructions that the burgher protesters of the late 1770s referred to time and again in their *Memorie*.

It could be that the VOC Directors took these decisions because they wanted to avoid any public scandal which could harm the reputation of the Company. They probably also wanted peace and order at the Cape, which was a vital strategic and refreshment station for the VOC. But it was also clear that Van Der Stel no longer enjoyed the protection of the majority of the Amsterdam VOC directors. By 1706 they were mostly new appointees and followers of Joan Corver, while Van Der Stel's patron, Nicolaas Witsen, had lost most of his influence. Van Der Stel had become the victim of a typical eighteenth century feud between two factions and while his rise to power had to be attributed to his close relations with the regent elite in Amsterdam, his fall came following a lack thereof.

The point of relating the W.A. van der Stel affair is that it had clear elements of patrimonial rule, with a leader who built networks based on family links and mutual interests and abused his power. This resulted in faction conflict as was so common in many Dutch cities. It is furthermore possible to draw parallels between the Van Der Stel affair and the dispute of the late 1770s, e.g. the complaints against VOC officials, the role and nature of petitions and the involvement of wealthy burgher farmers. Robert Ross writes after stating that the conflict of the 1770s was caused by Company employees grabbing too large a share of the economic activity in the Cape settlement: 'In this sense it was a replay of the W.A. van der Stel affair earlier in the century'.⁸ All this raises the question whether the burgher protests of the 1770s were a similar struggle between two groups or factions for economic and political control.

To be able to shed light on this question we need to study the protesting burghers in more detail. Who were they? Where did they reside? Where did they come from? Were they related with each other and if so, how? Where did they stand in relation to other members of Cape society? What role did they play in Cape society? Were they a large section of the burgher population? Did they belong to the upper echelons or were they found among all social strata? The attempt to answer these and other questions prompted the building of a database of burghers residing in the Cape

⁸ Ross, 'Structure and culture in pre-industrial Cape Town', 42.

District in the 1770s and early 1780s, which makes it possible to perform a prosopography. Lawrence Stone has defined prosopography as follows and this describes accurately the function of this database:

‘Prosopography is the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives. The method employed is to establish a universe to be studied, and then to ask a set of uniform questions - about birth and death, marriage and family, social origins and inherited economic position, place of residence, education, amount and source of personal wealth, occupation, religion, experience of office, and so on. The various types of information about the individuals in the universe are then juxtaposed and combined, and are examined for significant variables. They are tested both for internal correlations and for correlations with other forms of behaviour or action.’⁹

This is precisely what we are setting out to do in the following. The study of the dynamics of political life in Cape Town at the time of the burgher protests, particularly with regards to the question whether these were a faction fight, made it necessary to compare the protesters to the rest of the burgher population residing in the Cape District in 1779. The year 1779 was chosen, because it was in that year that one of the main documents of the protest movement, the petition of May 1779 to send a delegation to Holland, was produced. This petition was signed by 404 burghers and contained their names, which enables the identification of a large number of burgher protesters. But unfortunately there is no list of burghers in the Cape District for 1779. The *opgaaf* or annual tax returns, which would have provided a detailed list of names, run until 1773 and for the years after that only total figures are available.¹⁰ Therefore a burgher list for 1779 had to be compiled and for this the database of burghers is an essential tool.¹¹

⁹ L. Stone, ‘Prosopography’, in: *Daedalus*, Vol.100, no.1 (1971), pp.46-79, 46.

¹⁰ P.C. van Duin and R. Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century*, (Intercontinenta 7, Leiden 1987), 92.

¹¹ The database is supplied separately to this thesis on a CD.

The database contains different kinds of information on the burgers of the Cape District. The data can be combined in many diverse ways and various aspects of burgher life can be highlighted. This makes the database a useful instrument for the historical research of burgher society and indeed Cape society as a whole at the end of the eighteenth century.

Much of the data for the database has been collected from primary sources held in the archives of the Western Cape Archive and Records Service. Because the ultimate aim is to gain insight into the political life in particular Cape Town at the end of the eighteenth century the gathered data focused on the Cape District. And because the burgher protests started in 1778 most of the information is from the decade leading up to the protests, the period 1770 to 1780. In the following section it will firstly be shown which sources were used to compile the database and how a list of burghers residing in the Cape District in 1779 was assembled. After that more general conclusions about the protesting burghers will be drawn.

Figure 3-1 is a record of the database showing which data has been collected. The records start with the name of the person. There were no uniform spelling rules for names at the time and various contemporary writers spelled them differently. Because the database contains a search function it was decided to record all alternative spellings. Figure 3-1 shows a typical example of the many diverse ways in which a last name could be spelt.

Marten Bateman (Bartman/Baartman/Baatman/Batman) Gender **Male** Contact ID **43**

Personal Details: First Name **Marten** Last Name **Bateman (Bartman/Baartman/Baatm** Further Identificatio

Date of Birth Date of Baptism Date of Death **1787 05 23** Age in March 1779

Place of Origin: **Braak in Oldenburg** National Group: **German** Family Relation **Family**

Status: **Burgher** When Burgher: **1756** Burgher Oath: **X**

Taxatielijst 1773 (Rd): **Yes** **20** Quotisatie Rol 1783 (f **Yes** **24** Burgher Rol 1783 **Yes**

Residence: District: **Cape District** Place: **Burgher Cape District** **Yes**

Moved To: Moved When: **March 1779:**

Property: Rents: Owns: **Yes** **Property**

Burgher Militia: **Militia Details** Brandmeester: **Yes** Years BM **1785**

Work Details Occupation: **Innkeeper** Years: Request 29 Jul 1778:

Alcohol Pachter: **Yes** **Liquor Pacht Details**

Meat Pachter: **Meat Pacht Details**

Church Function Religion: **Luthers** Diacon: Years Diacon:

Ouderling: Years Ouderling:

Administrative Functions: Burgerraad: Years Burgerraad:

Weesmeester: Years Weesmeester:

Commissaris CHZ: Years Commissaris:

Heemraad:

Freemason: Freemason Function FM Years:

Notes:

Protester 1779/1780

Petition May 1779:

Delegate 1779:

Petition Feb 1780:

9 Sep 1780:

Stat 14 Sep 1780:

Request 30 Sep 1780:

Militia Tax 1781

Militia Tax Roll 1781:

per 4 Months (R):

Annual (Rd):

Not paid by Feb 1782:

Request 13 Oct 1781:

Figure 3-1: A record of the database

In the archives of the Burgher Council¹² is a *'Taxatie-Lijst'* dated September 1773. This tax list contains the names of 406 burghers, who were required to contribute financially to the building of a new road between Cape Town and Rondebosch.¹³ The criteria for having to pay this tax were as follows:¹⁴

- Owners of a *'rijtuig of bolderwagen'* (carriage or handcart) – 10 *rijxdaalders*.
- Owners of a *'chaise of bolderwagen'* (chaise or handcart) – 8 *rijxdaalders*.
- Owners of a *'rijpaard tot plaisier of om te verhuuren'* (horse for pleasure riding or to rent out) – 2 *rijxdaalders*.
- Licensed butchers – 24 *rijxdaalders*.
- Bakers – 9 *rijxdaalders*.
- Private butchers – 6 *rijxdaalders*.
- Wood transporters – 6 *rijxdaalders*.

It is apparent that the prospective users of the road were made to pay for its construction.

The tax list forms the basis of a roll of burghers living in the Cape District in the 1770s and provides the following information:

1. First name and last name of the burghers.
2. Sometimes extra details were given, e.g. junior, senior or son of, and this has also been recorded. This assists with identification of the person concerned, but also helps with providing some information on family relations.
3. Furthermore a field has been created for the tax amount that each person on the list was supposed to pay, because this gives an indication of wealth, which will be one of the issues investigated later on.
4. The burghers on the list all resided in the Cape District, which has been recorded as well. However there were five burghers, who lived in the outer

¹² WCARS, reference BRD.

¹³ *Taxatie-Lijst der Burger Collegianten en andere onder dit Caabse district gehoorende burgers (September 1773)*, WCARS, BRD 24 (10/11.9.1773).

¹⁴ WCARS, BRD 1, 28 (29.5.1773).

districts, but owned property in the Cape District.¹⁵ They have been marked with an “X” behind the tax amount.

5. Lastly almost all the burghers on the list were males, but there were females as well: one a widow and the other the (two) daughters of Johannes Vermeulen. This has prompted the creation of a field in the database which reflects the gender of the person.

Another source in the archives of the Burgher Council is the ‘*Quotisatie Rolle over den Jaaren 1783*’.¹⁶ The *Quotisatie* tax was raised by the Burgher Councillors to provide for a fund out of which several expenses were paid. It used to be called ‘*Lion, tiger, bridges, roads and night watchmen tax*’¹⁷ and thus paid for the killing of dangerous animals, maintenance of roads and bridges and the wages of the night watch men.¹⁸ A new *Quotisatie* roll was made up every year around September¹⁹ and consisted of two parts: one with burghers and burgher widows and one with VOC employees and VOC widows.²⁰ In the database only the names of the burghers, a total of 1011, have been included. The following information has been obtained from this list:

1. The names of the burghers and extra information provided. New records were only created for burghers who did not appear on the 1773 tax list. If they did appear on the 1773 list and were therefore already in the database any new information was added to their existing record.
2. The *quotisatie* tax was based on financial means and this roll therefore provides information about the wealth of the burghers. The decision of the Political Council regarding the *Quotisatie* Tax taken in 1754 mentioned the following criteria on which the tax amounts were based:

¹⁵ ‘*Perzoonen die buiten woonagtig zijn, dog vaste goederen alhier hebben*’ – WCARS, BRD 24 (10/11.9.1773).

¹⁶ WCARS, BRD 24 (16.9.1783).

¹⁷ ‘*Leeuw, Tijger, Brugge, weege en Ratelwagts geld*’

¹⁸ WCARS, C 132, 311 (27.8.1754); WCARS, J.C. Visagie, ‘*Inventory of the Archives of the Secretary, Burgher Council, 1695-1803*’, in: *Inventory no. 1/82* (Cape Town 1970), 8.

¹⁹ The *Quotisatie Rol* of 1783 was compiled by the *Burgerraaden* Johannes Smuts, Hendrik Le Sueur and Adriaan van Sittert together with the Political Council members Adriaan van Schoor and Jacobus Johannes Le Sueur and approved by the Political Council on 16 September 1783. WCARS, C 165, 154-176.

²⁰ According to the Resolutions of the Political Council the VOC employees and their widows and the Burgher Councillors and their widows were only included in the *Quotisatie Rolls* after 1754. WCARS, C 132, 316-317 (27.8.1754).

- Two *Schellingen* a month for each chimney²¹, which makes 24 *Schellingen* per year, which is equivalent to 1.2 *Guldens* (Guilders) per annum.²²
- An annual amount of 6 to 12 Guilders for everyone who owned houses or land
- An annual amount of 3 and 4 Guilders for everyone who did not own real estate
- An annual amount of 2 Guilders for unmarried young men.²³

The amounts on the *Quotisatie Rolle* were all in Guilders and range from 1 to 30.²⁴ The tax amounts have been recorded in the database and will be evaluated later. In some cases two amounts are given, because the roll has figures in the margin in front of names. Presumably these were corrections to the original amount after the list was checked by the authorities.

3. All the burghers on the roll lived in the Cape District, because it was compiled by the Burgher Councillors whose jurisdiction only extended to this district. However, as with the 1773 tax list, there were five persons who did not reside in the Cape District, but had either a business or houses or warehouses there.²⁵ It appears that they were required to pay local tax as well. In the database they are marked with an “X” behind the tax amount.
4. The roll also included twenty-seven females, who apparently were not widows (because there was a separate list for these), but could have been unmarried or divorced women. At least one of them was identified as a ‘*gesep huijsvrouw*’ or divorced (separated) wife.

The role of female burghers was discussed briefly in the previous chapter and one of the points made was that they did not have a political voice and thus did not sign the

²¹ WCARS, BRD 13, 199-201 (10.7.1725) – In July 1725 the Political Council approved that each household had to pay two *schellingen* per month to the Burgher Councillors for “*Ratelwagts geld*” and maintenance of roads. This decision was taken after the Burgher Councillors made the Council aware that some properties were divided in two or more units, but that only two *schellingen* per property were being charged instead of per household living on the property.

²² Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony*, viii.

²³ WCARS, C 132, 313-314 (27.8.1754).

²⁴ The following amounts are found: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27 and 30. If the database says ‘0’ it means that there was no amount found behind the name.

²⁵ ‘*Personen onder de buijte Districte Woonagtigh dogh alhier neringh doende dan Wel huijsen of pakhuijse hebbende*’ – WCARS, BRD 24 (16.9.1783).

protest petitions. The females on the tax lists are therefore not considered in the comparisons in this thesis.

When the twenty-seven women and the five burghers living in the outer districts on the 1783 *Quotisatie* roll are excluded, one ends up with a list of 979 males. According to the *Opgaafrol* of 1783 there were 958 male burghers in the Cape District.²⁶ The difference between the two figures could be explained by the fact that the *Opgaafrol* was compiled in April and the *Quotisatie* roll in September 1783. It is possible that in the period in between twenty-one more persons could have registered to become burgher. Whatever the case, the difference is minimal and it can be maintained that the 1783 *Quotisatie Rolle* was a complete burgher roll or at least a complete roll of all burghers who were required to pay tax. This is why the 1783 *Quotisatie* roll can be used as a basis from where to work out who were burghers in the Cape District in 1779.

The start of this process is to select the burghers who appeared both on the 1773 tax list and on the 1783 *Quotisatie* roll. This totals a number of 255. None of these are females and none are burghers residing in the outer districts. It can reasonably be assumed that these 255 burghers were residents of the Cape District in 1779. This is recorded in a separate field: "Burgher Cape District March 1779". Other sources are used for confirmation of this.

Some of these can be found in the archives of the Burgher Military Council.²⁷ There is a '*Generaale Rolle Der Burgerrij zoo als Die zigh is bevindende zedert Primo October 1783 Aan Cabo de Goede Hoop*' or Burgher roll of Cape District burghers dated 1 October 1783.²⁸ Unfortunately the list is not complete and only contains the burghers with surnames starting with the letters A, B and M-V. They have all been added to the database. Sometimes notes were made about burghers regarding date of death, date

²⁶ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 347.

²⁷ WCARS, reference BKR.

²⁸ WCARS, BKR 9, no.4 (1.10.1783).

of moving to another district or date of entry into Company service. This provides valuable personal data on these burghers.

The Burgher Military Council archives furthermore hold a complete list of burgher militia members in the year 1785.²⁹ This list is divided in the following categories:

- The officers of the two companies burgher cavalry and four companies infantry with rank and year of appointment.
- The non-commissioned officers (*onder officiers*) of the two companies cavalry with rank and year of appointment. The appointment year was only recorded for sergeants and corporals.
- The non-commissioned officers of the four companies infantry with rank and year of appointment. The appointment year was only recorded for sergeants and corporals.
- The burgher constables (*burger constapels*).
- The *Pijpebestierders* (hose operators) at the *brandspuiften* (fire engines) with the rank of sergeant.
- The Firewardens of 1785 (*Brandmeesters*).
- The twenty rattle-watch (*Ratelwagt*).
- Officers and non-commissioned officers of the Company de Reserve.
- Officers and non-commissioned officers of the Company d'Invalides.
- All the soldiers (*gemeenen*) of the various companies.

All male burghers had to become members of the burgher militia once they reached the age of sixteen or after being granted burgher rights. It follows that this list was therefore the most complete burgher roll of burghers in the Cape District in 1785. Therefore all the burghers on this list have been added to the database and if the burghers were already in the database because they were on the tax lists of 1773 and 1783 and the burgher roll of 1783 the information provided has been added to their records.

²⁹ WCARS, BKR 9, no.5 (n.d., 1785).

The records of the database are set up in such a way that all information regarding burgher militia membership can be displayed in a separate pop-up. The burgher militia data reflect the years of appointment and service, the rank, the burgher company and the source of information. In this way the career of the burgher through the ranks of the militia can be traced and the database can also filter this information to a required set of records.

Regarding the militia careers of the various burghers it must be noted that further information about these has been obtained from other sources. In the archives of the Burgher Military Council itself is a '*Lijst der Officieren bij de resp Compagnien burger Militie hier aan Cabo de Goede Hoop. Aanstelling der officieren in den jaaren 1781*' (List of officers of the respective companies burgher militia here at Cape of Good Hope. Appointment of the officers in the year 1781).³⁰ These appointments were made in April 1781 by the Political Council after the leaders of the burgher militia had requested that the militia would be strengthened with more officers '*to be able to lead the troops better in case of enemy attack*'.³¹ This was shortly after the Cape residents had been informed of the new war that had broken out between the United Netherlands and England in December 1780. Other sources are the Minute books of the Burgher Military Council and the Burgher Council and the Resolutions of the Political Council. These bodies all recorded or decided on militia appointments at some time or other.

Even though they were linked to the burgher militia the information about two sets of burghers in the 1785 militia member list has been excluded from the burgher militia data, and has been added to the records of the database in another place. These are the *brandmeesters* or fire wardens and the rattle-watch members.

There are two reasons for recording the *brandmeesters* separately. The first one is that this was one of the more prestigious functions a burgher could be appointed to

³⁰ WCARS, BKR 9, no.2 (2.4.1781).

³¹ '*ten eijnde haare onderhoorige Manschappen, te beeter bij vijandelijke attacque te kunnen aanvoeren*' - WCARS, C 159, 219 (2.4.1781).

by the administration. All Dutch cities had these fire wardens and they were responsible for making sure that no dangerous fire-causing situations existed in the town and that streets were kept free from flammable material. In case of fire they would be in charge of fighting it together with members of the burgher militia. Very often it was more an honorary position and the actual work was carried out by assistants (the *pijpebestierders*). The burghers who were appointed to be fire wardens were part of the regent elite.³² This is confirmed by the data available about the *brandmeesters* in Cape Town. Twenty-six are identified in the database and half of them were also church council members, burgher councillors or orphan masters. And according to their tax figures most fell in the highest tax brackets. The second reason was that they were exempt from performing burgher militia duties. This was very likely an extra motivation for burghers wanting to become *brandmeesters*.

On the other side of the spectrum were the *ratelwagt* members. Their duties were to patrol the streets of the cities at night and apprehend burglars and disturbers of the peace. This was not the same duty as the members of the burgher militia performed at night, because these mainly occupied strategic points such as entrances to the city. Being a *ratelwagt* was not a popular job. They were burghers who were recruited from the lowest strata of society and they generally did not have a good reputation.³³ They would be paid a small fee and that is why the fact that a burgher was a *ratelwagt* has been recorded in the "occupation" field in the database rather than the burgher militia information. During the 1770s the Burgher Councillors controlled a contingent of twelve rattle-watchers in Cape Town, who were divided over three wards.³⁴ The database contains thirty-eight burghers who had been *ratelwagt* in Cape Town at one time or another and the available data for these men confirms their common status: none of them had an administrative function and all of them were found in the lowest tax brackets. Besides this the minutes of the Burgher Council reflected that there was

³² A contemporary observer described the Amsterdam *brandmeesters* as 'a set of the most pompous, authoritative fellows in the universe' - *Entertaining extracts being a select collection, from new books of merit* (Perth/London 1795), 171.

³³ M. Van der Burg, 'Law enforcement in Amsterdam. Between tradition and modernization' in: M. van der Heijden, E. van Nederveen Meerkerk, G. Vermeesch, M. van der Burg (eds.) *Serving the Urban Community. The Rise of Public Facilities in the Low Countries* (Amsterdam 2009), 217-241, 225-226.

³⁴ WCARS, BRD 1, 8 (21.9.1771).

quite a turn-over among the rattle-watchers, because they were fired regularly for bad behaviour or being drunk on duty.

After having added the burghers on the two tax lists, the burgher militia lists and the burgher roll of 1783 we now have a relatively good insight into who were burghers in the Cape District in the early 1780s. There were close to 1200 male burghers altogether. But to be able to make the comparison between the 404 protesters and the rest of the burgher population in 1779 and answer the questions referred to earlier we still need to get a more accurate burgher list for (the beginning of) 1779.

For this the archives provide some helpful additional sources. The archives of the Political Council contain the *requesten*, among which are many requests for the burgher rights of Cape Town. These and the information they provide for the database have been discussed in the previous chapter. The date of the requests is the date when the person first applied to become a burgher of the Cape District, even though the actual registration may have occurred at a later stage when the burgher entered the ranks of the burgher militia. Unfortunately not all the requests for burgher rights have been preserved.

The Oath Books in the archives of the Political Council have turned out to be invaluable in providing further information on burghers and their date of registration.³⁵ The Oath Books consist of a great number of different oaths. There are oaths for members of the Political Council and other VOC employees; oaths for midwives and surgeons; for various tradesmen; and oaths for burgher councillors, burghers and burgher militia members. Apart from the burgher oath itself it was also recorded who actually swore the oath, the date on which this happened, and in which district the new burgher was registered as such. In the 1770s the administration furthermore added in which burgher militia company the new burgher had to serve. The oath books thus provide a wealth of information for the purposes of the database. The burghers on the “oath lists” have been compared to the burghers in the

³⁵ WCARS, C 2663 & C 2664.

database and this has made it possible to give the date on which the men in the database became burghers. It can reasonably be assumed that when a person requested to become a burgher or was found on the oath lists of the Cape District before 1779, while his name was also on either the 1783 *Quotisatie* roll, the 1783 burgher roll or the burgher militia lists of 1785, this person was a burgher in the Cape District in 1779.

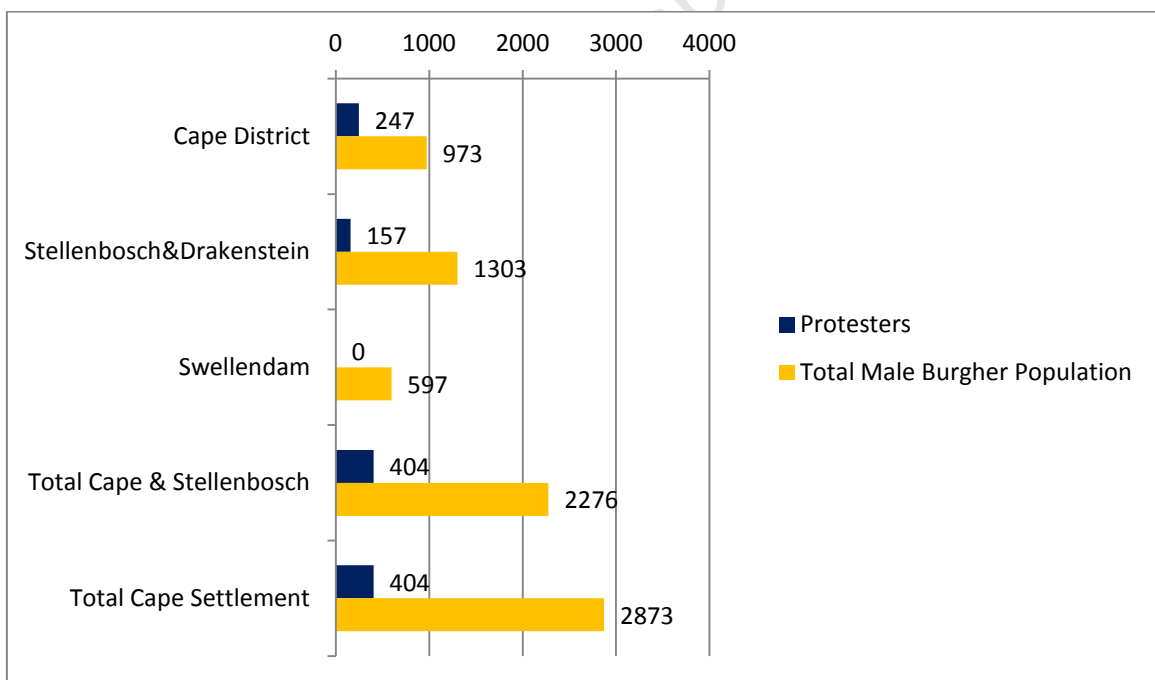
At this point we need to remind ourselves that all 404 signatories of the May 1779 petition were added to the database. Apart from their first and last names the signatories in some cases also provided the position they were holding or had held in Cape society, e.g. burgher councillor, captain or elder. It is therefore an important source of information. The names of the signatories have been checked against the names of the burghers already in the database. In cases where their records already existed, it has been reflected that they signed the May 1779 petition. In other cases a new record was created.

According to the March 1779 request and the May 1779 petition only residents of the Cape and Stellenbosch districts had signed the petition.³⁶ Therefore we can safely assume that none of these signatories was resident in the district of Swellendam. But the protest documents unfortunately did not specify the residence of the signatories further. This information has to be deduced from other sources. It is important to establish where the 404 signatories lived and if any district or place was more represented than others to be able to draw conclusions about the spread of the protest movement in the Cape settlement. Should it turn out that all or even most of the 404 lived in the Cape District it could mean that almost 50% of the burgher population closest to the centre of the Cape government and power would be supportive of the protest movement and that in turn would have been something that was difficult for the administration to ignore or downplay.

³⁶ WCARS, C 157, 149; C 1173, 88 (30.3.1779); C 2665, 2 (7.5.1779). This is confirmed by Governor Van Plettenberg in his official response – WCARS, C 2692, 8 (20.3.1781).

With the information gathered from the tax lists and the militia records we can draw conclusions about the residence of a large number of the signatories. The oath books provide further assistance, because they state in which district the burgher took his oath. Another important source of information can be found in the Returns for Taxation Purposes, which the VOC administration compiled of the burghers in the outer districts. They are comparable to the *Opgaafrollen* and provided data on the names and number of men, women, children, slaves and cattle and quantities of produce that were held at a particular time. For the purpose of establishing the residence of the signatories the returns of the district of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein for the year 1778 and 1779 were used.³⁷ The names of the signatories were checked against the names of the burghers on these tax returns to determine if they were indeed residing in the Stellenbosch district.

Figure 3-2: Protesters as part of the total male burgher population per district (1779)³⁸



It is now possible to select the protesters in the database and divide them according to the district they were living in (Figure 3-2). There were 247 protesters in the Cape District and 157 in the Stellenbosch district. The Cape District figure represents 61.1%

³⁷ WCARS, J 210 (1778) & J 211 (1779).

³⁸ Information on the total male burgher population figures from Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony*, 115, 117, 120, 122, 124.

of the 404 protesters and 25.4% of the total male burgher population of the district. This illustrates that a not inconsiderable portion of the protesters were found in the Cape District. This becomes more significant if one compares the number of male burghers in the Cape and Stellenbosch districts. Even though there were more male burghers in the Stellenbosch than in the Cape District, the support for the protest movement in the former district was remarkably less (12.05%). Therefore the Cape District can definitely be regarded as the area where the core of the protest movement was located.

In none of the primary sources used for the database a distinction was made between the urban and rural burgher population. In some sources more information on residence is provided, but generally it is almost impossible to ascertain if the protesters were based in Cape Town or if they were found among the farming population of the Cape District. It can however not be denied that Cape Town was the largest place in the Cape District and indeed the entire Cape settlement and it has been calculated that one third of the total population of the Cape lived in Cape Town throughout the eighteenth century.³⁹ Coupled with the fact that Cape Town was a port city, which needed the services of a large number of innkeepers, craftsmen and shopkeepers, it could be speculated that a majority of the Cape District protesters lived in Cape Town and that this city could be regarded as the centre of the burgher protest movement.

All the information gathered so far produces a combined list of 812 burghers who were registered in the Cape District in the first half of 1779. This is still 161 short of the number of burghers there were supposed to be according to the 1779 *Opgaafrol*, but it does provide a reasonable sample to compare the 247 Cape District protesters to and start dealing with some of the questions asked.⁴⁰

³⁹ Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony*, 10.

⁴⁰ Data regarding occupation, positions and family relations of the persons in the database have been obtained from archival sources such as the Resolutions of the Political Council, Requests, Estate Accounts, Inventories and records in the archives of the Burgher Council and Burgher Military Council.

In the petition of May 1779 the Burgher Councillors and *Heemraden* claimed they were the 'representatives of the entire burgher population' of the Cape of Good Hope. The Cape delegates to the Republic stated exactly the same in the introduction to their *Memorie*.⁴¹ This statement could be attributed to the required propaganda of a political protest movement wanting to emphasise that they were supported by a majority. But it was actually more than that. In the chapter about Cape *burgerschap* the notion of 'exit, voice and loyalty' was introduced to shed more light on the dynamics of the relationship between state and burghers. To resolve tensions and prevent citizens from taking the exit route or voicing their dissatisfaction and protest, governments needed to encourage and promote loyalty to the state. They could do so in several ways, e.g. through raising the profile of the urban community in order to make it attractive for people to be part of it, by formalising *burgerschap* arrangements, and by offering burghers various welfare schemes.⁴² Another important loyalty strategy was for the elite to show their commitment to the community and that was done through the tax system. In most European countries the poorest citizens had to pay the most towards taxes, while in the United Netherlands 'the Dutch elite not only paid taxes like everybody else, but in the eighteenth century, even experimented with progressive taxation'.⁴³ The urban rulers, despite having become a closed elite by this time, were still burghers and as such they wanted to be seen to be looking after the common good with their initiatives and investments. However the middle layer of craftsmen made the same claim and argued that their skilfulness, industry and thrift were just as, if not more, beneficial to the public interest.⁴⁴ They certainly did not want to be accused by the rulers of not acting in the interest of the community. Both groups considered that paying ones taxes was an indispensable and essential part of *burgerschap* and benefitted the entire community. This point was underlined in petitions by stressing that the petitioners not only acted in their own interest, but defended that of the community as a whole.⁴⁵ Thus when the Cape protesters pointed out that they represented the total burgher population of the Cape they wanted to

⁴¹ 'gesamentlijke Representanten van den geheelen Burgerstaat' – WCARS, C 2665, 2 (7.5.1779); C 2689, 29 (9.10.1779).

⁴² Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic', 62-64.

⁴³ Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic', 64.

⁴⁴ Kloek and Tilmans, *Burger*, 2-3.

⁴⁵ Prak, 'Challenges for the Republic', 64.

demonstrate that they were committed and loyal subjects of the administration and that their aim was not to lead some kind of revolt against the government. They knew that the vast majority of petitions in the Dutch Republic contained similar formulas and that the meaning of this statement would be well understood. It was thus an extremely important declaration to make and not merely a hollow political phrase.

The VOC officials at the Cape were just as familiar with the way petitions worked and how they were usually formulated and therefore they were well aware with what was implied by the burgher statements about representation. In their responses to the burgher *Memorie* they did their utmost to discredit the protesters and to show them up as nothing more than a band of troublemakers. They did this by stating that the protesting burghers were just a small group which was not representative at all for the rest of the burgher population.

The governor of the Cape, Joachim van Plettenberg, stated in his official response to the burgher complaints that *'the Burgher Councillors in this matter can and must not be regarded as anything else than exceptional persons, or at the most leaders of the signatories, whom altogether are only a small portion of the Freeburghers and Colonists'*.⁴⁶ Clearly the governor did not mean exceptional in the positive sense of being special, but he wanted to point out that the Burgher Councillors were few amongst many. He continued to write that *'the largest and highest part [of the burghers], do not approve at all of the actions of their fellow Residents and certainly do not recognise the quality, which Burgher Councillors and Heemraden have given themselves'*.⁴⁷

Independent Fiscal Boers was true to his vocation of lawyer in his reply to the burgher charges and wrote a long exposé on the authority of the Burgher Councillors which, he concluded, did not extend to anything other than a few burgher matters and then only

⁴⁶ *'die Burgerraden in deesen niet anders dan als bijzondere Persoonen, of ten hoogsten als hoofden der Teekenaars, kunnen en moeten worden aangemerkt, die alle te saamen genoomen nog maar een klein gedeelte der Vrijburgers en Colonisten uitmaken'* - WCARS, C 2692, 6 (20.3.1781).

⁴⁷ *'het grootste en beste gedeelte, de in deesen gehoudene handelwijze hunner meede Ingeseetenen geensints goedkeurt, veel min de qualiteit erkend, welke Burger en Heemraden voormeld sig selven toe eigenen'* – WCARS, C 2692, 6 (20.3.1781).

subject to strict instructions from the Political Council. They were definitely not *'entrusted with anything like general care or supervision and therefore they cannot in the least be considered Representatives of the Burgher nation'*.⁴⁸ He stated that wanting to present a request of just a few hundred of the many thousands of burghers as being representative of all of them was ridiculous and presumptuous.⁴⁹

Other officials also commented on the small portion of signatories in relation to the total burgher group and claimed that this could not be seen as representative. It is not too difficult to establish whether the VOC officials were right, because fortunately the Dutch administrators were well-organised record-keepers. Figure 3-2 shows the number of protesters in relation to the total male burgher population in 1779 and confirms that the 404 protesters formed 14% of this total. When the Swellendam district is left out of the picture, because nobody there signed the petition, this percentage increases to 17.75%. Both these figures are not small, but also not impressive and it seems that the Governor and other government officials were right when they depicted the protesters as a minority of the burghers overall. They conveniently did not make mention of the fact that 60% of the protesters lived in the central Cape District, where they formed a quarter of the population.

The VOC officials realised however that the protesters could not merely be evaluated in terms of quantity and that the quality, status and background of the members of the movement needed to be called into question as well. Despite the fact that they may not have made up a large part of the burgher population in numbers, it could not be denied that they did form a protest movement which made a considerable impression and had proved to be a more than just a minor source of irritation and annoyance to the Cape authorities. This group of burghers managed to send a delegation to Holland despite the tight control measures of the VOC, they made sure that the *'Wel-Edele*

⁴⁸ *'de geringste sorge of toesigt over het algemeen is toebetrouwd, en dat sij dus ook nog veel minder kunnen geconsidereerd worden te zijn Representanten van den Burgerstaat'* – WCARS, C 2692, 99 (97-100) (2.2.1781).

⁴⁹ Boers literally wrote: *'Maar behalven dat het de bespottelijkheid zelve zou zijn een verzoek van 4 a 500 burgers in een Land alwaar er meer dan so veele duijssenden zijn als er honderden getekend hebben, en dus het verzoek van nog thiende gedeelte te willen doen strekken tot goedmaking van eene gearrogeerde qualiteit als Repraesentant van alle'* – WCARS, C 2692, 100 (2.2.1781).

Groot Achtbaare Heeren XVII' took note of their complaints and ordered a far-reaching investigation, they organised further protests with burgher militia support at the Cape, and intimidated the Cape administration into conceding to various demands.

That the protest movement was a thorn in the side of the VOC officials was illustrated by the sour comments they made about the protesters, who they described as insignificant and lowly kinds of burghers. Based on information provided to him by the rich Cape farmer Hendrik Cloete, it was Hendrik Swellengrebel who wrote: *'the disgruntled at the Cape are not the most prominent settlers, but people of lower standing'*.⁵⁰ Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers called the 404 signatories *'the gullible rabble'*.⁵¹ And Governor Van Plettenberg wrote in a letter to Hendrik Swellengrebel *'that the people who started this whole game for the larger part have such a bad reputation, that one does not want to have much to do with them, as I concluded from the Register of Signatories'*.⁵² Provisions Master Damiaan Hugo Staring was perhaps most vitriolic in his judgment of the protesters: *'at least three quarters are the lowest kind of Europeans, most of whom had to leave that continent because of their criminal behaviour, mixed with Hottentotten and slaves'*.⁵³

The Cape Company officials did not want to acknowledge that the protest movement was supported by a considerable section of the burgher elite. Among the signatories of the May 1779 petition were three Burgher Councillors, four incumbent and eight former Heemraden and several other members and former members of administrative colleges. Furthermore twelve of the eighteen highest officers of the burgher militia, among whom five of the six captains, had signed the petition. The status of these burgher officials will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, but it must

⁵⁰ *'malcontenten aan de Caab sijn niet die voornaamste Colonisten, maar lieden van minder soort'* - Schutte, Swellengrebel, 17.

⁵¹ *'het onnozel gemeen'* - Schutte, Swellengrebel, 102.

⁵² *'de menschen die dat spel aan de Gang hebben gebragt voor een groot gedeelte van te slegten Allooij sijn, dan dat men om dezelve veel sou willen doen, sooals mij uit de Register der Inteekenaaren gebleeken is'* - Schutte, Swellengrebel, 121.

⁵³ *'ten minste meer als drie vierde deelen samen gesteld, uit de geringste soort van Europeesen, van all Natien, waar van denkelijk verscheijden, die dat waerelddeel om haar wangedrag hebben moeten ruijmen, verbasterd met Hottentotten en Slaaven'* - Staring, Damiaan Hugo Staring, 190. Staring, albeit in a negative manner, confirmed that there were burghers of mixed descent, and that they also signed the protest petition, as was determined in chapter 2.

be pointed out that these were burghers of the highest ranking within Cape society and certainly not the kind of people who could just be ignored or set aside as people of lower standing.

Even though wealth is generally not regarded as a guarantee for class or standing, in the light of the claims made by the VOC officials about the protesters it is necessary to determine if the protesters were indeed found among the lowest or lower income groups. This can be done with the help of both the 1773 *Taxatie Lijst* and the 1783 *Quotisatie Rolle*, which provide some information on the wealth distribution among the protesters and how this compares to the rest of the burgher population.

There are 404 male burghers on the 1773 tax list for the building of a new road. This group formed 48.44% of the burgher men in the Cape District in 1773.⁵⁴ It was established that there were 812 burghers in the database of whom it was confirmed that they resided in the Cape District in 1779. We find 315 of these burghers on the 1773 tax list and these are divided in non-protesters (191) and protesters (124). The number of 124 represented half of the total number of protesters in the Cape District. The above establishes that the burghers on the 1773 tax list form a good sample of burghers from which to draw some conclusions about wealth and perhaps status.

According to the criteria on which the tax amount was based it can be determined that the burghers who had to contribute to the building of the new road were entrepreneurs and in possession of modes of transport. This means that they had at least some wealth and is a first indication that the 124 protesters on the tax list were not the poorest burghers. When we look at the tax that each of these burghers had to pay according to the 1773 tax list, we can compare protesters and non-protesters. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 3-3. Apart from showing the number of tax payers per tax amount, they are divided in three groups, which represent a lower, middle and higher tax bracket. Judging by the percentages in columns 4 and 6 it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between protesters and non-

⁵⁴ There were 834 male burghers in the Cape District – Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 346.

protesters. Even though the biggest variation (higher percentage for protesters) is found in the lowest tax figure of 5 *Rijxdaalders*, the total difference for the lowest group is not considerable. Overall indications are that the protesters were an average group of burghers and certainly did not stand out as predominantly poor or as people of particular lower standing than other burghers.

Table 3-3: Comparison Protesters & Non-Protesters according to 1773 tax

1773 Taxatie Lijst Tax amount (Rd)	Total male burghers	Non- Protesters	Percentage of total non- protesters	Protesters	Percentage of total protesters
5	111	61	31.9	50	40.3
10	120	70	36.7	50	40.3
15	30	23	12.0	7	5.7
20	31	21	11.0	10	8.1
Total	292	175	91.6	117	94.4
30	13	8	4.2	5	4.0
40	3	1	0.5	2	1.6
Total	16	9	4.7	7	5.6
50	5	5	2.6	0	0
60	2	2	1.1	0	0
Total	7	7	3.7	0	0
Grand total	315	191		124	

The 1783 *Quotisatie Rolle* provides an even clearer picture. The information on wealth distribution furnished by the *Quotisatie* roll is more accurate for a number of reasons. As was established before it was a complete burgher roll and the criteria by which the tax amounts were determined were based more firmly on financial means and income. Furthermore the sample of protesters on the 1783 tax roll is larger in comparison to the 1773 list. By selecting the burghers residing in the Cape District in 1779 who are found on the *Quotisatie Rolle*, we get a group of 697 burghers. This group is divided in non-protesters (495) and protesters (202). The 202 protesters formed 81.8% of the 247 Cape District protesters.

In Table 3-4 the protesters and non-protesters are compared based on the 1783 tax. The burghers are again divided in three groups, but this time there is a firmer basis for

the division. The first group is formed by the young and lower income burghers, who did not own property (0-4 Guilders). The next group comprises the property owning burghers (6-30 Guilders) and is divided in half thereby creating a middle income (6-15 Guilders) and a higher income (18-30 Guilders) group.

Table 3-4: Comparison Protesters & Non-Protesters according to 1783 Quotisation tax

1783 Quotisation Roll amount (f)	Total male burghers	Non-Protesters	Percentage of total non-protesters	Protesters	Percentage of total protesters
0	39	37	7.4	2	1.0
1	2	2	0.4	0	0
2	140	126	25.3	14	6.9
3	120	91	18.2	29	14.4
4	64	44	8.8	20	9.9
Total	365	300	60.1	65	32.2
6	84	55	11.0	29	14.4
8	12	9	1.8	3	1.5
9	61	28	5.6	33	16.3
10	8	1	0.2	7	3.5
12	45	26	5.2	19	9.4
15	38	24	4.8	14	6.9
Total	248	143	28.6	105	52.0
18	33	17	3.4	16	8.0
21	18	13	2.6	5	2.4
24	11	8	1.6	3	1.5
27	11	8	1.6	3	1.5
30	15	10	2.1	5	2.4
Total	88	56	11.3	32	15.8
Grand total	701	499		202	

Immediately a number of differences between protesters and non-protesters stand out. Firstly the percentage of protesters in the lowest income group is significantly lower than that of the non-protesting burghers. If one considers in particular the criterion for being taxed 2 guilders - which was to be an unmarried young man - one finds only 6.9% of these young men among the protesters, while this percentage was 25.3% among the non-protesting burgher population. Secondly in the middle income group the situation is virtually the other way around: the percentage of protesters is almost double that of non-protesters. And thirdly, even though the percentages in the

highest income group are almost the same for protesters and non-protesters, the combined percentage of the middle and highest income groups is almost 30% higher for the protesters. These figures show more pronounced than based on the data of the 1773 tax list that the protesters did not belong to the poorest burghers and also that they included a considerable portion of older burghers with property. Especially this last aspect is a first indication that the protesters were found more among the middle layer of entrepreneurs and tradesmen.

Apart from the financial evidence this argument can be substantiated with other facts. There is for instance the case of the rattle-watchers. They were salaried employees, who were drawn from the bottom layers of the burgher community. They were paid six *Rijxdaalders* per month, which was increased to seven in 1773 and eight in 1774.⁵⁵ This was 96 *Rijxdaalders* or 230 Guilders per year. With this income the rattle-watchers may have belonged to the more fortunate commoners among the burghers, but they were still part of the lowest strata of the burgher population.⁵⁶ It is therefore significant to note that none of the rattle-watchers active during or before 1779 signed the protest petition of 1779, the one exception being Hermanus van der Schijff Janszoon, who was a rattle-watcher in the 1760s, but must have done better later in life, because according to the 1783 tax list he fell in the middle bracket.

The results of the tax comparisons between protesters and non-protesters show that Governor Van Plettenberg was less than candid when he attacked the quality of the protesting burghers and signatories of the burgher petition by stating that they were found at the bottom of burgher society and therefore most of them had nothing to lose. According to him any change would be an improvement for them.⁵⁷ By his own admission the Governor had studied the register of signatories and within the small society of the Cape he must have known exactly who he was dealing with. His comments were contradicted by the financial facts and clearly did not have much substance. They must be attributed to a deliberate attempt to discredit the protesters.

⁵⁵ WCARS, BRD 1, 19 (25.2.1773), 42 (4.2.1774).

⁵⁶ De Jong, *Een deftig bestaan*, 14; Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy*, viii.

⁵⁷ WCARS, C 2692, 8 (20.3.1781).

Apart from describing the burgher protesters as a lowly and poor group of people, the VOC officials at the Cape and their supporters also tried to depict them as being uninformed and ignorant of what the protest movement actually stood for. Governor Van Plettenberg claimed that most signatories were not aware of the exact nature of the burgher complaints and thought they only signed a petition to prevent *'that what happened to Buijtendag would happen that evening or another day to them or theirs'*.⁵⁸ Jacobus Johannes Le Sueur wrote to Swellengrebel that *'among those who signed the petition, are several, who in hindsight felt very misled'*.⁵⁹ And Fiscal Boers stated in his reply to the burgher accusations that most signatories of the protest petition *'did not know the content of the paper they signed, and that some only days after having signed regretted this, and insisted that their names would be removed, and informed him in person of this desire, so that this ill-considered deed would not be held against them later'*.⁶⁰ The Company administrators wanted to portray the protesters as an uninformed bunch of people, who withdrew their support for the movement once they found out that it was mainly directed against the government.

However the tax figures show that a majority of the protesters belonged to the more established part of the burgher population. It seems improbable that people who had managed to make a financial and entrepreneurial career were as gullible as the administrators argued. Even more so because the signing of the petition was preceded by meetings of burghers where it was discussed what the protest movement stood for. It was thus unlikely for the signatories not to have been informed or at least have some inkling of the nature of the objections against the administration.

⁵⁸ *'het gebeurde met Buijtendag niet t'avond of morgen hun, of iemand van de hunne mogt overkomen'* - WCARS, C 2692, 9 (20.3.1781).

⁵⁹ *'onder die genen die mede voort redres getekend hebben, zijn verschijden die van agteren zien, zeer misleijd te zijn geweest'* – Schutte, Swellengrebel, 85.

⁶⁰ *'onkundig zijn geweest van den inhoud van het Papier, waaronder zij hunne handtekeningen hebben gesteld, dat sommige selfs seer weijnige dagen na deselve tekening sig daarmede hebben beswaard gevonden, en dat sij op de roijeeringe van hunne naamen hebben doen geinsteerd, en er aan den Ondergetekenden selve in persoon van hebben doen kennisse geven, opdat men naderhand uijt die onbezonnenn daad geene consequentien tot hun nadeel sou trekken'* – WCARS, C 2693, 100 (2.2.1781).

Furthermore, even though it is no indication of a higher form of education, most burghers in eighteenth century Cape Town could read and write, which was more than could be said about the lower ranked VOC employees, who were mostly drawn from the 'unemployed proletariat of Dutch towns'.⁶¹ The burghers who signed the protest petition were not uneducated: only four of the 404 signatories were illiterate and signed the May 1779 petition with a cross. They were almost certainly not people who were led astray by a few conniving leaders as the Company administrators claimed.

The burgher protest movement was not disorganised or losing strength from the time it started as the VOC officials implied with their above quoted statements. Support for the movement was not diminishing at all. At the annual burgher militia review in October 1779 the burghers forced the Political Council with military intimidation to accept that the serving Burgher Councillors would stay on for another year instead of resigning in December as should have happened.⁶² And in January 1780 Hendrik Cloete reported to Hendrik Swellengrebel that '*the riots of the burghers spread like wildfire*'.⁶³ There were more petitions and requests from protesters throughout 1780 and even though they were not signed by the same number of burghers as the one of May 1779, it was clear that the protest movement showed no signs of fading.

The evidence presented so far suggests that the support for the protest movement was found among the middle income and richer burghers. This was not unique to Cape Town. In the previous chapter it was established that most of the burgher protests in cities in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were rather non-violent, because of the involvement of the middle layer of burgher shopkeepers and artisans organised in guilds and burgher militia, who chose the more civilised way of petitions rather than running amok. The motive of these burghers to support the protest movement was likely that they would benefit from the proposed economic reform measures. The Cape entrepreneurs favoured cutting out the VOC middleman from trade and being allowed to trade freely with Europe and the Asian

⁶¹ Worden, *Cape Town*, 51, 74.

⁶² More detail about this incident in chapter 5.

⁶³ '*de onlusten der burgeren nemen toe als brandt*' – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 95.

settlements. They would also have been opposed to any unfair competition by Company officials or other groups. All the indications are that these protesters were a well-established, informed and organised faction fighting for a share of the economic spoils.

This is further supported by statements made at the time of the protests, which illustrated that the opposing groups had a familial basis. Fiscal Boers wrote on 31 January 1780 that *'Hate and anger, always so common in these circumstances, are playing a remarkable role in our current drama. One needs to be here to truly experience the real nature of what is going on. The nearest relatives begrudge each other the light in their eyes and only self interest is preventing an unspeakable persecution, which would be followed by murder and mayhem'*.⁶⁴ And in February 1788 the Political Council refused one of the leaders of the protest movement, Burgher Councillor Cornelis van der Poel, permission to sue the VOC *koopman* Christoffel Brand with the words that they feared *'the immediate revival of the despicable divisions, which dominated this Colony for a long time, through which animosity and bitterness between residents and even between those who normally were tied together through the loving bonds of family came about, so that one had to fear the most harmful consequences for this Colony'*.⁶⁵

Apart from the fact that these accounts were evidence of the traumatic impact of the political turmoil, they are also illustrations of the aspect of family and faction conflict involved in the burgher protests. This aspect, and the question if the motive behind the conflict was indeed economic, will be further investigated in the following chapters. This will be done by describing the role of various role-players and

⁶⁴ *'Haat en nijd, altoos zo eijgen aan dit klimaat, spelen bij die gelegenheid eene wonderbaerlijke Rolle op ons Toneel. Men dient hier present te zijn, om de ware geschapenhijd der zaken regt te bezeffen. De naaste bloedverwanten gunnen elkanderen het ligt niet in de oogen, en indien men door het point van interest niet nog eenigzints in teugel wierd gehouden, geloof ik, dat moord en doodslag de gevolgen van een onbeschrijfelijke persecutie zouden zijn'* - Schutte, *Swellingrebel*, 104.

⁶⁵ *'het dadelijk herleeven van die verderffelijke verdeeldheeden, dewelke eenen geruimen tijd in deze Colonie hebben geheerscht, en waardoor verwijderingen en verbitteringen tusschen Ingezeetenen Ja zelfs ook tusschen de zodanige die anderzints door de teederste banden van namaagschap aan elkanderen verbonden zijn waren ontstaan, zo dat men uit deselve de Schadelijkste gevolgen voor deze Colonie heeft moeten vreesen'* – WCARS, C 177, 487-488 (19.2.1788).

organisations, starting with the officials (Burgher Councillors), then the burgher militia, and finally the burgher entrepreneurs. A closer study of the people will eventually shed more light on who was driving and part of the burgher protests and their reasons why.

4. The Burgher Councillors

Even though the ruling elite in many Dutch cities closed their ranks more and more from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards they were never completely detached from the rest of the burgher residents and realised they could not rule without their support. Therefore they invited and allowed leading members and representatives from the middle layer of the burgher population to become part of the city government. They were called *burgerraden* (burgher councillors) or *burgemeesters* (burgher masters) and were given specific tasks, like looking after the city walls, the canals and the market and taking care of the orphans. These prominent burghers were frequently engaged in the same type of business as the regents and often family and friendship ties were forged between them.¹

A similar development occurred in the Cape settlement. Once the burgher group was created at the Cape at the end of the 1650s it grew rapidly. In the Cape District alone the number of burghers grew from 51 in 1658 to 563 in 1701.² The VOC administrators were steeped in the Dutch regent tradition and practices and following the principles of patrimonial rule, which were based on mutual support, they must have thought it wise to give the burghers representation in the administration of the settlement. Even though the VOC ultimately stayed in control of its settlement, it wanted to obtain a certain measure of co-operation from the growing burgher population, because without it there would be a potential for conflict. The Cape government thus made space for representatives of the burgher population on its administrative colleges and, as in the Dutch cities, they were called *burgerraaden*. In 1676 the number of Burgher Councillors increased from two to three and by the mid 1680s they had developed into a separate body (the Burgher Council). They were given tasks not unlike their Dutch counterparts and supervised the *Ratelwagt* (night watch), controlled the burgher butchers and bakers, and took care of the financing of the maintenance of roads and

¹ Leupen, 'Burger, stad en zegel', 27-29; Kloek and Tilmans, 'Inleiding', 2; De Jong, *Een deftig bestaan*, 16.

² Worden, *Cape Town*, 26; Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte (1967)*, 339. The total number of burghers in the Cape settlement was 1265 in 1701.

bridges in the town and district. The Burgher Councillors raised taxes from the burghers in the Cape District to be able to perform these functions. The VOC administration furthermore determined by 1685 that the Burgher Councillors were allowed to take part in the meetings of the Cape's second highest administrative body, the Council of Justice, but only when it dealt with matters concerning burghers.³

The Burgher Councillors at the Cape were appointed for terms of two years. Two of the three Burgher Councillors were replaced one year and one of them the next year. The Burgher Council submitted a double nomination of candidates to the Council of Policy, which would then choose and appoint its preferred candidates.⁴ Like the aldermen and mayors in Dutch cities, the Burgher Councillors alternated their function with several other positions within the administration and burgher militia of the Cape settlement. They served as members of the Orphan Chamber or as Commissioners of Civil and Marriage Affairs; they were often the highest officers in the burgher militia; and they were elders or deacons of the Church Council of the Dutch Reformed Church. Most of these important burghers were repeatedly appointed on the executive bodies and subsequently their administrative careers could sometimes span a period of several decades.

Because the functions of the burghers are recorded in the database it is possible to select the Burgher Councillors who served in the ten year period running up to the start of the Cape protest movement – the period 1770-1779. It results in a list of just fifteen names (Table 4-1), which indicates that the Burgher Councillors belonged to a relatively exclusive group. It is on this group that this chapter will mostly focus.

As members of this elite group the Burgher Councillors were awarded a high status. In 1755 the so-called sumptuary laws were issued at the Cape following instructions from the central VOC government in Batavia. The laws were designed to regulate '*pracht en praal*' (pomp and circumstance) among the various segments of the population to

³ Visagie, 'Inventory', 2-5.

⁴ The election procedure is deduced from the proceedings of the Council of Policy as recorded in the Resolutions in combination with the Nominations.

ensure that nobody would rise above or go outside the station they were supposed to be in accordance with their rank and status.⁵ It can be concluded from these laws that Burgher Councillors were awarded a rank equal to that of under-merchant in the VOC. The '*onderkoopman*' was the third highest rank in the VOC hierarchy. The sumptuary laws determined that Burgher Councillors were therefore allowed to wear gold or silver shoe buckles and their wives jewellery up to a certain value and clothes of specific material.

Table 4-1: Burgher Councillors, 1770-1779

Name	Other functions	Protest Supporter	Taxatie Lijst 1773 (Rd)	Quotisatie Rolle 1783 (f) ⁶
Bottiger, Jan Fredrik Willem	Orphan Master; Captain; Brandmeester		50	30
Brink, Andries (sr)	Orphan Master; Ritmeester		30	30
Cruijwagen, Johan Meijnderts	Ritmeester; Elder		60	30
De Wit, Petrus Johannes	Orphan Master; Brandmeester		50	
Eksteen, Hendrik Oostwald (sr)	Orphan Master		50	30
La Febre, Jacobus Alexander	Orphan Master; Commissioner; Captain; Deacon		20	
Maasdorp, Christiaan George	Orphan Master; Ritmeester	Yes	10	30
Meijer, Gerrit Hendrik	Orphan Master; Captain	Yes	10	30
Muller, Adam Gabriel	Orphan Master; Brandmeester; Deacon		15	30
Smuts, Johannes	Orphan Master; Commissioner; Captain		15	30
Van Breda, Michiel	Orphan Master; Lieutenant	Died 1777	30	
Van der Poel, Cornelis	Captain	Yes	20	30
Van der Spuij, Jacobus	Orphan Master	Died 1778	60	
Van Reenen, Jacobus (sr)	Orphan Master; Lieutenant	Yes	50	30
Van Sittert, Johannes (sr)	Orphan Master; Brandmeester; Elder		40	30

⁵ WCARS, C 2283 (15.7.1755); see also Ross, *Status and respectability*, 9-39.

⁶ If no amount, it means the Burgher Councillor died before 1783.

The burgher protesters of the late 1770s were not satisfied with this ranking and maintained that the Cape administration went against the instructions of the *Heeren XVII*. One of the points raised in the *Memorie* was that '*the members of the Burgher colleges should be having the rank which was awarded to them by Your Honourable and Respectable Gentlemen: a Burgher Councillor and Captain of the Burgher Militia the rank of Merchant*'.⁷ This request was indicative of the enormous importance that was placed on having the proper rank and status in Cape society as was the case in the social and political world of any Dutch city. The insistence on a higher ranking by the protesters was not merely motivated by a desire among the Burgher Councillors to wear more expensive clothes or be allowed to have more horses before their carriages. It carried great significance for their status in public life. Arrivals of high officials, inaugurations and funerals were highly public events and a perfect opportunity to show one's standing to the general populace. Accordingly the place one was awarded during these occasions was precisely circumscribed. In the 1760 funeral procession of Sergius Swellengrebel, the *Secunde* (deputy Governor), the incumbent Burgher Councillors were in the eleventh (out of thirty-one) position immediately behind various VOC officials, but grouped together with the members of the Council of Justice. Former Burgher Councillors were number seventeen and came before the captains of the burgher militia and members of the Orphan Chamber and Commission of Civil and Marriage Affairs.⁸ The protesters thus wanted to make sure that the Burgher Councillors were given the place they were entitled to in accordance with their proper rank.

Not only did the Burgher Councillors have a high status, they were required to be able to afford it financially. Table 4-1 gives an indication of the wealth of the fifteen Burgher Councillors. The *Taxatie Lijst* of 1773 shows that seven of them had to pay the highest tax amounts of 40 to 60 *Rijxdaalders*, a further four fell in the middle category (20-30 *Rd*) and only four were in the lower brackets, but none in the lowest of 5 *Rijxdaalders*. And in a decision taken by the Political Council in 1754 regarding the *Quotisatie* tax it

⁷ 'de Burger Collegianten dien rang te laten genieten, die hun reeds door U Wel-Ed: Groot Achtb: vergunt is geworden, te weeten: een Burger Raad en Capitein der Burgerije den rang van Koopman' – WCARS, C 2689, 66, Art.12 (9.10.1779).

⁸ WCARS, Miscellaneous Documents, M 41 (12.1760).

was resolved that the Burgher Councillors had to pay the fixed and highest amount of 30 Guilders.⁹ They had to do this even when they were not in function, because all the (former) Burgher Councillors still alive in 1783 were taxed with this amount. This indicated that being a Burgher Councillor was a permanent status, even when not serving as such – an important point in the discussion about factions among Burgher Councillors later in this chapter. A certain measure of wealth definitely was one of the prerequisites and criteria for becoming a Burgher Councillor. This impression is further supported by the fact that the Burgher Councillors all owned various properties in Cape Town itself as well as gardens and farms.¹⁰

Another feature of the Burgher Councillors was that they came from influential families and this very likely contributed to them achieving their position. The grandfathers, fathers and elder brothers of many members of the group of Burgher Councillors of the 1770s, e.g. Cornelis van der Poel, Jacobus van Reenen, Johannes Meijnderts Cruijwagen, Christiaan George Maasdorp, preceded them in that function or in the comparable position of *Heemraad* in the outer districts. More details about the families of the Burgher Councillors will be provided when their individual backgrounds are discussed later on.

The *Burgerraaden* were thus generally wealthy and came from high-ranking backgrounds. Everything pointed to the fact that this group of burghers belonged to a ruling elite within the burgher community. By accepting their position on the administrative colleges of the Cape they became *regenten* just like their VOC counterparts. And as regents they were expected to belong to the '*wisest, most important and richest*'¹¹ among the burgher population. Despite this, it could be argued that the Burgher Councillors did not have any real political power. All the administrative bodies that the burghers served on consisted of both Company employees and burghers, but this was never on equal footing. The VOC administration made sure Company members were in the majority or had the deciding vote. The

⁹ WCARS, C 132, 311-317 (27.8.1754).

¹⁰ See database.

¹¹ '*wijsten, treffelijksten en rijksten*' – these were the characteristics of Dutch regents. See Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 40-41.

appointment of the Burgher Councillors was completely subject to Company approval and it was unlikely that candidates who did not have a favourable disposition towards the administration would make it into the inner circles of the administration. All the decisions of the Burgher Councillors had to be signed off by the Council of Policy. On acceptance of their position they were required to swear an oath which pledged absolute loyalty and allegiance to the Dutch States-General, the Stadholder, the Directors of the VOC and the local Company government.¹² It is clear that the role, status and political position of the Burgher Councillors was heavily dependent on the good-will of, and was interwoven with, the VOC government and its officials. It cannot have been a comfortable position for the Burgher Councillors: how were they expected to act as proper representatives of the burgher population if they were so deeply entrenched in the VOC administration? But this was precisely where the VOC wanted the Burgher Councillors to be, because it would make it more unlikely that they and the burghers they represented would seriously oppose the Company government.

Yet all three serving Burgher Councillors - Cornelis van der Poel, Christiaan George Maasdorp and Gerrit Hendrik Meijer - turned against the government in 1779. According to the '*Resolutie Boek van E: E: Burgerraaden*' (Resolution Book of the Burgher Councillors)¹³ the Burgher Councillors did have regular meetings together. In the minutes of these meetings no reference whatsoever is found to the burgher unrest of the time. It seemed that the Burgher Councillors, knowing how closely scrutinised they were, did not discuss this subject in their meetings or at the very least they did not minute their discussions. It is probable that they did not want to raise the suspicions of the Political Council and the Company about the burgher actions.

On 30 March 1779 they submitted the request to the Political Council to send a delegation to Holland to address the burgher concerns. Suddenly the tension between the VOC officials and the Burgher Councillors became palpable. On the day that the Burgher Councillors wanted to submit the afore-mentioned request to the Political Council they were kept waiting outside the council chamber. They were never invited

¹² '*Eed voor Burgerraaden*' (Oath for Burgher Councillors) - WCARS, C 2693, 171-172 (undated).

¹³ WCARS, BRD 1.

to come in and a lowly messenger was sent to collect the request from them. A few days later the Councillors were summoned to appear before the Governor to explain what all the burgher meetings and unrest were about and what the burghers were planning to do.¹⁴ Until then the relation between the members of the administration and the Burgher Councillors was based on mutual respect and letters from the government to the Burgher Council usually started with the collegial '*Goede Vrienden*' or 'Dear Friends'. To be treated like common underlings was a serious affront to the status of the Burgher Councillors. Clearly the VOC government wanted to show who really was in charge.¹⁵

Subsequently the relationship between VOC officials and Burgher Councillors became even more strained as the three Burgher Councillors continued to test the boundaries of their authority. In October 1780 they appointed the burghers Dirk Weesberg and Jan Andreas Grundlingh to obtain affidavits and statements about civil and criminal complaints from burghers. They did this after having been requested to do so by several burghers.¹⁶ In so doing they assumed powers which the Burgher Councillors never had according to the members of the Council of Justice, which was the only judicial court in Cape Town and the only body authorised to attend to any legal matter. The Burgher Councillors were merely part of the proceedings when matters concerning burghers were heard. The Council of Justice complained to the Political Council about the activities of the two burghers, who acted independently from the VOC government almost as a separate burgher court or *scheepenbank*. The members of the Political Council were shocked to hear that the Burgher Councillors '*could have emancipated themselves to go beyond their authority for which no precedent has ever existed*'.¹⁷ The Council instructed the members of the Council of Justice to disregard and ignore the activities of the two burghers and not accept any cases or statements produced by them. The conduct of these burghers was even more detestable, because it would

¹⁴ WCARS, C 2689, 164 (5.4.1779).

¹⁵ WCARS, C 2689, 165 (10.5.1779).

¹⁶ WCARS, C 2692, 209-210, 210-211 (6.10.1780).

¹⁷ '*zig hebben kunnen emancipeeren tot het doen een uijstap, waarvan alhier nimmer eenig voorbeeld heeft g'exteerd*' - WCARS, C 158, 345-346 (7.11.1780).

cause 'the current discord and disputes among the Cape residents to worsen and continue'.¹⁸

Then in November 1780 another conflict erupted between the Political Council and the Burgher Councillors. This time it concerned the *Quotisatie Rol* of 1780. It appears that the Burgher Councillors had had the audacity to increase the tax amount of Company employees and put previously untaxed Company employees on the list without seeking the permission of the Political Council first. The Council was very annoyed and it saw this as a challenge to its authority. That the Burgher Councillors thought they could 'do things by themselves without any consultation with the government' was unheard of.¹⁹ To prevent this from happening again it was decided that from then on the *Quotisatie Rol* would be compiled by a commission consisting of *Burgerraaden* and one or more members of the Political Council.²⁰

It appears that the Burgher Councillors tried to become something that they were not entitled to be in terms of Company policy: independent administrators. This raises the question why the three serving and the former Burgher Councillor Jacobus van Reenen would turn against the government in 1779, seeing that they were in a respectable position as part of the Cape ruling elite and the administration. At the same time it must be noted that apart from these four Burgher Councillors and after having discounted the two who died before 1779, there were nine others who apparently did not support the protest movement or at the very least did not sign the May 1779 petition. This points to a difference of opinion among the Burgher Councillors.

The obvious disagreement among the Burgher Councillors is a relevant point, which becomes clear when the responsibilities of the Burgher Councillors are looked at more closely. One of their duties was to represent the interests of the burghers towards the

¹⁸ 'de thans onder deeze Caabse Ingezeetenen reets te veel plaats hebbende Twisten en oneenigheeden nog al meerder werden aan- en voort- gezet' - WCARS, C 158, 348 (7.11.1780).

¹⁹ 'zonder eenige de minste kennisse der Regeeringe op hun eijgen hadden kunnen te werk gaan' - WCARS, C 158, 373 (14.11.1780).

²⁰ WCARS, C 158, 353-354, 362-374 (14.11.1780).

VOC administration. Therefore they would often submit requests to the Political Council on behalf of burghers. Against this background it might be argued that the four protesting Burgher Councillors were merely doing their job as burgher representatives. However this function of representing the burghers did not just extend to the serving Burgher Councillors, but also to the former ones. Burgher Councillors would often serve a number of terms and once someone was appointed as Burgher Councillor the status and role remained with him even after he had served his term. It was furthermore customary that when the Political Council wanted to investigate something concerning the burghers, it consulted both with the serving as well as the former Burgher Councillors.²¹ In line with this, and especially in such an important matter as the struggle for burgher rights, one would expect that more Burgher Councillors would have signed the burgher petition. Yet they did not do so and therefore one has to consider why.

Contemporary observers saw the three serving Burgher Councillors indeed as leaders of the protest movement. Governor Van Plettenberg stated that they appointed themselves as the leaders of the *Malcontenten*.²² The writer of an anti-protest pamphlet described Cornelis van der Poel as '*Cornelis den Hoofdman*' (Cornelis the Chief), who poisoned many good and obedient burghers against the administration.²³ Van Plettenberg saw him as one of the '*instigators of the discord*' and singled him out as one who particularly tried to turn the opinion of the burghers against him.²⁴ Van der Poel in his turn accused the Governor of having an unfavourable disposition towards him and other members of his family because of '*the part he had played in promoting the Burgher rights during the complaints to the lords Directors in the*

²¹ WCARS, C 2692, 6-7 (20.3.1781). In 1773 a tax was raised to pay for a new road between the Cape and Rondebosch and the list of contributing burghers was compiled by members of the Political Council as well as '*fungeerende en oud Burgerraaden*' (acting and ex Burgher Councillors) – WCARS, BRD 24 (10/11.9.1773). Other examples of this practice are the commission investigating tax problems: WCARS, C 160, 93-96 (18.9.1781) and the commission looking into complaints of the licensed burgher butchers: WCARS, C 162, 235 (7.5.1782).

²² This is the term used by Van Plettenberg to describe the burgher protesters – WCARS, C 2692, 7 (20.3.1781).

²³ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 112.

²⁴ '*Aandrijvers der verdeeltheeden*' – WCARS, C2692, 23 (20.3.1781).

Fatherland'.²⁵ The Governor had offended his honour and status as captain of the burgher militia by refusing to promote his nephew, Albertus Johannes van der Poel, to *vaandrig* despite this being the wish of the majority of the members of the burgher militia. It was for this reason that Van der Poel requested his discharge as captain in the burgher militia and of all his other burgher duties in February 1782. In the same request Van der Poel pointed out that the Governor had embarrassed Christiaan George Maasdorp by not appointing him in a militia position he qualified for on the basis of seniority. Maasdorp was bypassed in favour of the younger and less experienced captain (and non-protesting Burgher Councillor) Johannes Smuts. Van der Poel cited Maasdorp's involvement as leader of the burgher protests as the reason for this.²⁶ The Governor simply replied that Van der Poel's claims were untrue, but that he did not want to argue about it and the discharge was granted.²⁷

Governor Van Plettenberg provided further insight into the apparent division within the ranks of the Burgher Councillors. In his official response to the burgher complaints the Governor remarked that it would have been customary for the three serving Burgher Councillors to consult with their former colleagues. As was established earlier serving and former Burgher Councillors met on a regular basis, especially when important issues needed to be discussed. The Governor continued to argue that should they have done this when the troubles started and together have agreed on a course of action, they would have rightly been able to say that they acted in the interest of all the burghers. Instead the serving Burgher Councillors disregarded their colleagues²⁸ *'to not expose themselves to the unpleasantness of being outvoted or be opposed in their actions'*.²⁹ Apart from the fact that the Burgher Councillors were therefore not properly qualified as burgher representatives, the Governor also implied that there were opposing camps among the Burgher Councillors. This warrants a closer inspection of the Burgher Councillors.

²⁵ *'het deel dat den Suppliant tot voorstand van de Burgerlijke regten in haar klagten naar onse heeren Hoofdgebieders int Vaderland heeft genomen'* – WCARS, C 1180, 49-50.

²⁶ WCARS, C 1180, 48-62 (12.2.1782).

²⁷ WCARS, C 161, 233-234 (12.2.1782).

²⁸ He mentioned Crujwagen, Serrurier, Brink, Bottiger, van Sittert, Eksteen, Muller, Smuts, de Wit and La Febre.

²⁹ *'om sig niet bloot te stellen, aan eene onaangename overstemming, of tegen te worden gegaan, in haar lieder voorgenomene desteynen'* - WCARS, C 2692, 7 (20.3.1781).

One of the major complaints contained in the second part of the 1779 burgher *Memorie* was that various Company officials engaged in private trade against the regulations of the Company and according to the protesters one of the main culprits was the firm La Febre & Co.³⁰ The main partner in this company was ex Burgher Councillor Jacobus Alexander La Febre and he was in business with the VOC Provisions Master and member of the Political Council Damiaan Hugo Staring and the Provisions bookkeeper Hendrik Pieter Möller.³¹ La Febre was the youngest son of a large (originally) Huguenot family, which was aligned to a number of important VOC families through marriage. An older sister of La Febre was married to the *Secunde* Otto Luder Hemmy.³² La Febre's wife was Christina Jacoba de Wet.³³ She had two sisters who were married to respectively Petrus Ludovicus Le Sueur, the Company Warehouse Master, and his brother Johannes Jacobus Le Sueur, the Company Cellar Master and member of the Political Council.³⁴ The last one was quite vocal in his opposition to the burgher protesters.³⁵ Two brothers of La Febre's wife were Olof Godlieb de Wet, a member of the Council of Justice, and Hendrik Justinus de Wet, a VOC *boekhouder*. Olof Godlieb de Wet was the son-in-law of Burgher Councillor Jan Fredrik Willem Böttiger. Hendrik Justinus de Wet had an extensive network of links with both VOC officials and Burgher Councillors. Through his first wife, Sophia, he was a son-in-law of Burgher Councillor Andries Brink (sr). Through his sister he was a brother-in-law of Jacobus Alexander La Febre, while his second wife, Elisabeth Jacoba, was a niece of La Febre.³⁶ Perhaps more important were his entrepreneurial links. He was one of the six partners in the firm Cruijwagen & Co, the other company that the protesting burghers specifically mentioned in their complaints. The other partners were the Burgher

³⁰ The information in this paragraph is reproduced in the schedule in appendix 2.

³¹ WCARS, C 2689, 52 (9.10.1779). Damiaan Hugo Staring did not deny the partnership in his response to the burgher complaints. He wrote it was in existence from 1774 until Le Febre's death in April 1779. He claimed however that their main trading commodity was wood and not burgher produce and was therefore not against Company regulations or in competition with the burghers. Staring, *Damiaan Hugo Staring*, 178-181.

³² Heese and Lombard, *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagregisters*, Vol.16, 250.

³³ Heese and Lombard, *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagregisters*, Vol.16, 250.

³⁴ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 1127; Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 48.

³⁵ See for example his letter in Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 83-86.

³⁶ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 1127, 218; Heese and Lombard, *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagregisters*, Vol.16, 250.

Councillors Adam Gabriel Muller and Petrus Johannes de Wit, the VOC under-merchant Christoffel Brand and the bookkeeper Abraham Chiron and lastly the person after whom the firm was named: VOC *kassier* Gerrit Hendrik Cruijwagen, who was the brother of Burgher Councillor Johan Meijnderts Cruijwagen.³⁷ Both Christoffel Brand and Petrus Johannes de Wit were sons-in-law of Johannes Hendrikus Blankenberg, a member of the Council of Justice and secretary of the Orphan Chamber, who was again the uncle of Hendrik Justinus de Wet and his siblings. Jacobus Alexander La Febre also had business dealings with Burgher Councillor Petrus Johannes De Wit, Christoffel Brand and Abraham Chiron.³⁸ One of the partners in his company La Febre & Co, Hendrik Pieter Möller, was a member of the Möller family, most of whom were employed by the VOC. One of the Möller brothers, Marthinus Johannes, was the son-in-law of VOC *assistent* Michiel Smuts, who was the brother of Burgher Councillor Johannes Smuts and the brother-in-law of Burgher Councillor Johannes van Sittert (sr).

The above intricate web of relationships has been translated into a schedule (see appendix 2) with the aim of showing that eight non-protesting Burgher Councillors were part of the same faction. The over-arching conglomerate has been divided in four sub-networks, each revolving around a prominent Cape family or group of entrepreneurs. The major three were the De Wet family, the firm La Febre & Co and the firm Cruijwagen & Co. The main families in these networks were La Febre, Le Sueur, De Wet and Möller. Perhaps most striking is that Jacobus Alexander La Febre was a member of all three main sub-networks and as such was the centre figure in this ruling faction of Burgher Councillors and VOC officials. His position reflects pre-eminently the familial component of patrimonial rule referred to in the previous chapter. His central place will prove to be of vital importance for the course of the political events of the late 1770s as will be described later.

The presented information shows that the non-protesting Burgher Councillors were all linked into a tight network of burghers and VOC employees close to the centre of

³⁷ WCARS, C 2689, 49-50 (9.10.1779); C 2695, 377 (n.d., 1780).

³⁸ According to two requests by this group of 15 April 1777 and 21 September 1778 – WCARS, C 1168, 33-34; C 1171, 27-28.

government. Governor Van Plettenberg was well aware of this situation when he claimed that the protesting Burgher Councillors would have been outvoted by their colleagues. Belonging to this ruling faction could very well have motivated the majority of the Burgher Councillors to not support the protest movement – most were simply too closely related to high Company officials and they had nothing to gain, but much to lose, from opposing the VOC administration.

The schedule in appendix 2 also shows the three protesting Burgher Councillors and their links with the ruling establishment. It is no surprise that they had these connections, because without them it would almost certainly not have been possible to become a Burgher Councillor. But despite their being part of the elite group they chose to stand up against the administration. How can this apparent contradiction be explained?

Of the three Burgher Councillors, Gerrit Hendrik Meijer was the one who seemed to have had most links to the Cape establishment and was therefore the least likely to go into opposition. He was a third generation Cape burgher. His grandfather was from the Netherlands and arrived at the Cape in the 1690s. The Meijer family eventually moved to the Swellendam district, and it was there that Gerrit Hendrik and his brothers took the burgher oath in 1753.³⁹ He climbed the ranks of the burgher militia to become a captain and he was also a Swellendam *Heemraad*. In 1772 he asked to be relieved of his burgher duties in the district, because he wanted to move to Cape Town.⁴⁰ The status of his positions in Swellendam ensured that he did not become an ordinary burgher in the Cape District. Soon after arrival in Cape Town he was appointed as deacon in the Dutch Reformed Church (1774), Burgher Councillor (1776) and Orphan Master (1777). He also became the captain of the burgher Company d'Invalides. Another contributory factor to his career as official in Cape Town was probably that he was married to Hester de Wet.⁴¹ She was a cousin of the brothers Olof Godlieb and Hendrik Justinus de Wet. Gerrit Hendrik Meijer was furthermore a nephew of former

³⁹ WCARS, C 2663, 72 (26.10.1753).

⁴⁰ WCARS, C 1155, 10-11 (15.5.1772).

⁴¹ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 571.

Burgher Councillor Jan Mijndert Cruijwagen and therefore a cousin of Burgher Councillor Johan Meijnderts Cruijwagen and VOC official Gerrit Hendrik Cruijwagen.⁴²

With this background and these family links one would not expect to find Gerrit Hendrik Meijer on the side of the burgher protesters, were it not for the fact that he was in serious conflict with Independent Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers. Meijer wrote about this in a statement submitted in support of the protest movement and recorded in the documents related to the protests. He recalled how the *geweldigere* Doeksteen came to his house and told him, on orders of Independent Fiscal Boers, *'that I would have to prepare a sum of money, payment of which would prevent, that a certain Person would give a statement about a Criminal case in which he [Meijer] would be accused of sleeping with and fathering a child with a young girl'*.⁴³ Meijer became extremely angry and upset that he would be accused of such an abhorrent misdeed. He told Doeksteen that he would never pay any money, because this had nothing to do with him.

In his official response to the burgher complaints, Fiscal Boers gave a different interpretation of the incident. He claimed that he had heard about a nephew of Meijer of the same name, who had impregnated an orphan girl staying with him and his wife. Boers had suggested to Doeksteen to make some discrete enquiries. Doeksteen was a cousin of Meijer and Boers assumed that because of this family relationship he may have been less diplomatic than expected. Presumably Doeksteen had advised Meijer to quietly handle matters for his nephew and save the whole family shame and embarrassment. Whatever the case, Boers stated he never instructed Doeksteen to accuse Meijer himself or demand any money or bribe. He furthermore pointed out that Meijer should have rather kept quiet about this shameful incident to protect his family name. But now, because Meijer had issued a public statement, the whole embarrassing story was out in the open and all that merely because Meijer had

⁴² De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 571, 164.

⁴³ *'dat ik een sak gelt moest klaar maken, die eerdaags agter zijn deur kwam, dat hij een Persoon over een Crimeneelen geval daar hij mee beschuldigt wiert van een Bijslaap bij een jonge Dogter, souw laten sweren'* - WCARS, C 2673, 26. The statement was made on 1 May 1779, but it did not say on which date this incident occurred.

wanted to tarnish the reputation of the Fiscal. According to Boers the tactic had backfired badly on Meijer and his family and there was no substance in the story.⁴⁴ Cape Town was a *kletsdorp* (gossip town) and an incident like this would not have remained hidden very long. It was a major affront to the high standing of a prominent burgher like Gerrit Hendrik Meijer, who without doubt took this very seriously. It may have prompted him to side with the protesters in an effort to get his own back at Fiscal Boers, who he saw as the instigator of the offence.

Christiaan George Maasdorp was also a third generation Cape burgher. His grandfather Christiaan Maasdorp was German and arrived at the Cape around 1700. He became a burgher after his contract with the Company was finished. Originally he was a wagon maker, but soon after receiving his *burgerschap* he became a liquor *pachter*.⁴⁵ His two sons, Arnoldus and Christiaan, became prominent burghers in the Stellenbosch district. Arnoldus, the father of Christiaan George, was a deacon of the Stellenbosch church, a captain of the burgher dragoons and a *Heemraad* of the district. He owned several farms in the area among which the well-known *Vergelegen* farm. In 1762 he requested to be relieved of all his burgher duties, because he intended to sell his farms and settle in Cape Town.⁴⁶

The first wife of Arnoldus Maasdorp and mother of Christiaan George was Anna Sophia van Brakel.⁴⁷ She was the sister of Adriaan van Brakel, a captain of the burgher militia in the Stellenbosch district. Arnoldus Maasdorp's second wife was Anna Sophia de Vos, a niece of his first wife, whose mother was Maria Sophia van der Bijl. The Van Brakels and the Van Der Bijls were prominent farmer families, members of which joined the burgher protests in 1779. After the death of Arnoldus Maasdorp's second wife he married a third time in 1752. Significantly, Elsabé La Febre, his third wife and stepmother of Christiaan George was a sister of Jacobus Alexander La Febre.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ S.D. Naude, 'Willem Cornelis Boers', in: *Argief-jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, 13-II (1950), 355-449, 385-386; WCARS, C 2693, 125-126 (2.2.1781).

⁴⁵ Leibbrandt, *Precis*, Vol. II, 743; Groenewald, *Kinship, Entrepreneurship and Social Capital*, 221 (1717-1726).

⁴⁶ Leibbrandt, *Precis*, Vol. II, 762.

⁴⁷ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 517.

⁴⁸ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 517, 218.

Christiaan George Maasdorp was born in 1737. He took his burgher oath on 1 November 1756 in Stellenbosch and joined the burgher militia.⁴⁹ In 1758 he was already a cornet of the Stellenbosch dragoons.⁵⁰ In or shortly after 1762 he followed his father to the Cape district, because in November 1763 the Political Council recorded that he was ('now') living at the Cape and he was appointed cornet of the burgher militia there.⁵¹ In 1773 he was promoted to lieutenant of the burgher cavalry.⁵² In 1777 followed his promotion to *ritmeester* (captain) of the second company cavalry.⁵³ In the meantime he was also made deacon of Cape church council (1772-73) and he served as Commissioner of Civil and Marriage Affairs (1773-74) and Orphan Master (1776-1777). In between these positions he was Burgher Councillor for the first time in 1775 and he was again appointed in that position in 1779 till 1781. He was one of the permanently appointed Burgher Councillors in 1786. Towards the end of his life his fortunes seemed to have taken a downturn. In March 1790 Hendrik Cloete wrote in a letter to Hendrik Swellengrebel that Maasdorp '*is in a sad state: his possessions will soon be sold by the council of Justice which affects him to such extent that he often falls into reveries and is absent-minded*'.⁵⁴ Maasdorp died in April 1790.

Cornelis van der Poel was the grandson of Pieter van der Poel, who was born in Leiden in Holland and arrived in the Cape around 1688. He married Johanna Vijandt from Amsterdam and together they had six children.⁵⁵ Pieter van der Poel became a respected and wealthy burgher with a farm near the Liesbeek River and six properties in Cape Town. He was elected as deacon and elder in the Dutch Reformed church of Cape Town. Among Pieter's six children was only one son, Jonas van der Poel, who was born in 1695 and followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a farmer. In the Resolutions of the Political Council he was mentioned as the owner of a cattle farm at

⁴⁹ WCARS, C 2663, 75 (1.11.1756).

⁵⁰ WCARS, C 2663, 6 (9.8.1758).

⁵¹ WCARS, C 141, 320-321 (15.11.1763).

⁵² WCARS, C 151, 50 (19.7.1773).

⁵³ WCARS, C 155, 297 (2.9.1777).

⁵⁴ '*is in een bedroefden staat: zijn boedel zal binnen korten door de raad van Justitie worden verkogt 't welk hij zig zodanig heeft aangetrokken, dat hij dikwijls in diepe mijmeringen vervalt en niet praesent is*' – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 287.

⁵⁵ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 713.

the Kleine Paardebergen in 1744, a butcher contractor and a liquor *pachter*.⁵⁶ He did better in Cape and burgher society than his father, because he was an elder in the Cape church, a Burgher Councillor and an officer of the burgher militia. He resigned from all burgher duties, among which captain of the burgher infantry, in October 1753.⁵⁷

Jonas was the first Van Der Poel to marry into the Meijburgh family when he married Sophia Meijburgh, a daughter of Jan Lamberts Meijburgh. Her grandfather, Lambert Lambertz, came from Leiden as did Jonas' father and this may have been a link between the Meijburghs and Van Der Poels. The Meijburgh family did financially well and many descendants settled in the Stellenbosch district, where they served on the church council as deacons and elders and became officers in the burgher militia. One of the most well-known Meijburghs was Johannes Albertus. He was a nephew of Sophia Meijburgh and Jonas van der Poel. Both Johannes Albertus and his son, Phillipus Albertus, served several terms as *Heemraden* in the Stellenbosch administration. The relation between the Meijburgh and Van Der Poel families must have been close, because four of the five sons of Jonas van der Poel married a Meijburgh bride.⁵⁸

Cornelis van der Poel was the youngest son of Jonas. He was born on 16 November 1736 and took his burgher oath in October 1753 when he was 18 years old.⁵⁹ After that he joined the ranks of the burgher infantry. In February 1766 he was promoted to *vaandrig* or ensign. At the time he was a *vaanjonker* (standard-bearer) and therefore skipped the two ranks of corporal and sergeant to join the officer corps and with that the Burgher Military Council.⁶⁰ In September 1772 he became a lieutenant and when in April 1776 his older brother Albertus resigned as captain of the burgher infantry and all his other burgher duties due to ill health, Cornelis was appointed in his place.⁶¹ In December 1777 he became a Burgher Councillor – a function he would fulfil until the

⁵⁶ WCARS, C 122, 136 (16.6.1744)/C 85, 119 (9.5.1730)/C 98, 203 (31.8.1735).

⁵⁷ WCARS, C 131, 238-239 (2.10.1753).

⁵⁸ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 713-715.

⁵⁹ WCARS, C 2663, 71 (10.1753).

⁶⁰ WCARS, C 144, 87 (11.2.1766).

⁶¹ WCARS, C 150, 368 (1.9.1772)/C 154, 263 (20.8.1776).

end of 1780.⁶² It is noteworthy that Cornelis van der Poel was never an Orphan Master unlike the other Burgher Councillors. As in his burgher militia career he jumped the ranks to the highest burgher position. In 1768 Cornelis van der Poel married Elsie Elisabeth Meijburgh, a daughter of the above-mentioned Johannes Albertus. After her death in 1772 he married Susanna Smuts, a sister of Johannes Smuts.⁶³ Thus at the time of the start of the burgher protests he had a direct family link to the Burgher Councillor establishment surrounding Jacobus Alexander La Febre, which clearly did not prevent him from standing out as the leader of the protesting Burgher Councillors.

There were some striking similarities between the three incumbent (and protesting) Burgher Councillors. All three were born in the 1730s and were therefore of the same age group. Each of them was a third generation Cape born burgher from mixed Dutch and German descent. They and their families each had links to the outer districts: Maasdorp and Meijer grew up in Stellenbosch and Swellendam respectively and only moved to the Cape District later in life, while the Van Der Poel family had close connections with the Meijburghs of Stellenbosch. This meant that they all had a farmer background and links to the farming community. In contrast the non-protesting Burgher Councillors seemed to have had more an urban base in the economic and political centre of the Cape settlement.

It can however not be denied that the three serving Burgher Councillors, being members of some of the foremost burgher families, were also connected in some way to the group of non-protesting Burgher Councillors and through that to the VOC administration. The family links to the ruling faction were especially strong in the case of Gerrit Hendrik Meijer. But they were placed somewhat on the fringes as becomes clear from the schedule in appendix 2, perhaps because they did not have business connections to the ruling elite. Yet the existence of the relationship was extremely significant, because being Burgher Councillors and leading burghers afforded them the perfect springboard and opportunity to become political challengers.

⁶² WCARS, C 155, 386 (9.12.17770).

⁶³ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 615-616, 715, 904.

This is illustrated by a particular set of events which occurred at the end of 1778 and the beginning of 1779. In his official response to the burgher complaints Damiaan Hugo Staring elaborated on the reason why he and his partners decided to wind down the company known as La Febre & Co. He wrote that at the beginning of 1779 *'the Burgher Councillor La Febre struggled already for a long time with consumption⁶⁴, which worsened every day, and it was expected he would die soon and it was advisable to stop the buying of goods, settle the outstanding balances and sell the remaining goods'*.⁶⁵ La Febre died in April 1779. From the description of the network of non-protesting Burgher Councillors it can be concluded that La Febre was very much at the centre and most probably the leader of the ruling faction of burghers and VOC officials. Fighting a debilitating disease for quite some time not only made it impossible for him to continue his business, but very likely made it difficult to fulfil his leading and central role in the political field. It could very well be that the ruling faction began to unravel and this opened the way for others to step forward and become contenders for the position. The challenge came from three Burgher Councillors with similar backgrounds, who were part of the establishment and had the political position to make it possible for them to take this step.

This supports the notion that the burgher protests had another facet apart from a purely ideological one, namely the role of patrimonial rule and particularly the faction system and disputes, which clearly had an impact on Cape political life. Apparently there were opposing camps among the Burgher Councillors and Governor Van Plettenberg must be credited with his astute assessment of this situation. But this does not explain the motive behind the protesting Burgher Councillors' actions and still leaves the important question unanswered exactly why these three men, being part of the administrative elite, chose a route which would lead them into conflict with the administration. To gain further insight in this matter we need to dig more into other aspects of their background.

⁶⁴ Pulmonary tuberculosis, a wasting disease.

⁶⁵ *'den Burgerraad La Febre sedert lange aan Teeringsiekte laboreerende, dat van dag tot dag verergerde, so dat men een kortstondige dood te gemoet sien konde, wierden wij in het begin van 1779 te raade, onsen Inkoop van Goederen te staaken, onse saaken te vereffenen en de restanten gaande weg te verkoopen'* – Staring, *Damiaan Hugo Staring*, 178.

5. The burgher militia and their role in the protests

'The militias were in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries part and parcel of everyday life in the towns of the Dutch Republic'.¹ They were one of the many corporate entities that existed in Dutch society: provinces and cities were seen as communities and within the cities there were guilds, neighbourhood associations and militia. These corporations were vital to the dynamics of Dutch society. People were generally not regarded as individuals, but as members of various communities. Membership of corporations gave meaning and value to individual lives. It meant that people belonged to a certain status group and contributed to the community. The other side of the coin was that people were only entitled to certain privileges as member of a group or corporation. Individual rights were not acknowledged and therefore belonging to a corporate entity, like a guild or burgher militia, was important if one did not want to place oneself outside society. Thus being a burgher (and protection of that status) could not be taken lightly, because that was the only access to membership of a guild or militia.²

Before 1600 many Dutch towns had *schutterijen* or civic militias, which until then were organisations which could be compared to guilds. Membership of the militias was voluntary. During the uprising against the Spanish rulers the Stadholders, who were leading the struggle, found a regular standing army formed by mercenaries more useful than scattered militia forces. The militias gradually transformed to a civic guard and lost their exclusive status. From the beginning of the seventeenth century most Dutch cities made membership of the militia compulsory for all male burghers between the ages of eighteen and sixty. In fact, the association between *burgerschap* and militia membership became so strong that the same word – *burger* – was used to name both militia members and burghers and the words *schutterij* and *burgerij* were virtually interchangeable. As the cities grew, the ranks of the militia increased. In practice the poorest burghers and the *grauw* were still excluded, because militia

¹ Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 446.

² Van Der Burg, 'Law enforcement', 217-218; Streng, *Stemme in staat*, 33-43.

members had to be able to afford to buy their own weapons and uniforms and some cities even used certain criteria of wealth for admission. The burgher militias were given a new role by city governments. They could be used to defend the cities together with the regular army garrison when threatened by outside forces and they were used in times of crisis to quell riots. In many cities militias were put to work as fire watch and night watch, which policed the towns during the night and maintained order.³

Even though the militias had lost their original military role in the cities and very often their military prowess left a lot to be desired, they maintained their organising function and remained a significant factor in sustaining a sense of community among the burghers. They became the embodiment of common interests and responsible citizenship. The bond between militia members was strengthened through ritual and ceremonial gatherings, such as meals and festivals. Many cities had an annual militia parade through the streets followed by a review, some spectacular drills and more feasts. And at special events, like a visit to the town by the Stadholder, the urban burgher community was represented by the civic militias.⁴

The Dutch rulers allowed the existence of guilds and militia as long as they just busied themselves with their own limited purposes. Playing a role in the political arena was not regarded as being part of this. In the province of Holland the burgher militias were robbed of any political influence by a resolution of the Provincial States issued in 1581, which prohibited the city governments from consulting militias and other burgher organisations on national and city affairs. However the prominent social function of the militias combined with their military potential - even if it was insignificant in many cases - made them role-players on the political scene regardless and almost by default. In times of turmoil they could be a threat to the authority of the city administration. The militia were often the only organising vehicle available to

³ Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 446; Prak, 'The Dutch Republic's City-State Culture', 350; Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 72-76; Van Der Burg, 'Law enforcement', 223-225; W. Frijhoff & M. Spies, *Dutch culture in a European perspective: 1650, hard-won unity* (Assen 2004), 143; P. Knevel, 'Armed Citizens: The Representation of the Civic Militias in the Seventeenth Century', in: A.K. Wheelock and A.F. Seeff, *The public and private in Dutch culture of the Golden Age* (Cranbury 2000), 85-99.

⁴ Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 446; Frijhoff & Spies, *Dutch culture*, 144.

the burghers to make demands, voice their dissatisfaction or form an opposition to the ruling regents. What is significant is that in those cases the militia leaders often claimed to speak on behalf of the entire burgher community. In the time of political turmoil in the Netherlands around 1747-48 the burghers made their demands to the city councils through the militia. In Amsterdam and Leiden the militia companies elected representatives who drew up a list of demands, which included the maintenance and revival of guild regulations and the right to elect their own burgher officers. In Leiden the militia went as far as occupying strategic points in the city when their demands were turned down and the regular army had to be brought in to force the burghers into submission. It must be noted that these burgher protests were not started to achieve a radical or revolutionary change, but had more a rectifying function: they wanted to expose excesses by the city rulers and asked for a return of old burgher privileges – be it real or perceived.⁵

Because of the potential threat that the militias could pose to the authority of the patriciate, they had to be kept under close supervision. One way to control the militias was to prohibit or prevent them having militia meetings. However this would not make the city rulers very popular, because it would be regarded as going against the burgher rights and was therefore not the preferred method. Another way to exert some influence over the militia was via the *burgerkrijgsraad* or Burgher Military Council, which controlled the militia. In many cities these councils could only meet after having obtained approval from the magistrate. But more effective was the use of networks available to the administration. The members of the Burgher Military Councils were the highest officers of the burgher companies and these men usually were appointed from among the narrow circle of regents themselves. They would therefore be closely linked to members of the city government and this would usually ensure that burgher militias would remain on the side of the administration.⁶

When the VOC created its settlements in the Asian empire, burgher militias became an integral part of these as they were in Dutch cities. Militias were found in all parts of

⁵ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 46; Streng, *Stemme in staat*, 41-42; Prak, 'Burghers, Citizens', 445-446.

⁶ Van Der Burg, 'Law enforcement', 223.

the Dutch VOC empire and they often performed the same organising role as did their counterparts in the Republic. This meant that the Company administrators, like the Dutch regents, had to attempt to keep the burgher militias under VOC control. This did not prevent that the militias at times proved to be important role-players in the political world of some Dutch settlements in Asia. In places like Colombo in Ceylon the burghers frequently tried to get greater privileges from government. They chose the officers of the militia to speak on their behalf, because they enjoyed respect and standing among the burgher population. In 1678, when there were just over one hundred burghers living in Colombo, a first petition was submitted. The complaints were much the same as the grievances of the Cape burghers of a later time. The burghers of Colombo claimed that they were in a desperate state after Asian merchants had managed to wrest lucrative trade from them and the burghers, because they were Dutch or from Dutch descent, thought themselves entitled to preferential treatment. The first petition was followed by many others, but seldom did the VOC give in to their demands.⁷

At the Cape of Good Hope the political position of the burgher militia was more volatile than in other parts of the Dutch Asian world. It is helpful to explore the reasons for this before looking at the role of the militia in the burgher protests of the late 1770s.

The Cape was relatively isolated from other parts of the Dutch empire, but its strategic importance to the Dutch empire and VOC trade routes was crucial. For that reason the settlement had to be defended at all costs and the burghers were expected to play a large role in this. Even though the VOC at the Cape had its own military forces, a factor in agreeing to release employees to become free-burghers was that they would contribute to the defence of the Cape and all the burghers were conscripted in the militia. The militias of the Dutch cities served as an example for the Cape government in setting up the burgher militia, which was clearly illustrated when in September 1768 the Cape administrators decided to regularise the rules and

⁷ Bosma and Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 40-41.

instructions regarding the burgher militia and issued a '*Reglement voor den Burger krijgsraad*' or 'Regulations for the Burgher Military Council'.⁸ Many of these mirrored the ones that were in force in Dutch cities. Each burgher between the ages of 16 and 60 had to be a member of a militia company, although the youngest ones were free from watch duty until they were 18 years old. This regulation stemmed from as far back as the agreements of the '*Unie van Utrecht*', the 1579 treaty between the northern Dutch provinces and one of the founding documents of the Dutch Republic, where in article eight a general conscription of all healthy men between the ages of 18 and 60 into burgher militia was determined.⁹ Members of the militia also had to provide their own weapons and ammunition and keep it in good working order at all times.

It was furthermore evident from the 1768 regulations that at the Cape the association between *burgerschap* and militia membership was as equally strong as in Dutch cities. Clause 20 read: '*The young men who have reached the age of 16 and have not registered themselves as Burghers, will have to pay a fine of ten Rixdollars when this is discovered*'.¹⁰ And clause 24 started as follows: '*Everybody who has enrolled oneself as burgher...*' and continued to stipulate that as long as they still were considered recruits they had to come to the Burgher Watch house once a month to be exercised as preparation for their Burgher militia duty.¹¹ Clause 45 stated that '*All the burghers will once every year be under arms to have its usual and annual Exercise*' and '*nobody enrolled in the Burgher service will be excused from this*'.¹² At the Cape, as in Dutch cities, the word '*burger*' was used for both burghers and members of the burgher militia.

⁸ WCARS, C 146, 173-212 (6.9.1768); BKR 8 (6.9.1768).

⁹ <http://webh01.ua.ac.be/storme/unievanutrecht.html> (last accessed 29 September 2011).

¹⁰ '*De Jongelingen die 16: Jaaren oud geworden zijn, en zig nog niet onder de Burgerij hebben laten inschrijven, zullen wanneer Sulx ontdekt word, verbeuren een boete van thien Rijxd:s.*' – WCARS, BKR 8, 8 (6.9.1768).

¹¹ '*Alle die gene, die zig onder de burgerij hebben laten inschrijven...*' – WCARS, BKR 8, 9 (6.9.1768).

¹² '*De gantsche Burgerij zal precise eens in 't Jaar, in de wapenen moeten koomen, om haar gewoonlijke en Jaarlijxe Exercitie te verrigten ... Sullende hier van niemand die Burgerdienst doet, vrij weesen...*' - WCARS, BKR 8, 18-19 (6.9.1768).

The above association was likely to have a considerable significance at the Cape. The number of Cape burghers was much larger than that in other Asian settlements and they had developed a more self-conscious identity in the eighteenth century. There were no other corporate institutions like guilds or neighbourhood organisations as in Dutch cities. Therefore the burgher militia were the only way in which the large number of burghers were organised and they were thus of vital social importance to the burghers and their identity. It was in the militia that the burghers met with each other, accessed their social and business networks, and discussed all kinds of issues. The Cape burgher militia, like their Dutch counterparts, had ceremonial gatherings and an annual parade in which the burghers could show their military competence. And at official occasions, like the visit of a VOC return fleet or the funeral of a high-ranking official, the burgher militia was part of the proceedings representing the burgher population.

An important criterion for membership of the burgher militia at the Cape was that one had to be born free. It was for this reason that free blacks could not become militia members. The minutes of a meeting of the Burgher Military Council on 7 September 1774 recorded the following:

'After which it was noted that two freed young men had presented themselves to Captain Soermans, and another one to the Scriba, to be enrolled in the Company of master Soermans as Burghers, and serve with other Burghers, claiming that there were other freed men like them who served in the burgher militia, after investigation this was found not to be the case; it was resolved that according to ancient custom, nobody could be enrolled among the burghers than those who were born free; or whose father was married to their mother and would therefore be legitimate, providing their fathers were free and born free'.¹³

¹³ *Daarna te kennen gegeven zijnde, dat Twee Vrijgegeeven Jongens hun bij D Hr Captn Soermans hadden aangediend, als meede Een derselven bij den Scriba, om onder de Comp: van gem: heer Soermans, als Burgers te werden ingeschreeven, en met andere Burgers meede gelijke diensten te doen onder voorgeeven datter eenige soodanige vrijgegeeven onder de burgerij waren sorteerende, 't geene egter na gedaane ondersoek dus niet is bevonden; is geresolveerd volgens aloude usantie, geen andere onder de burgerij inteschrijven dan die in vrijdom gebooren; dan wel wiens vaders met haar moeders*

Free blacks were not burghers, but members of a different status group in Cape society (comparable to *inwoners* in Dutch cities). They were not born free, but were freed during their lives, and could thus not enrol in the burgher militia. However their sons would have been born free and this enabled them to become members of the burgher militia and therefore burghers. The determining factor seemed to have been whether one was born free and not one's race. The difference between the groups was based on status with specific reference to freedom. It follows that being a militia member must have been important in the forming of burgher identity in Cape society.¹⁴

What we have established so far is that the burghers at the Cape were organised in burgher militia by the VOC government according to Dutch example; that the militia were the only corporate organisation available to the burghers at the Cape; and that the militia played a major role in shaping the identity of the burghers as a status group. The combination of these factors created the capricious situation referred to earlier. Under the wrong leadership - which at the Cape would mean: opposed to the VOC administration - the militia could be a powerful threat to Company authority. And with all the ingredients for an explosive situation present a stand-off between burgher militia and VOC government did indeed take place during the burgher protests of the late 1770s, which illustrated that the Cape militia played the same role in burgher society as the militia in Dutch cities: acting as the medium through which protests and revolts were organised and demands to the government were made.

In October 1779 the Military Exercise of the Cape District burgher militia was held. This event happened every year according to the instructions of 1768 and lasted six days.¹⁵ All the burgher militia companies had to exercise and parade in Cape Town and on the last day a grand review was held at which the burgher Companies would parade outside the seat of the Cape government, the Castle. For this occasion the

getrouwt, en dus g'egt zijn, mits hun vaders te vooren vrijluijden geweest en gebooren zijn' – WCARS, BKR 2, 34 (7.9.1774). A similar formulation is found in the minutes of the Burgher Council – WCARS, BRD 1, 46 (2.9.1774).

¹⁴ The argument around status and race is further explored in chapter 2.

¹⁵ WCARS, BKR 8, 18-19 (6.9.1768).

members of the burgher militia were all armed. The review would be the end of the week of events and afterwards the militia normally dispersed. However, after the review of October 1779 this did not happen: the burgher companies remained in their position and did not lay down their weapons. Contemporary observers claimed that the officers of the militia were made to go to the Governor and demand, in name of all the burghers, that the three serving Burgher Councillors – Van Der Poel, Maasdorp and Meijer - would stay in function for another year instead of two of them being replaced as would have been usual in December. Naturally the VOC officials were highly upset about the threatening and intimidating way these events took place. One of them exclaimed: *'is that the way to submit a request?'*¹⁶ Another member of the administration, Independent Fiscal Boers, thought it highly offensive that this demand was made. He was of the opinion that the three Burgher Councillors should have stopped the burgher unrest and protests which preceded this event a long time ago and that they had not done so showed they were not fit for the job in the first place. According to him it was therefore not appropriate at all to let them stay on in their position. However the Governor and other members of the Political Council tried to minimise the gravity of the event and stated that *'this was such a small matter and a curt refusal would only lead to unpleasant incidents'*.¹⁷ They acceded to the burgher demands and the Burgher Councillors could remain in their post. Boers obviously did not agree with the decision.¹⁸ The resolution of the government was announced in the meeting room (*de groote Kamer*) of the Burgher Military Council in the Burgher Watch House. Boers remarked that it was unheard of that there were also *onderofficieren* present at this meeting and to make matters worse: apparently they did not just sit quietly, but commented loudly that the Governor had been forced to agree to the burgher demands *'otherwise blood would have flowed'*.¹⁹

That it was possible for this serious incident to happen illustrated that the VOC must have lost control over the burgher militia. The VOC officials were certainly not

¹⁶ *'is dat een gedoente, om een versoek op die manier te doen?'* - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 96.

¹⁷ *'de saak om welke versogt word, op sig selven van te kleinen belang is om door een rauwelijx afslaan des versoeks somwijlen aanleijding te geeven tot onaangenaame gebeurtenissen'* - WCARS, C 2674, 52 (19.10.1779).

¹⁸ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 103.

¹⁹ *'of dat het bloed zou gekost hebben'* – Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 104.

oblivious to the potential threat of the militia and kept a close watch on them. They did so through the *Burgerkrijgsraad* or Burgher Military Council, which consisted of the highest burgher officers, but was presided over by the head of the Company's garrison. The Council was furthermore convened by the VOC.²⁰ At its meeting the Council recorded all the resignations, changes, appointments and promotions within the burgher militia and dealt with disciplinary matters. The Burgher Military Council itself handled the appointments up to officer rank, but all its decisions had to get final approval of the Council of Policy. All the higher officer appointments (from *adjutant* up to captain and *ritmeester*) were made by the Cape government. And, as will become clear later, often these high burgher officers were closely involved with and linked to Company officials and through this network the government could keep an eye on the burgher militia, much as city councils in Dutch cities did. Yet apparently this was not enough to completely control the burgher militia. What had gone wrong?

The Burgher Military Council was supposed to meet six times a year.²¹ However, judging by the Minute book of the Council this schedule was rarely met.²² In Table 5-1 the meeting schedule of the Council is recorded. The contrast between the number of meetings in the years 1779-1780 and the four preceding years is noticeable. In 1779 the burgher protests erupted in earnest. The three serving Burgher Councillors played a central role in these protests, while at the same time being captains of the burgher militia. Even though the minutes did not reflect any debate about the protest movement, it is more than likely that this matter was discussed – if not during the meetings, then before or after. The burgher militia officers may have insisted that more regular meetings were held according to the VOC instructions, giving the protest leaders more opportunities to discuss their plans for the annual militia review.

²⁰ WCARS, BKR 8, 1-2 (6.9.1768).

²¹ WCARS, BKR 8, 2 (6.9.1768).

²² WCARS, BKR 2.

Table 5-1: Meeting Schedule of the Burgher Military Council, 1768-1780

	Ordinary Meeting	Extra-ordinary Meeting
1769	2	1
1770	2	1
1771	1	0
1772	3	0
1773	1	1
1774	4	1
1775	1	1
1776	2	0
1777	1	0
1778	1	0
1779	4	0
1780	5	0

Less speculative will be to investigate what support the burgher protest movement actually had among the officer corps of the burgher militia. According to clause 1 of the instructions for the Burgher Militia of 1768, the Burgher Military Council had to consist of the captains, lieutenants and ensigns of the burgher companies.²³ There were six companies: two cavalry and four infantry, and each of these companies had one captain (or *ritmeester* in the cavalry), one lieutenant and one ensign (*vaandrig* in the infantry and *cornet* in the cavalry). This meant that eighteen burgher officers were members of the Burgher Military Council, besides the VOC president and the secretary (who was also a burgher).²⁴

The officers of the burgher militia are quite easily identifiable. Burgher officers of high rank would often be mentioned as such in official documents like the Resolutions or Requests. And the Archives of the Burgher Military Council contain records of officers, '*onder officiers*' and other members of the burgher militia.²⁵

²³ WCARS, BKR 8, 1-2 (6.9.1768).

²⁴ Besides the six companies mentioned there were a *Compagnie de Reserves* and a *Compagnie d'Invalides*, which were meant for the retired, invalid and infirm burghers. In April 1781 it was announced by the Governor, who made a special and unique appearance in the meeting of the Burgher Military Council, that from then on the Council would consist of the captains and first lieutenants of the six active companies as well as the two reserve companies. Thus before 1781 that was not the case – WCARS, BKR 2.

²⁵ WCARS, BKR 2 (Minute Book of the Burgher Military Council), BKR 5 (Papers received from the Political Council approving appointment and promotions) and BKR 9 (which contains lists of Burgher Militia members).

Table 5-2 shows the eighteen officers who served at the start of the burgher protests in 1779. It shows that twelve of the eighteen burgher members of the Burgher Military Council and highest officers of the burgher militia, among whom five of the six captains, supported the protest movement. And only one of the five highest officers of the reserve companies did not sign the May 1779 petition. This clearly indicates that there was considerable support for the burgher protesters among the leaders of the burgher militia.

Table 5-2: Burgher protest support among officers of burgher militia, 1779

Company	Rank	Name	Signatory May 1779 Petition
Cavalry	Ritmeester	Johan Hendrik Munnik	Yes
	Ritmeester	Christiaan George Maasdorp (BC)	Yes
	Lieutenant	Dirk Gijsbert Van Reenen	Yes
	Lieutenant	Johannes Dempers	No
	Cornet	Pieter de Waal Arendzoon	Yes
	Cornet	Andries Stephanus Gous	No
Infantry	Captain	Johan Daniel Wieser	Yes
	Captain	Cornelis van der Poel (BC)	Yes
	Captain	Pieter Soermans	Yes
	Captain	Jacobus Alexander La Febre	No
	Lieutenant	Johannes Smuts	No
	Lieutenant	Johannes Matthias Bletterman	Yes
	Lieutenant	Johannes de Waal Arendzoon	Yes
	Lieutenant	Petrus Jesse Möller	No
	Vaandrig	Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen Pieterzoon	Yes
	Vaandrig	George Hendrik Bunding	Yes
Reserves	Vaandrig	Michiel Casparus Eksteen	Yes
	Vaandrig	Johannes Gie	No
	Captain	Johan Anton Hitsman	No
	Vaandrig	Hendrik de Waal	Yes
	Vaandrig	Johannes Guillaume van Helsdingen	Yes
d'Invalides	Captain	Gerrit Hendrik Meijer (BC)	Yes
	Lieutenant	Hermanus van Wiellig	Yes

The 1768 burgher militia instructions furthermore stipulated that each company had to have the following *onder officiers*: four sergeants (*wagtmeester* in the cavalry) and four corporals, making a total of forty-eight *onder officiers*. In Table 5-3 the twenty-four sergeants are listed and again the overwhelming support for the protest movement is visible: sixteen of the twenty-four were among the 404 signatories of the May 1779 petition.

Table 5-3: Burgher protest support among sergeants of burgher militia, 1779

First Name	Last Name	Further Description	Signatory May 1779 Petition	Rank
Johannes Jacobus	Tesselaar		Yes	Wagtmeester
Johannes Gijsbertus	Van Reenen		Yes	Wagtmeester
Cornelis	De Waal	junior/Corneliszoon	Yes	Wagtmeester
Daniel	De Waal	Johan Z	Yes	Wagtmeester
Servaas	Van Breda		Yes	Wagtmeester
Johannes	Brink	Andriesz (Junior)	Yes	Wagtmeester
Francois Pieter	De Necker		No	Wagtmeester
Johannes Poulus	Eksteen	Hendrik Zoon	No	Wagtmeester
Jens	Jansen		No	Sergeant
Franciscus Xaverius	Jurgens		Yes	Sergeant
Dirk	De Jong		Yes	Sergeant
Hendrik	Blankenberg		No	Sergeant
Hendrik	Olweg		Yes	Sergeant
Christoffel Hendrik	Bierman		No	Sergeant
Jan Christiaan	Bremke		No	Sergeant
Jan Smit	Van Dilburg		No	Sergeant
Johannes Mattheus	Hertzog		Yes	Sergeant
Barend	Akkerhuijs		Yes	Sergeant
Matthiam	Hofman		No	Sergeant
Johan Christoffel	Luster		Yes	Sergeant
Diederik	Keppelaar		Yes	Sergeant
Christiaan Pieter	Brand	JohannesZ	Yes	Sergeant
Andries Daniel	Grove		Yes	Sergeant
Johannes Henricus	Verlee		Yes	Sergeant

Of course it is not only the numbers that count when discussing the support for the burgher protesters among the burgher militia. In line with the investigation into the faction dynamics and networks it is important to determine who the officers were and how they were linked together and, above all, if and how they fitted into the complex of the leaders of the protest movement.

The one captain who did not support the protest movement was Jacobus Alexander La Febre. It has already been established that his company, La Febre & Co, was one of the main enterprises that the protesting burghers had complaints about, because it was so closely linked to high Company officials and therefore was seen to have unfair advantages over other burghers. His connections to the VOC establishment were confirmed. It is clear that La Febre was the central figure in a ruling faction consisting of burghers and high VOC officials. When Jacobus Alexander La Febre died in April 1779 it was generally expected that he would be replaced by another senior captain in the burgher militia. Cornelis van der Poel later claimed that Christiaan George Maasdorp should have been appointed in his position. Maasdorp did not get the post however, presumably because of his leading role in the burgher protests, and instead of him the younger and junior Johannes Smuts was promoted to captain.²⁶

The VOC authorities may have wanted to build up their support among the officers of the burgher militia with the appointment of Johannes Smuts. His cousin Catharina Adriana Smuts was married to Lieutenant Johannes Dempers and his niece to Marthinus Johannes Möller, the brother of Lieutenant Petrus Jesse Möller. Neither of these lieutenants signed the May 1779 petition against the government. Petrus Jesse Möller's brothers, Marthinus Johannes and Hendrik Pieter, were in the service of the VOC as was their father, *boekhouder* Hendrik Möller.²⁷ Johannes Smuts had already served a year as Burgher Councillor in 1777. Earlier in the 1770s he was Orphan Master and Commissioner of Civil and Marriage Affairs as well as a member of the Dutch Reformed Church Council. His support of the VOC administration probably served him well, because in 1782 he again became Burgher Councillor and remained in that

²⁶ WCARS, C 1180, 61-62 (12.2.1782).

²⁷ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 584, 904.

position almost uninterrupted until 1790. One of his daughters went on to marry Hendrik Justinus de Wet, while another daughter married the son of Jacobus Alexander La Febre.

There were multiple family relationships among the supporters of the protest movement within the officer corps of the burgher militia.²⁸ Cornelis Van Der Poel was the brother-in-law of Pieter Gerhard Van Der Bijl (married to a Meijburg), whose cousin and former captain Adriaan Van Brakel was the uncle of Christiaan George Maasdorp.²⁹ The senior Captain Pieter Soermans was the uncle of ensign Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen Pieterzoon and the father-in-law of lieutenant Johannes De Waal Arendzoon, who again was the brother of cornet Pieter De Waal. Johannes and Pieter were nephews of ensign Hendrik De Waal and ensign Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen was the nephew of ensign Michiel Casparus Eksteen.

Even outside the officer corps the officers had close family ties with leading protesters. Lieutenant Dirk Gijsbertus van Reenen and his brother, sergeant Johannes Gijsbertus van Reenen, were the sons of the wealthy entrepreneur, protest delegate and Burgher Councillor Jacobus van Reenen. Dirk Gijsbertus was also the son-in-law of protester Johan Willem Hurter, whose son was married to a daughter of former *Heemraad* Gerhardus Munnik, the brother of *ritmeester* Johan Hendrik Munnik. Pieter and Johannes De Waal were brothers-in-law of *Heemraad* Joost Rijnhard Van As.

The protesting officers in the burgher militia formed a majority in the officer corps and had strong familial links with each other. Judging by the October 1779 incident they could count on the support of a large number of militia members. That this was not only due to the existence of family or friendship connections is illustrated by the following episode recounted by the burgher soldier Jan Willem Lutsche to the Council of Justice.³⁰

²⁸ The genealogical data provided here is found in genealogical works, e.g.: Heese and Lombard, *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagregisters* and De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*.

²⁹ This family connection will be further explored in the following chapter.

³⁰ WCARS, C 2674, 55-69 (12.10.1780).

Lutsche was on burgher watch duty on 21 September 1780. The officer in charge on that day was Dirk Gijsbert van Reenen and the sergeant on duty Johannes Beck. Suddenly corporal Hendrik Hermanus Bos entered the Burgher Watch House and started shouting 'Mameluk' and then 'Mameluk Koning'. Lutsche stated that '*a Mameluk according to divine scripture is a liar, a traitor, and a renouncer of God*'.³¹ Clearly this serious insult was directed at Lutsche, because his nickname was Koning.³² And when he told Bos that a *Mameluk* was a rogue, Bos replied: '*Koning you are twice a rogue*'.³³ Shortly after this exchange Bos said to everyone present: '*all worthy burghers must come to the back to hear what I will announce*'.³⁴ He then started to read the statement of the daughter of Carel Hendrik Buijten dag about the events that had befallen her father in January 1779, but he was stopped by lieutenant Van Reenen. That same evening Bos sent his slave to the Burgher Watch House with two bottles wine to '*drink to the health of all worthy Burghers*'.³⁵ The day after this incident Lutsche again reported for burgher watch duty, but was informed by the lieutenants Johannes de Waal and Johannes Matthias Bletterman that he was suspended from duty until further notice. And the next day Jacobus Kruger told Lutsche that he was no longer prepared to act as surety for his watch monies. Lutsche then went to his captain Cornelis van der Poel to seek assistance. Van Der Poel claimed ignorance of the events and refused to look into the matter. When Lutsche left the house of Van Der Poel he met sergeant Johannes Henricus Verlee in the street and greeted him. Verlee did not greet him back, but said '*for such bad guys, as you are, I will not doff my hat*'.³⁶

It seemed that a number of militia members, who were all supporters of the burgher protest movement, conspired to ostracise Jan Willem Lutsche, who was not a protest supporter. What is even more remarkable is that these events did not just involve lower ranked members of the militia, but went right up the ranks to the captain

³¹ '*Een Mameluk is volgens godlijk heijlijker schriftuur, een Verleugenaar der Waarheid, een Verrader, en een van God afgevalen Mensch*' – WCARS, C 2674, 66 (12.10.1780).

³² WCARS, C 2691, 241-242 (12.10.1780).

³³ '*Koning dat ben gij 2 maal*' – WCARS, C 2674, 56 (12.10.1780).

³⁴ '*Alle brave Burgers komen na agteren om aantehooren wat daar door mij zal gepubliceerd worden*' – WCARS, C 2674, 57 (12.10.1768).

³⁵ '*als dan de Gezondheid van alle braave Burgers gedroncken worden*' – WCARS, C 2674, 59 (12.10.1768).

³⁶ '*voor zulke slegte kerels, hoe gij bend, neeme ik mijne hoet niet af*' – WCARS, C 2674, 65 (12.10.1768).

himself. Lutsche himself was extremely shocked and upset by this treatment. He stated that he had been an honest Christian burgher since 1759 and always performed his burgher duties to the best of his ability. Now he was defamed by his fellow burghers and had become an outcast (he was '*verstootten*') from the burgher community. It was for this reason that Lutsche asked the Council of Justice to punish Hendrik Hermanus Bos, whom he saw as the instigator of the insult and injury visited on him.

Apart from the fact that the above case clearly shows that the Cape conflict caused deep divisions within the burgher community, it also indicates that there could be negative and traumatic consequences for burghers who did not support the protest movement. To be excluded from the burgher militia and community like Lutsche must have been a scary prospect for any burgher, because these kinds of corporate memberships were of vital importance to their social identity and networking. Lutsche's social and financial support was suddenly taken from him. In a society where one's identity and survival was so dependent on the group and networks to which one belonged and had access to, this was nothing less than a shattering experience. Against this background it is not surprising that the leaders of the protest movement, who had a firm base in the officer corps of the burgher militia and a keen understanding of the dynamics of burgher society, managed to turn the burgher militia against the Company administration in October 1779.

It has become clear that the three serving Burgher Councillors and protest leaders, while being captains of the burgher militia, had access to a close and wide network of burghers, who supported the protest movement. The burgher militia at the Cape had the same function in organising the burghers as the ones in Dutch cities. It could be argued that this function was even more pronounced at the Cape, because there were no other corporate vehicles available to the burghers to get organised. In the hands of the leaders of the protest faction the burgher militia could be turned into an opposition force. But even though the workings of the protest movement have become clearer, the motives of the burgher protesters and their leaders still remain hidden. The next chapter will shed more light on these.

6. The burgher entrepreneurs

In the previous chapters more clarity has been obtained about who the leaders of the burgher protest movement of the late 1770s in the Cape were and how they managed to manoeuvre themselves into a leadership position from which they could challenge the authority of the ruling VOC/burgher faction. They made use of their public positions and patrimonial connections to fight their battle. But what has not been clearly established yet is the motive of these prominent burghers to undertake their struggle and protest. At first glance strife and turmoil was not in their interest, because as part of the ruling elite they would be more served by peace and quiet. It is also not sufficient to simply state that the protesters were local burghers fighting colonial administrators coming from overseas¹, because the ruling elite consisted of a complex network of VOC officials as well as local burghers. Battle lines within Cape society could not be drawn on a clear-cut basis anymore by the end of the eighteenth century. There is no denying that the fight to protect burgher identity, freedom and rights played a role, but this cannot be the entire reason for the protests. An indication of the ulterior motive for the burgher uprising was embedded in the *Memorie* of 1779, which apart from demands for a firmer regulation of burgher rights also contained a manifest economic content with burghers asking for greater freedom to trade and less competition from the Company itself.² It is therefore important to have a closer look at the entrepreneurial side of the protesters and the role this played in the protests, and to establish if the main motive for the political turmoil can be found here.

The reason why this is important is that in the 1779 *Memorie* the protesters painted a picture of dismal circumstances for the burghers of the Cape settlement, whose economic development was restricted by VOC policies and unfair competition (see chapter 1). However, despite the writers' claims that they presented a fair and reasonable assessment of the situation, the *Memorie* was a highly polemic work and therefore the complaints should not be taken at face value. Pieter van Duin and Robert

¹ Schutte, 'Kompanjie en koloniste', 321.

² See chapter 1.

Ross have convincingly illustrated in *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century* that the Cape economy was vibrant and growing and that Cape farmers and entrepreneurs were operating in a rather favourable economic climate throughout the eighteenth century. They conclude: 'Our argument in favour of a steady, market-based expansion of agrarian production is in itself an important re-interpretation of the economic history of the period, but it has corollaries which stretch far beyond the purely economic realm'.³ In line with this, and based on the evidence presented in the previous chapters, the question must be asked if the disputes of the late 1770s were an attempt to wrest control over a rather prosperous economy from one faction by another. And if so, who, besides the burghers identified so far, were behind this challenge?

The meat *pachters*

The 1779 *Memorie* discussed many aspects of Cape economic life. The eighteenth-century agrarian economy of the Cape had three major components: wheat, wine and cattle farming and one would expect the protest document to deal with all three of these. It is therefore quite remarkable that neither the references to farming and trade in agricultural produce nor any other part of the *Memorie* made any mention of the so-called meat *pacht*. Because of the importance of cattle farming and meat consumption for the Cape economy this was rather a glaring omission. This could hardly have been a co-incidence and this exclusion cannot be ignored. The reasons behind it may reveal more about the driving forces behind the protests and their motives.

In the earlier years of the Cape settlement the Company kept its own cattle farms and the meat needed for Cape Town and passing ships was supplied from there. The holding and maintenance of the cattle farms proved to be too expensive in the long run. The Company did not consider the sending out of employees to buy cattle from the burgher farmers and transport them to the Cape to be the solution to the problem, because that was also costly. The administration furthermore conceded that it was not practical that farmers would deliver the necessary cattle and meat to the Cape

³ Van Duin & Ross, *The Economy*, 89.

themselves. The cheaper and more convenient way out of the problem was to arrange the supply of fresh meat through contractors and to pay a set price for it. Moreover the income from the sale of the contract to supply meat was a form of revenue for the Company, albeit not a major one. The meat *pacht*, or the contract for the delivery of meat to the Company, slaves and the Hospital, was granted by the VOC for a period of five years. The conditions of the contract were that the contractors, the so-called meat *pachters*, had to sell healthy and fresh meat and that it always had to be available. To make sure there was a steady supply of fresh meat the contractors could make use of holding farms, like Groene Kloof, which were situated close to Cape Town. They also had the benefit of access to the Company shambles to slaughter the cattle and did not have to invest money for this.⁴

The meat *pacht* was usually sold in four parts and bought by a group of burghers operating in partner-ship. It was necessary for the contractors to work as a syndicate, because enough funds had to be available to buy cattle from the suppliers. In addition each contractor had to have two wealthy and reputable burghers who would stand surety for him. This was not without risk for these burghers, because the Company would definitely hold them liable should the contractor not be able to fulfil his financial obligations in terms of the contract.⁵

During the eighteenth century the Cape experienced a considerable growth in the production of cattle and meat and in the size of the meat market. There were several reasons for this. The consumption of meat by the Company quadrupled between the 1720s and the 1790s. The population of the Cape settlement increased steadily throughout the eighteenth century and with that the size of the internal market for the meat *pachters*. One of the conditions of the meat *pacht* was that the contractors had the monopoly on the sale of meat to foreign vessels visiting the Cape and after 1770

⁴ Mentzel, *A geographical-topographical description*, 55-56; Ross, 'Die Kaap die Goeie Hoop', 253-254; G. Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen – sy aandeel in die Kaapse geskiedenis tot 1806* (Pretoria 1976), 36-37.

⁵ Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen*, 37-41.

the sales to foreigners increased enormously. Lastly during the 1750s the export of meat products began and this market showed a rising development from then on.⁶

The prosperity of the meat market did not really benefit the producers, the cattle farmers. Because of the meat *pacht* system they could only sell their meat through middlemen and were often forced to accept low prices. Yet apparently they did not manage to get their dissatisfaction with the way the meat trade was organised recorded in the 1779 *Memorie*. The main explanation for this could only be that meat *pachters*, who did not have much to complain about, had managed to prevent this. In this light it may come as no surprise that the foremost author of the *Memorie*, Jacobus van Reenen, the former Burgher Councillor who led the protest delegation to the Dutch Republic in 1779, happened to have made his fortune as a meat *pachter*.

Jacobus van Reenen was born at the Cape in 1727 as the son of the German immigrant Jacob van Reenen, who became a wealthy man because of his extensive business interests in farming, wine trading and property dealing. He was one of the meat *pachters* between 1742 and 1754.⁷ Van Reenen junior was therefore born into a highly placed family and this contributed to his rise in Cape public society. In 1763 he was promoted from cornet to lieutenant in the burgher militia.⁸ During 1768 and 1769 he was an orphan master and in 1769 and 1770 he became a Burgher Councillor. He was again appointed in this position for the years 1776 and 1777. Jacobus van Reenen was an enterprising burgher like his father and he owned a large number of properties and farms. This caused him to request the Political Council in August 1770 to release him from all his burgher duties and positions, because '*the management of his farms and loan farms, some of which were situated far into the interior, keeps him more and more busy*'.⁹ The Political Council granted his request. Between 1772 and 1775 he made an overseas business trip and visited several European countries.¹⁰

⁶ Van Duin & Ross, *The Economy*, 58-80 (71-72, 79); Worden, *Cape Town*, 50-51.

⁷ Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen*, 1-2.

⁸ WCARS, C 141, 320 (15.11.1763).

⁹ '*de beheeringe van desselfs eigendoms- en Leenplaatsen, van dewelke Sommige verre Landwaarts in zijn leggende, thans nog merkelyk vermeerderd zijnde*' - WCARS, C 148, 241-243 (14.8.1770).

¹⁰ Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen*, 5-7; Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 84.

The other reason why Van Reenen asked to be relieved of his burgher duties was that he was one of the meat contractors and was tasked with the buying of cattle by his fellow *pachters*. This would mean, as he stated, that he would be away from the Cape for prolonged periods of time. It was the meat *pacht* which contributed mostly to Van Reenen's prosperity. He first became a meat contractor in 1747 and from then on until 1773 he was virtually uninterrupted one of the *pachters*. The only break in this period was between 1764 and 1768 when the only meat contractor was Jan Plaat.¹¹ However Plaat was a business associate of Van Reenen and it is probable that Van Reenen, being a large cattle farm owner, was one of the main meat suppliers to Plaat.¹²

The partners of Jacobus van Reenen in his last meat contract were his long-time partner Jan Plaat and the two Burgher Councillors Hendrik Oostwald Muller and Jan Serrurier (Table 6.1). Plaat and Muller died before 1779 and were therefore not involved in the burgher protests. The role of Jan Serrurier is not entirely clear. He became the owner of the farm Alphen through his first marriage to Catharina Kretschmar, the widow of the previous farm owner Jan van der Swijn. In 1768 he bought two houses and erven in Block 10 in Cape Town on which he built a warehouse.¹³ In 1778 he became the owner of the wine farm Groot Constantia, but unfortunately his crop was damaged by hail and in December 1778 he sold the farm again to Hendrik Cloete.¹⁴ Serrurier was a prominent member of burgher society and was appointed several times to elder, orphan master and Burgher Councillor. He was also captain of the burgher infantry. In November 1772 he requested to be relieved of all his burgher duties.¹⁵ In 1786 he repatriated to the Dutch Republic with his wife and a daughter.¹⁶ Serrurier's relationship with the Van Reenens was close. After his first wife died he married again on 23 November 1755 with Geertruijda van Reenen, a sister of Jacobus.¹⁷ In 1776 he sold his property in Cape Town to Dirk Gijsbertus van

¹¹ WCARS, C 2716, 112-113 (1.2.1764).

¹² Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen*, 5.

¹³ WCARS, C 146, 160 (18.5.1768).

¹⁴ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 59.

¹⁵ WCARS, C 150, 451 (24.11.1772).

¹⁶ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 194.

¹⁷ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 869, 766.

Reenen, a son of Jacobus.¹⁸ On the other hand, his brother was a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town and his son Jan Jacob a bookkeeper in service of the VOC. This son would later in 1784 succeed Willem Cornelis Boers as Independent Fiscal. Jan Serrurier did not seem to have any other significant involvement with the ruling establishment of VOC officials and burghers. It may have been this position between the two opposite camps which made him decide to remain neutral in the political conflict. In any event he did not sign the May 1779 protest petition, but he was also not found in the anti-protester camp.

Table 6-1: Meat Pachters, 1769-1783

Period of pacht	Pachter	Part	Signatory Petition 1779	Administrative Function	Sureties
1769-73	Jacobus Van Reenen	1	Delegate	Burgerraad	Jan Serrurier Hendrik Oostwald Muller Jan Plaat
	Jan Serrurier	2	No	Burgerraad	Hendrik Oostwald Muller Jacobus Van Reenen Jan Plaat
	Hendrik Oostwald Muller	3	Died 1773	Burgerraad	Jan Serrurier Jacobus Van Reenen Jan Plaat
	Jan Plaat	4	Died 1775	-	Jan Serrurier Hendrik Oostwald Muller Jacobus Van Reenen
1774-78	Johannes Albertus Meijburgh	1	Yes	Heemraad	Cornelis Van Der Poel Jan De Villiers (JPzoon)
	Philippus Albertus Meijburgh	2	Yes	Heemraad	Cornelis Van Der Poel Johannes Albertus Meijburgh
	Cornelis Van Der Poel	3	Yes	Burgerraad	Johannes Albertus Meijburgh Jan De Villiers (JPzoon)
	Jan De Villiers (JPzoon)	4	Yes	Heemraad	Cornelis Van Der Poel Thobias van Dijk
1779-83	Jan Smook	1&4	No	-	Maarten Baatman Christoffel Luster
	Dirk Gijsbertus Van Reenen	2	Yes	-	Jan Willem Hurter Thomas Fredrik Dreijer
	Johannes Gijsbertus Van Reenen	3	Yes	-	Dirk Gijsbertus Van Reenen Jan Smook

¹⁸ H. Fransen & M.A. Cook, *The old houses of the Cape* (Cape Town 1965), 11.

Jacobus van Reenen was not the only protest leader involved in the meat *pacht*. Between 1774 and 1778 a by now familiar figure in the protest movement was found among the contractors: Burgher Councillor and militia captain Cornelis van der Poel. His partners were his former father-in-law Johannes Albertus Meijburgh and former brother-in-law Philippus Albertus Meijburgh. In January 1775 it was recorded by the Political Council that Meijburgh senior had transferred his portion of the meat *pacht* to his brother-in-law Albertus van der Poel, the older brother of Cornelis.¹⁹

That Cornelis van der Poel was a leader and instigator of the burgher protest movement is without doubt. Apart from being a prominent burgher in administrative and militia circles he now appeared as part of an entrepreneurial partnership involved in one of the major business ventures open to burghers at the Cape. This partnership was founded on the close relationships between the Van Der Poel and Meijburgh families. It is possible that they took advantage of the absence of Jacobus van Reenen at the time that the meat *pacht* was auctioned in 1774 to take over this enterprise. It did not last long however, because by 1779 the contract reverted back to the Van Reenen family and stayed there until the 1790s.

It has now been established that two of the main leaders of the protest movement were also meat *pachters*. It was unlikely that they would criticise the meat *pacht* system. Jacobus van Reenen had made his fortune in this enterprise and as one of the main authors of the 1779 *Memorie* he could choose to make no mention of it. The omission is especially significant, because it is a first indication that the burgher protesters were more interested in protecting their own interests rather than those of the entire burgher community as they purported to do.

The farming community

Besides this connection to the meat *pacht*, the role of these two men had further implications for the motives behind the protest movement. Jacobus van Reenen was

¹⁹ WCARS, C 153, 58-60 (10.1.1775).

involved in the meat *pacht* for a period of about twenty-five years during a time that the size of the meat market grew significantly. His influence in that market and the world of the farming community must have been considerable. In chapter 4 it was established that the Van Der Poel family had many connections with the farming community surrounding Cape Town. Both Jacobus van Reenen and Cornelis van der Poel were thus part of a network of wealthy and established farm owners operating in the vicinity of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. The following paragraph describes some of the relationships in this network and in order not to be repetitive, the farmers who were signatories of the May 1779 petition are marked with a *.

Van Reenen and his many sons were themselves considerable land owners and were as such firmly embedded in this community.²⁰ Van der Poel's father was a cattle farmer at the Paardeberg. He was the brother-in-law of Philippus Albertus Meijburgh*, whose wife Hester Anna van der Bijl was a sister of Pieter Gerhard van der Bijl*, the owner of the farm Welmoed. This Van Der Bijl was married to a sister of Meijburgh.²¹ Philippus Albertus was the son of Johannes Albertus Meijburgh*, owner of the wine farm Meerlust since 1757, who again was married to Sophia Margaretha Morkel.²² It was through this marriage that he became the brother-in-law of Wouter de Vos (married to Elisabeth Morkel), the owner of Oude Molen and Libertas,²³ and the Van Brakels.²⁴ Sarah van Brakel, wife of Willem Morkel, was the sister of Adriaan van Brakel*, owner of the farms Brakelsdal and Boute Rivier, and Anna Sophia van Brakel, the first wife of Arnoldus Maasdorp. Their son was Christiaan George Maasdorp*. The wife of Johannes Albertus Meijburgh and the other *heemraad* who signed the May 1779 petition, Joost Rijnhard van As*, were both grand-children of the patriarch of the Van Der Merwe family. Van As was married to Wilhelmina de Waal, a daughter of Arend de Waal and Maria van Breda, and thus related to two of the leading protest families.²⁵

²⁰ See Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen*.

²¹ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 129.

²² Brink, *They came to stay*, 103.

²³ Brink, *They came to stay*, 96.

²⁴ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 589, 92.

²⁵ M. Hall, 'The Secret Lives of Houses: Women and Gables in the Eighteenth-Century Cape', *Social Dynamics*, Vol.20 no.1 (1994), 1-48, 32-38.

The connections described here are set out in appendix 3, which shows some of the foremost farming families and the various links between them. From this illustration it becomes clear that the Meijburgh family, because of its many familial links with other farming families, played a central role in this community. Members of these leading families, apart from being involved in their own agricultural enterprises, often played a prominent role in the administration of the Cape and Stellenbosch districts. It was from these families that the *heemraden*, burgher militia officers, church elders and deacons were recruited.²⁶ Yet several members of these farmer families were signatories of the May 1779 protest petition. At first glance this seemed somewhat contradictory, because as Van Duin and Ross have shown, the 1770s were one of the more lucrative periods for the wine farmers with high demand and an expanding market. It seemed they (like the meat *pachters*) did not have much reason to protest.²⁷

But despite this fortunate set of circumstances many farmers felt that they were still too dependent on and subject to the VOC for a considerable part of their market. Several of them supported the petition with statements complaining about being forced to accept lower prices for their wine than originally agreed to with the Company. And if they objected, they were forced into submission with the threat that they would not be allowed to sell their wine at all. Besides that they were not allowed to export any wine without permission of the Company. Even Hendrik Cloete, although no supporter of the protest movement, complained bitterly that he was not allowed 'to provide his good friends in Europe with a small amount of wine' now that he was the owner of Constantia, because it was forbidden by the administration.²⁸

From the economic demands and proposals of the 1779 *Memorie* it becomes evident that many of these favoured the farmers of the Cape and Stellenbosch districts. It was suggested that the control over the buying of wine and grain and other agricultural produce for export and supply to the Company would be handed to burghers and no

²⁶ R. Ross, 'The rise of the Cape gentry', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (April 1983), 193-217, 208; Brink, *They came to stay*, 103.

²⁷ Van Duin & Ross, *The Economy*, 43-57.

²⁸ 'om mijne goede vrienden in Europa met een half aamtje te kunnen voorsien' - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 59.

longer handled by VOC officials. Another proposal was that the farmers would be able to take occupation of open land between farms if it could be shown that it would not be viable to fit another farm there.²⁹ The plans put forward in the *Memorie* regarding free trade with the Asian territories and the Netherlands were also beneficial to the farmers, because this trade involved the export of agricultural produce and the import of slave labour.

It can be concluded that the protest petition was to a considerable extent set up to assist the farmers. With this in mind it was actually not unexpected to find a large number of them among the burgher protesters. And because many of them belonged to leading and prominent families, it is conceivable that they had influence on the economic proposals made in the burgher *Memorie*. Again it becomes apparent that the protest movement was geared towards the concerns of some, rather than of all the burghers.

The 1779 *Memorie* suggested that the trade and import market was controlled by a small number of companies, like La Febre & Co and Cruijwagen & Co, which were made up of a network of leading burghers and high VOC officials. This oligopoly kept the prices for imported goods, which the farmers needed to purchase, at a high level. This urban elite had furthermore managed to exclude other burghers from their profitable enterprises. For the farming families involved in the burgher protests it was vital that they gained access to the import market. If they could manage to do so, they could control and subsequently lower the prices, which would be of great financial benefit to them. At the same time a greater measure of free trade with the Dutch Republic and Asia would be of advantage to the merchants and entrepreneurs in Cape Town itself. It was here that a significant combination of interests emerged. If the farmers could somehow forge a coalition with burghers in the city, they would have a foothold in Cape Town which would help them in the pursuit of their goals. The role of Cornelis van der Poel and Christiaan George Maasdorp in this endeavour could prove to be crucial.

²⁹ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 54-57.

Van Der Poel and Maasdorp were based in Cape Town and both men were involved in the wine trading business of the large wine farmers. At the beginning of 1785 Van Der Poel was mentioned as *'the private wine buyer'* in a request to the Political Council.³⁰ In 1782 Maasdorp submitted a request to the Political Council in which he stated that he had earned his living for many years with *'the buying and again selling of wine by wholesale'*.³¹ Neither of the men were liquor retailers, which meant that they did not sell wine in bars and inns. Instead they bought wine in large quantities from the wine farmers, transported it to Cape Town and there sold it again to the retailers and innkeepers. They were agents and representatives for the wine farming families. This bond was strengthened further in 1774 when Cornelis van der Poel became a partner in the meat contract together with Johannes Albertus Meijburgh and two of the four *heemraden* of the Stellenbosch district, Philippus Albertus Meijburgh and Jan de Villiers Jan Pieterszoon. During the 1770s Van Der Poel and Maasdorp were placed in leading administrative positions as Burgher Councillors and captains of the burgher militia. When political unrest started brewing in January 1779 the influential farming families like the Meijburghs and the De Villiers', being politically prominent in the outer districts themselves, may very well have recognised that two of their close associates were in the ideal position to form a connection between country and city and thus to represent and promote their interests.

Another invaluable contribution to the process was made by Jacobus van Reenen. Apart from being a wealthy member of the farming community himself, he was the founder of a family dynasty with links to both the rural and urban entrepreneurial elite. On 4 December 1746 Van Reenen married Maria Franke. She was the daughter of Berlin immigrant Johannes Franke and Cape born Catharina Verweij.³² Her mother descended from a farming family and was the aunt of Cornelis, Johannes, Gijsbert and Daniel Verweij, all four signatories of the 1779 protest petition and farmers in the Cape

³⁰ *'den particulieren Wijnkooper'* - WCARS, C 168, 192 (22.2.1785).

³¹ *'het inslaan en weeder uijtverkoopen van Caabse Wijnen bij de groot maat'* - WCARS, C 162, 198-202 (23.4.1782).

³² Wagenaar, *Johannes Gysbertus van Reenen*, 8-9.

District.³³ Maria's father however was a shoemaker residing in Cape Town. She therefore must have been familiar with both city and country life. It seemed that the Verweijs played a significant part in Maria Franke's life, because she had eleven children with Jacobus van Reenen and at least six of these were named after her siblings: Johannes Gijsbertus, Daniel, Catharina Gesina, Dirk Gijsbertus, Jacobus Arnoldus and Gijsbert.

Maria Franke's youngest sister, Christina, was the wife of Thomas Frederik Dreijer, the messenger of the Burgher Council and a signatory of the protest petition, as was his brother, Johannes Augustus, whose daughter Sara Johanna was married to a nephew of Maria Franke, Johannes Hendrik Franke.³⁴ This Franke owned a house and garden called *Uijtvlugt* in Cape Town and was also one of the 404 protesters. In the 1780s he became one of the important *brandmeesters*.

Perhaps one of the most significant connections between the Van Reenen family and the city entrepreneurs of Cape Town came about in 1775 when Jacobus' son, Dirk Gijsbertus, married the eldest daughter of Jan Willem Hurter, Aletta Catharina. Hurter was at the centre of a world of urban-based alcohol *pachters* at the Cape and a major entrepreneur himself.

Urban support: the alcohol *pachters*

Before explaining why the matrimonial union between a Van Reenen and a Hurter carried so much weight, it is necessary to give some background information about the alcohol *pachters*. As early as at the end of the seventeenth century it became clear that the alcohol trade at the Cape was potentially very profitable. The settlement was growing and because it was a stop-over for ships travelling between Europe and Asia there were always many visitors. The Cape administration gave several burghers the right to retail liquor, which they had to buy from the Company. In the beginning the system was still somewhat unregulated, but before long the VOC administration

³³ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 1021-1022.

³⁴ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 178-179, 233-234.

realised that stricter controls were necessary to prevent smuggling and to create a stable source of revenue for the Company. From the Dutch Republic the administrators were familiar with a system whereby certain privileges, e.g. the right to sell liquor, were *verpacht* (rented out). From the late 1670s the right to sell a certain type of alcohol was auctioned to the highest bidder on an annual basis and this arrangement remained one of the cornerstones of the Cape economy for more than one hundred years. The successful bidders and buyers of the alcohol licences were known as the alcohol *pachters*.³⁵ The yearly auction of the alcohol licences happened on 31 August (unless this fell on a Sunday) and was a big event on the business calendar of the Cape. One of the more well-known visitors to the Cape in the eighteenth century, Otto Mentzel, described the auction process in lively and amusing detail.³⁶

There were two striking and closely related elements which characterised and were part and parcel of the alcohol *pacht* system: vast sums of money had to be paid (and could be earned) and without the right relations it was difficult to get a firm footing in the liquor trade. Most *pachten*, and especially the more lucrative ones, were sold at several thousands of guilders, while the general *pacht* to sell Cape wines was auctioned for tens of thousands of guilders. Clearly this was not meant for people who could not afford it. And that leads to the second element. Each *pachter* had to provide two burghers, who would stand surety for the payment of the *pacht* monies and who would sign the contract together with him. This was a serious affair and not just a formality. Sometimes the Governor would even interview would-be *pachters* about their sureties to ascertain if they were viable prospects. The Company regularly took *pachters* to court if they were late with their payments and should it happen that they were not able to pay, the Company did not hesitate to go after the sureties next and would try to get the unpaid monies out of them.³⁷ The administration was highly motivated to do so, because the income from the sale of the alcohol *pachten* was the

³⁵ For a detailed description of the evolution and working of the alcohol *pacht* system see G. Groenewald, *Kinship, Entrepreneurship and Social Capital: Alcohol Pachters and the Making of a Free-Burgher Society in Cape Town, 1652-1795* (PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2009), 15-47. See also G. Groenewald, 'A Cape bourgeoisie?: Alcohol, entrepreneurs and the evolution of an urban free-burgher society in VOC Cape Town', in: N. Worden (ed.), *Contingent Lives. Social identity and material culture in the VOC world* (Cape Town 2007), 278-304, 279.

³⁶ Mentzel, *A geographical-topographical description*, 50-53.

³⁷ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 34-35; Groenewald, 'A Cape Bourgeoisie?', 284-285.

single most important form of revenue of the Cape government throughout the eighteenth century. In the decade 1730 to 1739 almost 31% of the of the total net income of the Cape settlement came from the sale of the alcohol *pachten*. And by the last decade of VOC rule this percentage was 38%.³⁸ Therefore standing surety was not to be taken lightly and it was normally only done for people who one knew well and trusted. In fact, Mentzel observed that the sureties were '*usually partners in the transactions, for the lease is nearly always taken by a syndicate of four or more persons*'.³⁹

The two aspects of the alcohol *pacht* are most significant. It meant that a *pachter* either had to be fairly wealthy himself or had to have sufficient and reliable financial backing. Therefore relations, both with financiers and with sureties, were of utmost importance in this business. Because trust was a key aspect in these bonds, they were often forged between family members or close friends. It was vital for alcohol *pachters* to build up a tight social network and the matter to be investigated is how these networks operated during the political troubles of the late 1770s.⁴⁰

An examination of the data regarding the alcohol *pachters* and their sureties for the period 1775-1779, the years immediately leading up to the eruption of the burgher protests, reveals important information. For the purpose of this investigation the six most profitable and expensive *pachten* were selected. These were the rights to sell brandy (which was sold in four parts or *perceelen*), the licence to sell wine to foreign ships, and the most lucrative one: the general *pacht* to sell Cape wine. It must also be noted that these *pachten* gave the holder the right to sell alcohol in Table Valley and therefore they were directly related to Cape Town.⁴¹ At the annual auction the right to sell Cape wine was auctioned in four parts and contracts were signed with the successful bidders and their sureties. After that however, the Company auctioned the right to sell Cape wine as one lot, the general *pacht*. If the successful bidder on this

³⁸ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 45-46; Van Duin & Ross, *The Economy*, 51.

³⁹ Mentzel, *Geographical-topographical*, 52.

⁴⁰ The relationships of the alcohol *pachters* and the importance of social capital for economic success and the shaping of burgher identity and society at the Cape during the VOC period is the subject of the groundbreaking thesis of Gerald Groenewald referred to earlier.

⁴¹ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 31, 205-206.

contract offered a higher price than the total of the four parts, the contracts for the individual parts became null and void.⁴² Therefore one might find several *pachten* to sell Cape wine in the archival records, but these are not taken into account here. Consequently the number of ten burghers active at the annual auction in the pursuit of the most profitable *pachten* between 1775 and 1779 is reduced to five. Notably these men were five of the six alcohol *pachters* who dominated the liquor retail trade in Cape Town during the 1770s.⁴³ Table 6-2 shows these five *pachters*, how many *pachten* they bought in this period and who their sureties were.

The five *pachters* formed two distinctive groups. The Roep/Schreuder group includes Johan Casper Holtman and Johan Christoffel Luster, Jan Andries Bam and Johannes Smook. All of these men were active at the *pacht* auctions, but only Roep and Schreuder managed to acquire some of the more important *pachten*. More significant is that all these men were standing surety for both Roep and Schreuder, while these two also backed each other. Roep and Schreuder and their sureties evidently formed one of the syndicates that Mentzel referred to.

The second group around the *pachters* Baatman, Melk and De Kruger used a different set of sureties. It is furthermore noteworthy that they seemed to be able to call on a wider and more varied collection of backers. Only Holtman appears in both groups, but was used just once by the second.

The most striking difference between the two groups is that all of the men in the first group, except for one, belonged to the 404 signatories of the May 1779 protest petition, while the majority of the second network of *pachters* and their sureties did not sign the protest petition. A closer inspection of the five *pachters* will shed more light on the reasons for this difference.

⁴² Mentzel, *Geographical-topographical*, 51-52; Groenewald, *Kinship*, 31-32.

⁴³ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 132.

Table 6-2: Alcohol Pachters, 1775-1779

Pachters	Number of pachten	Signatory Petition May 1779	Sureties	Number of times used by pachter	Signatory Petition May 1779
Johan Jacob Schreuder	5	Yes	Johannes Roep Johannes Casper Holtman Johan Christoff Luster Jan Smook Jan Andries Bam Jacobus Johannes Vos Ferdinand Christiaan Geijer	2 3 2 1 1 1 1	Yes Yes Yes No Yes Yes Yes
Johannes Roep	3	Yes	Johan Jacob Schreuder Jan Smook Johan Christoff Luster Jan Andries Bam	1 3 1 1	Yes No Yes Yes
TOTAL	8				
Maarten Baatman	5	No	Michiel Cornelis Berning Carel Fredrik Geere Johannes Esselaar Johannes Verlee Martinus Lourens Smidt Willem De Kruger Dirk Groeneboom	3 2 1 1 1 1 1	No No No Yes Yes No No
Willem De Kruger	10	No	Jurgen Stadelaar Jan Adam Ziedel Johan Godfried Bottiger Maarten Baatman Jan Peter Voges	2 8 6 2 2	No No No No Yes
Martin Melk	7	No	Johannes Casparus Holtman Fredrik Lehman Hendrik Cloete Jan Bernard Hofman Maarten Baatman Jacobus Johannes vd Berg	1 1 3 4 3 2	Yes No No No No No
TOTAL	22				

It was in the 1730s that a family dynasty started to develop around the control of the brewing and selling of malt beer. Aletta de Nijs and her second husband Hans Jurgen Honk established a prosperous business as brewers of malt beer on their farm De Papenboom. For four decades the malt beer *pacht* was in the hands of burghers linked to De Nijs: her sons-in-law, grandsons-in-law and close associates. This network of *pachters* included Jan Jacob Schreuder and Johannes Roep.

Roep was a German immigrant, who became a burgher in 1760. The following year he married Johanna Elisabeth Staf, a granddaughter of Aletta de Nijs. It is likely that Roep entered the alcohol *pacht* world and particularly that of the malt beer because of this marriage. In 1767 he bought his first *pacht* and that was the licence to sell malt beer. From then until the late 1770s he remained involved in the alcohol trade and bought a great number of *pachten*.

Schreuder was also a German immigrant and became a burgher in 1754. Originally he was a carpenter, but in 1761 he invested in his first alcohol licence and over a period of twenty-nine years he owned thirty-nine *pachten* among which was the malt beer *pacht*. By the late 1770s he was firmly on the side of the protest movement: it was on his garden that the first protest meetings of the burghers were held in June 1778.

Schreuder was not directly family related to the De Nijs dynasty, but he was supported regularly by sureties with strong links to the family. One of these was Jan Willem Hurter. Like Roep and Schreuder, Hurter was a German immigrant. He became a burgher in 1762. In 1755 he married Barbara Honk, the daughter of Aletta de Nijs and Hans Jurgen Honk, and he inherited the malt beer brewery at De Papenboom after Honk's death. Hurter bought the malt beer *pacht* only seven times over twenty years, but because he possessed the brewery he was the sole provider of beer to all the malt beer *pachters*. On his farm he also contracted as *bijtapper* (assistant tavern keeper) for the *pachters* of the brandy licence for Rondebosch and False Bay, one of whom was Johannes Roep and another Johannes Casparus Holtman, a regular Schreuder surety.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 137-144.

The link between the three men is evident: they were all Germans and arrived at the Cape in the same period. Roep and Hurter both married into the malt beer brewers family and all three of them belonged to a network of men who regularly supported each other as sureties. The man at the centre seemed to have been Jan Willem Hurter. He expanded the successful enterprise built by Aletta de Nijs and Hans Jurgen Honk and brought his family to prominence in Cape society. He was appointed to Commissioner of Civil and Marriage Affairs in 1775 and 1776.⁴⁵ Another sign of his important status was that in 1775 his eldest daughter Aletta Catharina married a son of the prominent Jacobus van Reenen, Dirk Gijbertus. This bond was strengthened further in 1779 when Hurter stood surety for his son-in-law when this one ventured into the meat *pacht*.

It may very well be that this alliance between the Hurters and the Van Reenens marked the beginning of a shift for this group of alcohol *pachters*. In the early 1770s there was more fluidity between the two groups of alcohol *pachters* described above. Baatman used Schreuder as surety and vice versa. Roep was used once as surety by Melk. Among the seven sureties used by Schreuder between 1770 and 1774 there were only two, Roep and Holtman, who would sign the protest petition in 1779. Yet after 1775 a clear divide appeared between the two groups, as described earlier, and it is not unlikely that a highly influential burgher as Jacobus van Reenen may have drawn these *pachters* and their associates into his political camp.

The connection between the Van Reenens and Jan Willem Hurter was not the only link Hurter had with the wealthy farmers who supported the protest movement. The relations of Hurter and his support of the protest movement may very well have contributed to the fact that several of his children went on to marry members of some major Cape burgher families in the early 1780s. Catharina Hurter became the wife of another Van Reenen scion, Sebastiaan Valentijn. Elisabeth Maria Hurter married Arend Munnik and Johan Wilhelm Hurter became the husband of Martha Maria Munnik, a

⁴⁵ WCARS, C 152, 400-403 (6.12.1774).

daughter of Gerhardus Munnik, the brother of Arend. Another daughter of Gerhardus, Jacoba, was married to yet another Van Reenen brother, Jacobus Arnoldus.⁴⁶

Gerhardus Munnik had been a *heemraad* in Stellenbosch, and his other brother, Johan Hendrik, was a *ritmeester* of the burgher cavalry in the Cape District, who would become a burgher councillor in the 1780s. Both Gerhardus and Johan Hendrik were signatories of the May 1779 petition. Gerhardus was in 1779 also the *pachter* of the brandy licence for Rondebosch and False Bay and must have had business dealings with Jan Willem Hurter. The Munniks were furthermore known as a family which owned several farms. Jan Willem Hurter's second eldest daughter became the wife of Servaas van Breda, a son of Michiel van Breda, the wealthy owner of the farm Oranjezicht. Servaas himself was the owner of several farms and a prominent burgher in Cape Town.⁴⁷ His brother, Pieter van Breda, inherited Oranjezicht from their father in 1777, and owned six other properties in Cape Town. He was married to Catharina Sophia Meijburgh, a daughter of Johannes Albertus Meijburgh.⁴⁸ Pieter van Breda was therefore a brother-in-law of protest leader Cornelis van der Poel and both he and brother Servaas signed the protest petition.

Jan Willem Hurter could be regarded as a leading figure in a business and family network which included the alcohol *pachters* Johannes Roep and Johan Jacob Schreuder. It is therefore plausible that they would choose to follow his lead in siding with the protest movement. It explains that the network of sureties surrounding Roep and Schreuder were all signatories of the May 1779 petition. This argument will be strengthened later in this chapter when we will meet several of these sureties again. It is also clear that Hurter was a foremost member of an intricate network of leading urban entrepreneurs and wealthy farmers involved in the burgher protests, who were looking after their interests and were ready to take on the ruling faction.

⁴⁶ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 347, 613.

⁴⁷ N. Penn, *The forgotten frontier: colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's northern frontier in the 18th Century* (Cape Town 2005), 170.

⁴⁸ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 96-97, 615.

A neutral faction

A closer look at the three alcohol *pachters* who did not support the protest movement reveals an interesting aspect to the political landscape described so far. These three – Maarten Baatman, Willem de Kruger and Martin Melk – supported each other as sureties, but their network of supporters seemed to have been wider and more varied than that of Schreuder and Roep. They did not limit themselves to fellow Germans, but also associated with Dutch and Cape born burghers.⁴⁹

Undoubtedly the most successful of the three was Martin Melk. He owned a large number of farms and was one of the foremost wine and cattle farmers of the Cape settlement. He was furthermore involved in other enterprises like lime-burning and brick-making. When his wife Anna Margaretha Hop died in 1776 Melk's estate was valued at the enormous amount of 240,000 Cape guilders. In the late 1760s Melk was *heemraad* of the district of Stellenbosch.⁵⁰ Martin Melk was an alcohol *pachter* for eighteen years, who especially later in his career invested in and controlled the most lucrative and expensive General Cape Wine licence. The sureties who supported him in his endeavours were mostly other Cape and Stellenbosch farmers, while his most regular backer was Hendrik Cloete. During his early days at the Cape Melk had worked as a farmhand for the father of Hendrik Cloete and a close personal and business relationship had developed.⁵¹ This relationship may have contributed to Melk's position in the burgher protests.

Hendrik Cloete was a wealthy farmer in his own right. He was of the same age as Martin Melk and had a distinguished political and business career. During the 1760s and 1770s he was *heemraad* of Stellenbosch. He owned the farm *Nooitgedacht* and in 1778 he became the owner of *Groot Constantia*. Besides these farms he possessed property in Cape Town.⁵² As a descendant of one of the older burgher families Cloete

⁴⁹ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 154-156.

⁵⁰ G.A. Cockrell, 'Die lewe van Martin Melck (1723-1781)', in: *Kleio 33 2001*, 86-106; J. Hoge, *Personalities of the Germans at the Cape, 1652-1806* (Argief-jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis 9 Kaapstad 1946), 265-267.

⁵¹ Groenewald, *Kinship*, 156.

⁵² Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 43, 55-56; WCARS, BRD 25, MOOC 23/9.

was related to many of the other families, like the Van Der Bijls, Laubschers, Morkels and Eksteens. But he also had contacts with VOC officials and farmers further away in the interior. He seemed to have been quite well informed about events happening all over the Cape settlement, which was apparent from his correspondence with his friend Hendrik Swellengrebel junior, the son of the former Cape governor Swellengrebel.⁵³

This friendship sheds light on Cloete's position in the political turmoil at the Cape of the late 1770s and 1780s. In chapter 2 we saw that Hendrik Swellengrebel tried to convince the delegation of Cape burghers to submit a *Memorie* to the *Heeren XVII* which was without any personal attacks on VOC officials. Swellengrebel was not unsympathetic to the cause of the Cape burghers, but he felt that a more objective approach would achieve better results. At the time his attempts to influence the events came to naught. However Swellengrebel's interest in Cape matters continued and he compiled a document containing the arguments and proposals to improve the condition for the burghers at the Cape which, according to him, the protesters should have submitted to the VOC directors. In July 1783 he sent this document to Hendrik Cloete with an explanation and instructions that the most prominent burghers and farmers, who had not been involved in the burgher protests, would submit it as a request to the Political Council. And that is precisely what happened. On 14 February 1784 a request was submitted to the Political Council by the former Burgher Councillors Johannes Meijndertz Cruijwagen and Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen, Hendrik Cloete and a further eleven prominent residents of the Cape and Stellenbosch districts.⁵⁴ The request was virtually word for word copied from the Swellengrebel document.⁵⁵

In essence the request was not very different from the proposals made by the protesting burghers in the 1779 *Memorie*. It gave an overview of the economic conditions at the Cape and the consequences for the burghers. The adverse economic situation was blamed on the large increase in the number of farmers and the resulting

⁵³ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 16-17.

⁵⁴ WCARS, C 160, 142-145 (14.2.1784); Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), Bylae E, 323-329.

⁵⁵ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 196-201.

larger production for which there was no market available. The upswing of the early 1780s was considered only temporarily as it was founded on increased activity as a consequence of the wars between European countries. The request asked the Cape administration to provide a more structural solution for the economic problems, among which the opening of the market for the burghers and a system of free trade. Most significantly and completely in Swellengrebel's spirit, the request did not contain any negative personal attack on or comment about Cape VOC officials.⁵⁶

The request was thus well-received by the members of the Political Council, who stated in 1786 that the first three signatories of the request belonged to the wealthiest, oldest and most important families of the Cape burgher community. They also said that all the writers '*had always loathed the behaviour and actions of another part of the Residents*'. This observation could only be regarded as a reference to the Cape protesters.⁵⁷ Apparently these rich and important burghers did not want to associate themselves with the protest movement. Cloete himself commented to Swellengrebel in 1789 how '*I and my family always opposed the Cape patriots*', and complained that he was ostracised because of his stand.⁵⁸

What is clear from this set of events is that there was a group of wealthy burgher farmers which took a more or less neutral position between the protest faction and the ruling one made up of leading burghers and Company administrators. This non-aligned faction agreed to a large extent that the situation at the Cape needed to change, but they did not want to antagonise the government. Hendrik Swellengrebel gave a possible explanation for this position. Being wealthy, these farmers were able to sustain themselves better through an economic recession. They were furthermore not as much victimised by harsh actions of the Independent Fiscal as many of the protesters. And lastly, most of these top-ranking burghers were, either by marriage or

⁵⁶ Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte* (1967), 150-151.

⁵⁷ 'zig egter altoos afkeerig hebben getoond van het gedrag en de handelwijze bij een ander gedeelte der Inwoonderen gehouden' – WCARS, C 171, 138 (19.4.1786).

⁵⁸ 'ik en mijn famielie de Caapse patriotte altoos zoodanig teegen sprak' - Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 17.

in another way, connected to the administration.⁵⁹ But something not mentioned by Swellengrebel was that they were also related to the farming community. Just one example of this was that Hendrik Cloete was also a grand-child of the Van Der Merwe patriarch as were protesting *heemraad* Joost Rijnhard van As and the wife of Johannes Albertus Meijburgh. These prosperous farmers were positioned in between the squabbling factions, but could afford not to choose sides.

Looking back at the close and long-standing social and business relationship between Hendrik Cloete and Martin Melk and their very similar background, it comes as no surprise that the last one was not a supporter of the protest movement. Had he still lived he may very well have been one of the signatories of February 1784 request, because he was one of the wealthiest burghers at the Cape and because of his close friendship with Cloete. What is interesting is that apparently the supporting network of Melk and Cloete, which included the alcohol *pachters* Baatman and De Kruger and their various sureties, followed the same route as their influential patrons and did not sign the May 1779 protest petition.

More entrepreneurial support for the protest faction

What we have seen so far is that a group of wealthy cattle and wine farmers situated close to Cape Town in the Cape District and around Stellenbosch was a major force behind the burgher protests. They were eager to protect and promote their economic interests. They built a web of family connections and business relations stretching from the rural areas to the urban environment and aimed to use this network to challenge the powerful ruling faction consisting of burghers and VOC officials. Time and again Jacobus van Reenen and Cornelis van der Poel came to the fore as central figures in this protest faction.

The alliance which was formed between the protesting farming families and some of the alcohol *pachters* was not the only connection between the rural community and

⁵⁹ Schutte, *Swellengrebel*, 17-18. The first signatory Johannes Meijndertz Cruijwagen was the brother of the maligned Gerrit Hendrik Cruijwagen.

the urban entrepreneurs of Cape Town. The protest faction gained support among burghers involved in all kinds of trades and crafts. This was due firstly to business relations at the Cape becoming more complex in the second half of the eighteenth century. Everybody was dependent on the Company for the general welfare of the settlement and survival; poorer burghers were dependent on the wealthier ones for work; the people in town were dependent on the farmers for a supply of produce and food, while the farmers needed services offered by urban based burghers. And secondly, with a burgher population present at the Cape for several generations, kinship connections had become more widespread and intricate. These social and economic relationships had consequences for the political events of the late 1770s. This can be illustrated by using the example of some trades and occupations about which more information is available: bakers, smiths, and teachers.

The burgher bakers at the Cape settlement were kept on a tight leash by the VOC administration. Every year in January they had to apply and pay for a licence to operate as a baker.⁶⁰ The baker business was subject to various conditions. They were obliged to sell bread to the '*komende en gaande man*' (one and all), the weight of the bread was standardised and each baker had to stamp the bread he baked so that it could be identified if something was found wrong with it.⁶¹ The number of burgher bakers operating in Cape Town was fixed and was from time to time increased following the growing population. In the minutes of the Burgher Council it was stated in December 1782 that there were twenty licensed burgher bakers in Cape Town. The Burgher Councillors did not think this number enough to cope with the larger demand of the town and they requested the Political Council to increase the number to twenty-six in 1783.⁶²

Whether there were also twenty bakers in Cape Town in 1779 is not known, but of fifteen bakers it has positively been established that they were operating in the town

⁶⁰ According to several requests to the Political Council.

⁶¹ WCARS, C 168, 52-59 (11.1.1785).

⁶² WCARS, BRD 1, 94 (1.1783).

in that year (Table 6-3).⁶³ Eleven of these signed the protest petition of May 1779. The protesting bakers all belonged to the middle and higher income group according to the criteria established in chapter 3 for the *Quotisatie Rolle* of 1783. Therefore they fitted into the profile of the protesters as self-employed and relatively wealthy burghers. But there was more to the involvement of these eleven bakers in the protests.

The licensed bakers seemed to have been organised. In a request to the Political Council of twenty-four licensed bakers, dated August 1783, they complained among other things about '*some private individuals who did not belong to the body [organisation] of Bakers*'.⁶⁴ This organisation could have been born from the desire of these bakers to stress that they were the licensed ones and to prevent that people without the proper licence would be allowed to bake or sell bread. The above request illustrated that the bakers on occasion made representations to the government as a unified body. The baker body was the only example of a guild-like organisation in Cape Town. If the bakers were organised in this fashion it could very well be that, when a decision needed to be taken on an important matter, for instance on the joining of the burgher protest movement, this was done as a collective. And that would explain why eleven of the fifteen bakers, a large majority, were signatories of the May 1779 petition. The significance of this cannot be underestimated. Bread was a staple food and the bakers could have used their central role in the general well-being of the population as a bargaining tool.

It is likely that the leaders of the protest faction were well aware of the value of the baker support and they used their relations with them to draw them into their camp. Assuming that the bakers discussed their decision as a group, it is probable that certain members took the lead and that this ranking position was based on wealth. There are three bakers among the eleven signatories who were taxed high amounts according to the 1783 *Quotisatie Rolle*, namely eighteen guilders, and these were Jacobus Johannes Vos, Ferdinand Christiaan Geijer and Johannes Andries Bam. It cannot be regarded as a

⁶³ This was confirmed by looking at the requests of bakers for licenses and the minutes of the Burgher Council where the activities of bakers were discussed on occasion.

⁶⁴ '*zommige particulieren niet onder het lighaam der Bakkeren behoorende*' - WCARS, C 1184, 126-131, 127 (5.8.1783).

coincidence that these three were also sureties for the alcohol *pachters* Johan Jacob Schreuder and Johannes Roep and thus were part of the network of urban self-employed burghers supporting the protest movement. The fact that they were accepted as sureties furthermore shows that they were considered to be trustworthy and upstanding burghers and not ones 'of a lesser kind' as the VOC officials wanted to portray the protesters.

Table 6-3: Licensed burgher bakers in Cape Town, 1779

Last Name	First Name	Taxatie-Lijst 1773 (Rd)	Quotisatie Rol 1783 (f)	Petition May 1779
Bam	Johannes Andries	10	18	Yes
D'Aillij	David Benjamin		6	No
De Jong	Hendrik	10		Yes
De Necker	Adriaan	20	6	Yes
Ekhard	Jan Hendrik	30	21	No
Geijer	Ferdinand Christiaan		18	Yes
Grove	Andries Daniel		9	Yes
Jansen	Jens	15	15	No
Laubscher	Pieter Rijno	20		Yes
Lijbrand	Sijbastiaan		9 (12)	Yes
Loedolf	Christiaan	20	18	No
Smit	Andreas		9	Yes
Stapelberg	Frans Hendrik	10	12	Yes
Truter	Hendrik Andreas	10	9 (12)	Yes
Vos	Jacobus Johannes		18 (27)	Yes

Apart from belonging to the *pachter* network each of these three bakers had other connections and characteristics fitting the protester profile. Geijer was also a farmer and owned the farm Rheezicht close to Roodebloem just outside Cape Town.⁶⁵ Both Bam and Vos had an entrepreneurial spirit. Bam would become an alcohol *pachter* himself in the early 1780s. His brother, Johan Christiaan, and brother-in-law, Johan Hendrik Thomasse, were signatories of the May 1779 petition. Jacobus Johannes Vos became a contractor for the delivery of building material for the new hospital in 1781 and later in the 1780s he was mentioned as a lime burner operating between Roodebloem and Sonnebloem.⁶⁶ He was the brother of Johan Hendrik and Hendrik Vos, who too signed the protest petition. His marriage to Johanna Margaretha Mohr

⁶⁵ Hoge, *Personalia*, 112.

⁶⁶ WCARS, C 160, 177-178 (10.10.1781).

made him the son-in-law and brother-in-law of two more protest signatories, Hans Diederik and Marx Nicolaas Mohr.⁶⁷

It could very well be that his link with the Vos brothers and the Mohr family was held against Michiel Christiaan Vos, the youngest of the brothers, when he requested permission to go to Holland to study in the beginning of 1780. That was also his own interpretation of the events that followed. On his first attempt he was plainly refused permission by the Governor. On his second attempt the Governor did not address him as '*as a burgher of this country, but as the most common fiend*'.⁶⁸ He was told that he could only go if he took his wife with him. Vos did not want to do that, because it would be too costly and he did not expect to be away that long. He did not give up and on his third try he took his father-in-law, who told the Governor in no uncertain terms that he would seek redress from the Burgher Councillors should he not agree to the request. According to Vos the Governor was wary of more complaints about his administration reaching the *Heeren XVII* and gave in: Vos was finally allowed to leave the Cape.⁶⁹

Besides Vos, Geijer and Bam there were at least two other burghers among the bakers with a notable background.⁷⁰ Andries Daniel Grove's* grandfather had been a farmer and his father was a *heemraad*. His stepmother, who married his father when he was only ten years old, was Elisabeth de Waal, a sister of Johannes* and Pieter* de Waal. His aunt was married to Nicolaas Godfried Heijns*, one of the burgher delegates of 1779. Grove's own partner was Elisabeth Henning, a sister of Paulus Henning*, and of Aletta Henning, who again was the wife of Cornelis de Waal*. His family furthermore had kinship relations with the Van Der Bijls*.⁷¹ Then there was Pieter Rijno Laubscher*, who farmed on Roodebloem and whose family was related to important families like

⁶⁷ WCARS, MOOC 14 – 67 – [; vol 14 ; 15]; De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 1078-1079.

⁶⁸ '*een burger van het Land, maar als den gemeensten Booswicht*' - M.C. Vos, *Merkwaardig verhaal aangaande het leven en de lotgevallen van Michiel Christiaan Vos* (Amsterdam 1824), 25.

⁶⁹ Vos, *Merkwaardig verhaal*, 25-26; WCARS, C 158, 82 (10.2.1780).

⁷⁰ As before the supporters and signatories of the May 1779 protest petition are marked with a *.

⁷¹ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 272, 313.

the De Waals and the Eksteens among others.⁷² Lastly it must be mentioned that bakers Hendrik Andreas Truter* and Adriaan de Necker* were brothers-in-law.⁷³

A further illustration of the argument that the burgher protest movement was supported mainly by self-employed entrepreneurs is the example of the burgher smiths. One of the main complaints of the protesting burghers was that certain Company employees had all kinds of excessive advantages over the burghers. In their meeting of 13 August 1778 the incumbent Burgher Councillors - Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen, Cornelis van der Poel and Adam Gabriel Muller – dealt with a request from a number of burgher smiths. The request stated that the smiths were disadvantaged by Company servants, because some of them owned or rented shops from where they conducted forges. The burgher smiths had to pay high prices to the Company for iron, while these Company employees could get material at lower prices and thus charge less for their work. Because they suffered greatly from this form of unfair competition the burgher smiths asked the government to put a stop to this practice and prohibit Company employees from owning businesses like this or use others, like Chinese or Javanese or even other burghers, to act as a front for them.⁷⁴ This request basically summarised the complaints of the burghers formulated in the later protest documents, specifically the 1779 *Memorie*.

The request was signed by nine smiths (Table 6-4). Two of them, Johannes Daniel and Jochim Thijsse⁷⁵, died before May 1779. Of the seven that were left, five signed the May 1779 petition. However one of the two who did not, namely Dirk Beukers, did supply a statement which declared that Fiscal Boers had ordered an iron gate for his property from the Company smiths at prices that burgher smiths were not able to compete with, which showed that he disadvantaged the burgher trade.⁷⁶ The

⁷² De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 495; WCARS, MOOC 6/1, vol.2, 42.

⁷³ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 996.

⁷⁴ WCARS, BRD 1, 75-76 (13.8.1778). Even though the Burgher Councillors decided that they would present the request to the Governor, there is no record in the Resolutions of the Political Council that the government dealt with this matter.

⁷⁵ Jochim (Joachim) Thijsse is not in the database. This is because he only registered to become a burgher in or after 1773 and died in 1779, thus before 1783. His father Paulus was a smith. De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 999.

⁷⁶ WCARS, C 2673, 36; C 2689, 120. The statement was dated 5 May 1779.

statement was made together with Jan Hendrik Ehlers and Beukers could very well be regarded as a supporter of the protest movement. It is also noteworthy that all the smiths who signed the 1778 request and the protest petition belonged to the middle income group according to the criteria established in chapter 3 for the *Quotisatie Rolle* of 1783, except for Coenraad Luijt.

Table 6-4: Burgher smiths Cape District, 1778

First Name	Last Name	Signatory Petition May 1779	Taxatie-Lijst 1773 (Rd)	Quotisatie Rolle 1783 (f)
Johannes Pieter	Voges	Yes	10	12
Jan Hendrik	Ehlers	Yes		15 (18)
Dirk	Beukers	No		8
George	Guerijn	No		9
Frans	Jordaan	Yes		9
Johannes	Daniel	(Died Jan 1779)	10	
Coenraad	Luijt	Yes		3
Jan Ernst	Heijdenreijk	Yes		6
Jochim	Thijsse	(Died 1779)		

A different kind of entrepreneurs were the burgher teachers. During the eighteenth century a burgher had to request the Political Council permission to start a school and until 1777 these requests were passed on to the council of the Dutch Reformed Church. The church council then investigated if the burgher had a proper and Christian lifestyle and if he was competent enough to teach. From 1777 onwards this inquiry was undertaken by the so-called *Raad van Skolarchen* or Council of School Wardens. This council was formed by a member of the Political Council, the two church ministers and an elder of the church council. Education was rather limited. The schools had to have a solid religious (read Dutch Reformed) component, and besides that most taught reading, writing and some calculus. However if a Cape resident wanted to provide their children with a better education, he had to send them to the Dutch Republic. Because of the high cost factor this was reserved for the wealthier among them. There are several requests to the Political Council of burghers who wanted to send their sons to

the Republic for education and this was an indication that the burghers concerned were generally well-off.⁷⁷

The reason why the teachers are categorised as entrepreneurs is that they were not employed by the government, but derived their income from the school fees paid by their pupils. The more pupils they had, the more money they made and therefore it would have been important to them to have a good reputation as a teacher which would attract more pupils to their school. The teachers were also allowed to have other jobs to supplement their income.⁷⁸

Between 1714 and 1782 there were about thirty schools at the Cape. The number of schools in Cape Town grew from four in 1737 to eight in 1779 as a consequence of the increasing population. Thanks to the fact that the teachers had to apply for permission before opening a school there is a good record of the burghers who were teachers in 1779.⁷⁹ From Table 6-5 it becomes clear that the teachers were not very wealthy, but they did belong to the middle income group. It is furthermore evident that the majority of the teachers (six of the eight) supported the protest movement. This is somewhat surprising since they were so dependent on the VOC government for their appointments and approval. On the other hand it could be that the reason for their support was found in the fact that they were entrepreneurs like many of the burgher traders and craftsmen and that they wanted to show solidarity for a group of burghers that they essentially felt part of or connected to.

It is noteworthy that one of the teachers in 1779 was Johannes Henricus Redelinkhuijs. In chapter 1 he was identified as one of the burghers who were deeply involved in the protest movement from May 1778. He had close personal ties with some of the protesters. On 9 July 1780 he married Maria Elisabeth de Villiers. She was a niece of two of the foremost signatories of the May 1779 petition, the former *heemraden* Jan

⁷⁷ P.S. du Toit, *Onderwys aan die Kaap onder die Kompanjie 1652-1795* (Cape Town and Johannesburg 1937), 94-101.

⁷⁸ Du Toit, *Onderwys*, 93.

⁷⁹ Du Toit, *Onderwys*, 111-118.

and Jacob de Villiers.⁸⁰ Several of his other family members were also married into the De Villiers family. His sister Susanna married on the same day as he did and became the wife of protest supporter Evert Heugs.⁸¹ Redelinkhuijs' mother Johanna Hermina de Vries was a sister of Abraham de Vries, who was married to Cornelia Gesina Duuring, a sister of Daniel Nicolaas Duuring, one of the other teachers who supported the protest movement.⁸²

Table 6-5: Burgher teachers, Cape Town 1779

First Name	Last Name	Year of appointment	Signatory Petition May 1779	Taxatie-Lijst 1773 (Rd)	Quotisatie Rolle 1783 (f)
Daniel Nicolaas	Duuring	1770	Yes	5	4
Job	Jacobsen	1754	No	5	6 (3)
Albert	Joosten	1776	No		6
George	Knoop	1772	Yes	5	9
Petrus Johannes	Meijer	1764	Yes	10	6
David Hendrik	Mellet	1765	Yes	5	8
Johannes Henricus	Redelinkhuijs	1777	Yes		6 (9)
Willem	Wijdeman	1776	Yes		9

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to show that the burgher protests of 1779 were led by a faction of wealthy farmers and urban entrepreneurs, who had done well for themselves and even had links to the VOC administration. In order to protect their interests they needed to get more control over economic and political structures. That control was in the hands of a faction of rich burghers with close associations to key VOC personnel, which had managed to exclude others and had nestled itself close to the centre of power at the Cape. From the middle of the 1770s the protest faction began to try and gain access to the political and economic power centre. Firmer bonds between farmers and well-placed urban entrepreneurs were formed and widespread networks of support were built up. The urban entrepreneurs welcomed the assistance to get more

⁸⁰ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 1039-1044.

⁸¹ De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 762, 312.

⁸² De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, 182, 1084.

advantages for their skills and trade ventures. The efforts of the challengers came to an outburst in 1779 and a formal *Memorie* was presented to the directors of the Company. It asked for certain economic reforms, but was careful not to attack those systems which formed the basis for the financial success of the protest leaders, e.g. the meat *pacht* or even the alcohol *pacht*. The *Memorie* alleged that the burgher community was in a deplorable state and burgher rights were trampled on. It blamed VOC officials exceeding their authority while colluding with some wealthy burghers. However while the protest leaders tried to portray themselves as champions of a free burgher community, they were in fact ready to take the place of the burghers in the ruling faction. Thus when they wrote in Article 17 of the third part of the *Memorie* that *'in general the delivery of all products from the Cape to the Company should be contracted to burghers'* without any Company interference, they meant that they should be those burghers.

Conclusion

In the middle of the seventeenth century the directors of the VOC reluctantly agreed to the establishment of a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope. This sentence summarises the most often used manner in which early Dutch presence at the Cape is described. Even though the directors had given in to settlement at the Cape, they did not want it to go much further than that. There were even early plans to literally cut the Cape off from the African continent by digging a canal.¹ The initial hesitation soon changed to resolve and determination, although it may be argued that the VOC leadership were following economic and social realities rather than steering developments. VOC employees asked for permission to be released from their contracts and be settled as free burghers. Some stayed in town to ply their trades and crafts, others went to the rural areas as farmers and as they moved further inland so did the Cape frontiers. In Cape Town the wooden fort built by Commander Van Riebeeck was replaced by an impressive stone structure known as the Castle. No visitor to Cape Town today can look at this massive building and have any doubts about the intentions of the early Dutch settlers. No more wavering, they came to stay.

With settlement came government and organisation, which could facilitate the aims of the settlers. For the VOC the Cape station would only be attractive if it could be cost-effective and served its intended purpose as a half-way post. The burghers wanted to be able to make a living and survive. To achieve these goals the Cape settlers started organising their settlement in ways that were known to them, because they did not come to the Cape to start a new utopian or unique society. It was obvious that not everything could be exactly the same as in the Republic. After all, the Cape was not a traditional Dutch city, but a VOC governed settlement. Therefore the Company had to make sure it stayed in control and it designed the government in such a way that it would serve this objective. The Company needed the burghers' co-operation, but it also intended for the burghers to be subject and obedient to Company rule. Besides this, not all burghers came from the Dutch Republic, but they came from various parts

¹ Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire*, 246.

of Europe where they were used to different circumstances. Notwithstanding these challenges and differences the Cape settlers set out to create their version of European Dutch society with many of the same or similar social, political and judicial aspects.

Over time the burghers developed their own identity and emphasized their burgher status within Cape society. The view that the Cape settlement was part of the Dutch empire and the Dutch Republic prevailed among the burgher population and came to the fore during protests at the Cape at the end of the 1770s. The protests were undertaken by burghers and they made clear from the outset that they were burghers of a colony belonging to the United Netherlands. According to them this meant that they had the same status and rights as burghers of cities in the Republic. Despite attempts by the VOC administration to claim otherwise, a comparison between practices surrounding Cape and Dutch *burgerschap* (chapter 2) demonstrates that this was a justifiable standpoint. *Burgerschap* at the Cape was obtained in very similar fashion to cities in the Republic, the Cape burghers swore the same burgher oath as Dutch burghers with the one variation that they also swore loyalty to the VOC, and Cape *burgerschap* offered much the same economic, political, judicial and social advantages as Dutch *burgerschap*. It must be acknowledged that there were differences, but then it must also be pointed out that even within the Dutch Republic itself *burgerschap* practices differed from city to city depending on local circumstances. Despite the unity, there was no uniformity, but this made the case of the Cape burgher protesters even stronger, because it showed that the Cape had developed its own identity within and as part of the Dutch empire.

An important aspect of Cape *burgerschap* was that it was a first-rate status which could be obtained by all residents, no matter whether they were from European, Asian or African descent. The main determinant was not race, but that one had to be born free. Thus free blacks could not become burghers, because in most cases they were freed during their lifetime, but their children could. Even here the Cape situation was not essentially different from that in the Dutch fatherland, where many cities opened their doors to foreigners from other European nations, especially in cases where the Dutch thought they could gain from their expertise. There was one notable difference

from Dutch cities: at the Cape one could also apply for *burgerschap* if one had fulfilled a contract with the VOC. It seems that eighteenth-century Cape society, despite being subject to rather strict rules of engagement, was much more open to social mobility than many have assumed.

A further indication of the resemblance between the Cape and Dutch cities was the manner in which the protest actions of the late 1770s were undertaken. They followed a procedure which was customary and tested in the Dutch Republic as well as in the overseas settlements over a period of almost two centuries. The burgher protesters organised themselves and submitted petitions, after which a lengthy process of negotiations between protest movement and authorities ensued. This was a well developed, established and accepted practice.

This had important implications for the nature of the Cape burgher protest movement. This was not a revolutionary movement of burghers aiming to overthrow the VOC administration and establish a new form of government. Even though the first documents spread around Cape Town in 1778 may have wanted to call the burghers to an uprising to break the chains of oppression (chapter 1), this initially did not find fertile ground among the burgher population. There is no denying that the protesting burghers stood up for their rights, but they did so according to a long-standing tradition and without attacking the authority of the VOC administration or Dutch government. On the contrary, they clearly wanted to demonstrate that they were loyal subjects, who were committed to the common good of the community (chapter 3). They did not attack the VOC government en bloc, but expressed that they only criticised the behaviour of certain individuals within that administration. This was most apparent from the fact that they did not lay any complaint against the governor, the highest authority of the VOC at the Cape, to show that they had no intention of wanting to replace the rightful government of the Cape.

This furthermore illustrates that the burghers involved in the protest movement were not a desperate, uninformed and disorganised band of residents at the bottom of Cape society as some VOC officials described them. The protesters formed an organised and

restrained movement, which managed to have a considerable impact on both the political landscape as well as social life at the Cape. It is therefore more likely that the protesters were found among the middle and higher layers of the burgher population. This is confirmed by a more in-depth investigation into the individual protesters in comparison to the rest of the burgher population (chapter 3). Financial data clearly show that a majority of the protesting burghers were relatively well-off. And at the forefront of the protest movement was a considerable section of the burgher elite in the form of Burgher Councillors, *heemraden*, high officers of the burgher militia and other members of the various administrative colleges present at the Cape. These burghers were likely to be familiar with the well established manner of protesting used in the Dutch Republic and it was in their interest to keep matters as peaceful as possible. Here again one finds a connection with the Dutch Republic, where many protests occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but these were generally reserved and non-violent.

This similarity is of great significance to the understanding of and insight into the conflict at the Cape. In cities in the Dutch Republic there were often clashes between networks or factions consisting of leading burghers with close family and business relations. What was at stake for the various factions was economic and political control in their cities. Factions dominated political life in the Netherlands. It was almost unavoidable that this Dutch practice of faction forming and conflict was copied at the Cape, where there were so many parallels with the Dutch political world. The investigation into the networks and connections of the Burgher Councillors (chapter 4) confirms that there were two different and opposing groups among these prominent burghers. The one group had established long-term bonds of kinship and enterprise with leading VOC officials. Their main business interests were located in Cape Town itself. And because the burgher members of this faction were so connected and dependent on this association, they did not protest against the administration. The protesting burgher councillors, Cornelis van der Poel, Christiaan George Maasdorp and Gerrit Hendrik Meijer, were also linked to the ruling establishment, but at the same time they were members of a network of burghers which was primarily based in the rural areas surrounding Cape Town.

During the 1770s the three above-mentioned burgher councillors had not only made an administrative career, they also rose through the ranks of the burgher militia. The militia were set up, like so many other institutions in the Cape, according to Dutch example. Three aspects of the militia were particularly relevant to the Cape situation. Firstly, as an organising force they played a major role in shaping burgher identity to the extent that being a militia member was synonymous with having burgher status. Secondly, city governments had not much to fear from the burgher militia as long as they managed to keep them under control, but the militia could turn into a powerful opposing force if they fell in the wrong hands. And lastly, the leaders of the burgher militia were the same burghers which were recruited by the Dutch patriciate (and the VOC) to serve in the city administration. The combination of these factors regularly resulted in a volatile situation in times of political trouble in Dutch cities as well as overseas settlements and the Cape proved to be no exception, as is described in chapter 5. It is demonstrated that the officer corps of the burgher militia was dominated by members with various kinship connections to the protest faction. And the case of Jan Willem Lutsche illustrates that the consequences for a burgher who was not on the side of the protesters could be devastating, because they could be ostracised from their support network within the burgher community.

By the late eighteenth century Cape politics were dominated by an intriguing and highly developed complex of networks and two different and opposing factions. What is not yet evident is why burghers, belonging to the highest echelons of Cape society, would be in conflict with each other and with members of the VOC administration, on which they were to a high degree dependent. Clarity on that is only obtained by a further examination of the protesters, which reveals that many belonged to major farming families, like the Van Reenens, Meijburghs, Van Bredas and De Waals (chapter 6). Even though these families had done well for themselves, they were excluded from certain trade and economic advantages by the ruling faction consisting of leading urban burghers and VOC officials. During the 1770s they tried to gain access to the centre of economic power. They did so by forging bonds with many prominent urban

entrepreneurs. Some leading alcohol *pachters* were crucial in these attempts, but so were other trades- and craftsmen in the city.

By the end of the 1770s the various pieces began to fall in place for the protesting farming families. They had forged close kinship ties with key urban entrepreneurs. Their main allies and representatives had obtained top positions in city administration as well as burgher militia. The central figure in the ruling faction, Jacobus Alexander La Febre, was losing his fight against disease. The challengers were ready to make their move, and then the VOC administration made a huge mistake by arresting Carel Hendrik Buijtendag in January 1779. Suddenly the opportunity presented itself to exploit a lingering undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the government among the burghers and use it to their advantage. To gain the support of the burgher population the protest faction combined their economic demands with appeals for strengthening and extension of burgher rights.

In the end, the protesters were not very successful in their endeavours, because the VOC directors denied most of their demands. Besides the fact that most of these went against official VOC mercantile policy, this could also very well be attributed to their lack of connections with powerful allies in the Republic. The major official within the VOC, First Advocate Frederik Willem Boers, was a cousin of a fierce Cape opponent of the protesters, Independent Fiscal Willem Cornelis Boers. Other leading figures within the VOC and the Republic, although perhaps sympathetic to the cause of the protesters, rather aligned themselves with a group of wealthy and influential farmers and businessmen at the Cape. Some of these were not on the side of the protest faction, because they had connections with VOC officials and had access to economic and social advantages. Despite their considerable support at the Cape, the protesters could not gain ultimate political and economic control without vital assistance in the Republic itself. However the political turmoil did lead to the removal of certain VOC officials and a weakening of the ruling faction.

What the events surrounding the burgher protests of the late 1770s demonstrate is that Cape society by the end of the eighteenth century was a complex one. The

population had increased tremendously and many families had been at the Cape for a number of generations. This also meant that more and stronger connections had been formed between burghers and between burghers and VOC officials. The basis for these connections could no longer be reduced to a single defining factor like religion, occupation, race or nationality. What had become important for one's place in Cape society was one's status. Even though it must be acknowledged that the various groups were stratified, as burgher one belonged to a first-rate status group and as such one had at least the possibility to have access into the intricate complex of relationships formed by kinship and marriage. These networks again were based on a common interest in economic and personal advancement.

In this regard the Cape was not unlike cities in the Dutch Republic where burghers had formed the same kind of networks and belonging to these was crucial to survival. What was perhaps different about the Cape settlement was that here there was less distinction between the urban environment of Cape Town and the surrounding rural areas with regards to *burgerschap*. Cape *burgerschap* was not limited to city residents, but included those rural dwellers who qualified for *burgerschap*. This may have facilitated the relative ease with which bonds were formed between members of farming families and urban entrepreneurs, which resulted in the major protest movement as it occurred at the Cape.

The Cape settlement must be acknowledged as an integral part of the Dutch Republic and empire. And developments in Cape Town and indeed the Cape settlement in the eighteenth century should be regarded from the perspective of seventeenth and eighteenth century history, both of the Cape as well as of the Dutch Republic. Only by doing so one fully appreciates and understands the social and political dynamics of that period. At first glance this may seem a logical observation, but in the context of South African historiography, where especially the protest movement of the late 1770s is often looked at from a nineteenth or twentieth century viewpoint, this is certainly not a gratuitous statement. When the proper historic perspective is applied, the protests change from a freedom struggle with Patriotic overtones to a rather regular fight for the spoils between factions, one of which occurred so often in cities in the

Dutch Republic. The protests can then also be distinguished from a second wave which occurred later in the 1780s, when they had a more distinct ideological aspect with protest leaders connecting with the Dutch Patriot movement and being more anti-government inclined.

Appendix 1: the 404 signatories of the May 1779 Petition¹

First Name	Last Name	Further Description	Function	Notes
Cornelis	Van Der Poel		Burgerraad	
Christiaan George	Maasdorp		Burgerraad	
Gerrit Hendrik	Meyer		Burgerraad	
Philippus Albertus	Meijburg		Heemraad	
Jan	De Villiers	Jan Pietersz	Heemraad	
Joost Rijnhard	Van As		Heemraad	
Hendrik	Louw		Heemraad	
Jan Daniel	Wieser		Capitein	
Pieter	Soermans		Capitein	
Albert	Van Der Poel		oud Capitein	
Johannes Albertus	Meijburg		oud Heemraad	
Gerhardus	Munnik		oud Heemraad	
Thomas Fredrik	Dreijer		Ouderling	
Harmanus	Van Wullig		Lieutenant	
Dirk	Van Reenen		Lieutenant	
Hendrik Oostwald	Eksteen	Pietersz	Vaandrig	
Arend	Van Wullig		Brandmeester	
Pieter	Van Breda		Burger	
Johannes Jacobus	Tesselaar		Burger	
Daniel	Verweij		Burger	
Jan Hendrik	Munnik		Ritmeester	
Pieter	Laubscher		oud Heemraad	
Johan Willem	Hurter		oud Commissaris	
Michiel Casparus	Eksteen		Vaandrig	
Pieter	De Waal		Cornet	
Fokke	Hendriks		Commissaris	
Johannes	Verweij		oud Diacon	
Pieter Gerhard	Van Der Bijl		Cornet	
Nicolaas	Laubscher		oud Lieutenant	
Jan Gijsbert	Van Reenen		Burger	
Servaas	De Kok	de Jonge	Burger	
Christiaan Pieter	Brand		Burger	
Gijsbert	Verweij		Burger	
George Hendrik	Bunding		Burger	
Jan Adam	Hartman		Burger	
Johan Hendrik	Vos		Burger	
Jacobus	Heuning		Burger	
Servaas	De Kok	de Oude	Burger	
Daniel	De Waal		Burger	
Johan	Hasse		Burger	
Cornelis	Verweij		Burger	
Johannes Henricus	Verlee		Burger	

¹ WCARS, C 2665, p. 2-9. This is a transcription of the original written version of the petition. All the names are recorded in the order, manner and spelling they appear in this document. The only change made has been the ordering of the names in columns and adding the notes.

Hendrik	Olweg		Burger	
Simon Petrus	De Kok		Burger	
Dirk	De Jong		Burger	
Barend Hendrik	Toutte		Burger	
Gerrit Jacobus	Romond		Burger	
Johannes Andries	Grundeling		Burger	
Matthijs Pieter	Toutte		Burger	
Petrus Johannes	Meijer		Burger	
Martinus Lourens	Smith		Burger	
Johan Pieter	Voges		Burger	
Paul	Bester		Burger	
Gerrit	Coetsee		Burger	
Frans	Bestbier		Burger	
Godlieb Andries	Willer		Burger	
Franciscus	Jurgens		Burger	
Pieter	Le Roes	de Jonge	Burger	
Johan	Roode		Burger	
Hendrik	Heijns		Burger	
Siebert Jacobsz	Wiid		Burger	
Michiel Adriaan	Smits		Burger	
Johannes Henricus	Redelinghuis		Burger	
Christiaan Michiel	Akkerman		Burger	
Adriaan	Smuts		Burger	
Andries	Smith		Burger	
George	Knoop		Burger	
Jacobus Johannes	Vos		Burger	
Johannes	Pietersen		Burger	
Servaas	Van Breda		Burger	
Diederik	Keppeler		Burger	
Hendrik	Brand		Burger	
Floris	Brand	de Jonge	Burger	
Paulus	Heuning		Burger	
Johannes Henricus	Frank		Burger	
Jacobus	Tesselaar		Burger	
Johannes	Jurgens		Burger	
Jeremias	Auret		Burger	
Tobijas	Mostert	Cornelisz	Burger	
Michiel	Smuts		Burger	
Jacobus	Hegter		Burger	
Simon Johannes	Vaasen		Burger	
Jan	Van Coeverden		Burger	
Daniel	Duuring		Burger	
Michiel	Pents		Burger	
Christiaan Valentijn	Berning		Burger	
Fredrik Simon	Berning		Burger	
Johannes	Roep		Burger	
Johan Jacob	Meijer		Burger	
Johannes Casparus	Lotter		Burger	
Gregorius	Pents		Burger	
Johan Hendrik	Ehlers		Burger	
Fredrik	Bota		Burger	
Johannes	Thoorn		Burger	

Hans Diederik	Mohr		Burger	
Dirk	Van Schalkwijk		Burger	
Harmanus Pieter	Van Harrenstee		Burger	
Johannes Jacobus	Le roes		Burger	
Johannes Henricus	Coetzee		Burger	
Christoffel	Luster		Burger	
Harmanus	Van der Schijff		Burger	
Hendrik Lambertus	Warneken		Burger	
Hendrik	De Jong		Burger	
Nicolaas	Van Wulligh		Burger	
Andries Daniel	Groee		Burger	
Frans	Jordaan		Burger	
Hendrik	De Waal		Burger	
Fredrik August	Reedel		Burger	
Casper	Holtman		Burger	
Willem	Wijdeman		Burger	
Pieter	Terron		Burger	
David Hendrik	Mellet		Burger	
Hermanus	Eijkenstroom		Burger	
Ferdinand Christiaan	Geijer		Burger	
Luder	Jonkhoff		Burger	
Johannes	Brink	Andriesz	Burger	
Willem Godfried	Lotter		Burger	
Johannes Jacobus	Le Roes	de Jonge	Burger	
Everd	Heug		Burger	
Hendrik	Smuts		Burger	
Marcus	Aegidius		Burger	
Matthias	Van Eijssen		Burger	
Johannes	Visser		Burger	
Jacobus	Jordaan		Burger	
Johan Casper	Morgendaal		Burger	
Jacob	Grijffenstein		Burger	
Jan Geert	Bantjes		Burger	
Michiel	Vlotman		Burger	
Barend	Akkerhuijsen		Burger	
Johannes	Knoets		Burger	
Johannes	Zeederlouw		Burger	
Johan Georg	Kramert		Burger	
Pieter Rijno	Laubscher		Burger	
Johan Christiaan	Ende		Burger	
Harmen	Fredriks		Burger	
Johan Valentijn	Weeber		Burger	
Johan Otto	Uslar		Burger	
Coenraad	Luijt		Burger	
Dirk	Weesberg		Burger	
Jan Jacob	Schreuder		Burger	
Andries	Heijns		Burger	
Hendrik Lodewijk	Sies		Burger	
Carel Willem	Tielman		Burger	
Louis	Mostert		Burger	
Johannes Theodorus	Vlotman		Burger	
Johannes Andries	Van Graan		Burger	

Jacobus	Van Laar		Burger	
Hendrik Johannes	Nieustadt		Burger	
Johannes	Laros		Burger	
Cornelis	Hagedoorn		Burger	
Christiaan Adolph	De Wit		Burger	
Johannes Stephanus	Joubert		Burger	
Willem	Deeg		Burger	
Sebastiaan	Lijbrand		Burger	
Johannes Michiel	Wolfaard		Burger	
Abraham	a de Haan		Burger	
Jacob	Eksteen		Burger	
Johan Michiel	Elser		Burger	
Coenraad	Werner		Burger	
Frans	Sabresser		Burger	
Abraham	Schiettekate		Burger	
Daniel	Russouw		Burger	
Pieter	Zeeman		Burger	
Johannes Braun	Olkers		Burger	
Carsten	Muller		Burger	
Hendrik	Vos		Burger	
George Willem	Hoppe		Burger	
Johannes Andries	Bam		Burger	
George Hendrik	Teubes		Burger	
Christiaan Fredrik	Herbst		Burger	
Joseph	Wolmerands		Burger	
Daniel	Rood		Burger	
Fredrik	Lubenberg		Burger	
Johannes	Cotze		Burger	
Hendrik Oostwalt	Laubscher		Luijtenant	
Hendrik Harmanus	Bos		Burger	
Casper	Hofman		Burger	
Johan Fredrik	Wiesner		Burger	
Adriaan	De Nikker		Burger	
Dirk	Coetzee		Burger	
Godfried	Mokke		Burger	
Johannes	Lavekade		Burger	
Johannes Martinus	Hartman		Burger	
Johannes	Combrink		Burger	
Nicolaas	Prinsloo		Burger	signed with x
Jan Gijsbert	Olivier		oud Diacon	
Pieter	De Villiers	Davidsz	oud Diacon	
Pieter	Strijdom	de Oude	oud Diacon	
Albertus Petrus	Mijburg		Burger	
Abraham	Russouw		Burger	
Jacobus	Louw	Adriaansz	oud Diacon	
Cornelis	De Waal		Burger	
Jacobus	Grundeling		Burger	
David	De Villiers	Pietersz	Burger	
Pieter Jacob	De Villiers		Burger	
Cornelis	Van Nieuwerk		Burger	
Hendrik	De Nikker		Burger	
David	Malan	de Oude	oud Ouderling	

Stephanus	Malan		Burger	
Melt	Van Der Spuij		Burger	
Johannes	Van Nieuwerk		Burger	
Jan Jurgen	Cotze		Burger	
Nicolaas	Van Nieuwerk		Burger	
David	Malan	Davidsz	Burger	
Adriaan	Louw	Adriaansz	Burger	
Matthijs	Greef		Burger	
Albert	Van Nieuwerk		Burger	
Anthonij	Vlotman		Burger	
Hendrik Albertus	Van Nieuwerk		Burger	
Gerardus Cornelis	Mos		Burger	
Philippus	Le Roux		Burger	
Godlieb Rudolph	Opperman		Oud Cornet	
Christiaan	Gunter		Burger	
Thomas	Knusen		Burger	
Jan	Van Schoor		Burger	
Johannes Mattheus	Hertzog		Burger	
Jacobus	Bierman		Burger	
Jan Ernst	Heijdenreich		Burger	
Barend	De Klerk		Burger	
Johannes	Lambregts		Burger	
Hendrik Nicolaas	Cotze		Burger	
Arnoldus	Basson		Burger	
Reijnier	Basson		Burger	
Johannes	Basson	Jansz	Burger	
Johannes	Van Schalkwijk		Burger	
Johannes	Mostert	Jansz	Burger	
Johannes	Mostert		Burger	
Pieter	Mostert		Burger	
Arend Jacobus	Keulder		Burger	
Hendrik	Engeler		Burger	
Albertus Johannes	Meijburg		Luijtenant	
Johannes	De Waal		Luijtenant	
Petrus	De Villiers	Abrahamsz	Burger	
Johannes	De Villiers		Burger	
Johannes Jacob	Hendriks		Burger	
Hendrik	De Leeuw		Burger	
Harmanus	Bosman		Burger	
Harmanus	Bosman	de Jonge	Burger	
Stephanus Francois	Joubert		Burger	
Daniel	Bosman		Burger	
Jacobus	Roud		Burger	
Abraham	De Villiers	Jansz	Burger	
Hendrik	De Vries		Burger	
Johan George	Seijffert		Burger	
Pieter	Sellie		Burger	
Josua	Le roux		Burger	
Roelof Andriesz	Zuidhof		Burger	
Johannes Christiaan	Roode		Burger	
Johan Christiaan	Dennert		Burger	
Carel Hendrik	Rigter		Burger	

Stephanus	Jordaan		Burger	
Jacobus	Jonker		Burger	
Francois	De Toit	de Oude	oud Heemraad	
Jacob	De Villiers	de Oude	oud Heemraad	
Jan	De Villiers	de Oude	oud Heemraad	
Jacob	de Marais		oud Heemraad	
Pieter	De Villiers		oud Diacon	
Francois	Du Toit		Burger	
Jacob	Marais	de Jonge	Burger	
Pieter Eduard	Houman		Burger	
Jan	Roux		Burger	
Ignatius	Marais		Burger	
Johannes	Nieuwoud		Burger	
Adriaan	Louw	Jacobsz	Burger	
Johannes Stephanus	Du Toit		Burger	
Jacob	De Villiers	Jansz	oud Diacon	
Johannes	De Villiers		Burger	
Andries Stephanus	Du Toit		Burger	
Willem Petrus	Van Nieuwerk		Burger	
Jacob	De Villiers	Jacobsz	Burger	
David	De Villiers	Jansz	Burger	
Sijbrand	Vermeulen		Burger	
Daniel	Krijnow		Burger	
Johannes	Minnaar	de Jonge	Burger	
Petrus Johannes	De Villiers		Diacon	
Pieter	Marais	Pietersz	Burger	
Johannes Hercules	Viljoen		Burger	
Willem	Marais		Burger	
Johannes Nicolaas	Buijs		Burger	
Johannes Jacobus	De Goede		Burger	
Jan	Minnaar	de Oude	Burger	
Pieter	Jonker		Burger	
Philippus	Minnaar	Jansz	Burger	
Johan Georg	Kilian		Burger	
Francois	Roos		Burger	
Johannes	Roos		Burger	
Jan	Sellie		Burger	
Johannes Arnoldus	Ruijgrok		Burger	
Johannes	De Villiers	Jansz	Burger	
Carel Christoffel	Frik		Burger	
Guilliam	Du Toit		Burger	
Philippus Bernardus	Wolfaard		Burger	
Stephanus	Du Toit	Andriesz	Burger	
Josua Charel	Sellie		Burger	
Philip	Minnaar		Burger	
Francois	Du Toit	de Jonge	Burger	
Daniel	Retief		Burger	
Petrus Jacobus	Malherbe		Burger	
Pieter	Sellie		Burger	
Gidion	Malherbe		Burger	
Daniel	Malan	Davidsz	Burger	
Willem	Lategaan		Burger	

Andries	Lategaan		Burger	
Benjamin	Weijght		Burger	
Gabriel Johannes	Hauptvliet		Burger	
Daniel	Le Roux	Pietersz	Burger	
Charel	Du Plessies	Jansz	Burger	
Francois	Rossouw		Burger	
Francois	Retief	de Jonge	Burger	
Jacob	De Villiers	Abrahamsz	Burger	
Marthinus	Akkerman		Burger	
Hendrik Andries	Truter		Burger	
Jan Guiliam	Van Helsdingen		Vaandrig	
Johannes	Dreijer		Burger	
Pieter	Swart		Burger	signed with x
Jacobus	Smit	Jaspersz	Burger	
Pieter	Jacobsz	Danielsz	Burger	
Hans Jurgen	Du Preez	Jansz	Burger	
Schalk Willems	Van der Merwe		Burger	
Carel	Van Heeren		Burger	
Jacob	Pieterse		Burger	
Johan Adam	Meij		Burger	
Pieter Willemse	Van Heeren	Willemsz	Burger	
David	Van der Merwe		Burger	
Jacobus Johannes	Pienaar	Jansz	Burger	
Petrus	Van der Merwe		Burger	
Schalk Willems	Van der Merwe	Pietersz	Burger	
Jan Willem	Warnik		Burger	
Isaac	Van der Merwe		Burger	
Nicolaas	Van der Merwe		Burger	
Joachim	Wilke		Burger	
Louis	Cotze		Burger	
Jan	Theron		Ouderling	
Petrus	Prenaar		Burger	
Pieter	Du Plessies		Burger	
Francois	De Wet		Burger	
Willem	Lubbe		Burger	
Jochim Hendrik	Maartens		Burger	
Willem	Du Toit	de Oude	Burger	
Fredrik Hendrik	Coenradi		Burger	
Willem	Louw		Burger	
Jacobus Petrus	Kriel		Burger	
Hendrik	Van Asweegen		Burger	
Johannes	Conterman		Burger	
Pieter Jacob	Minnaar		Burger	
Adriaan	Louw	Jansz	Burger	
Johannes	Morgendaal		Burger	
Johannes	Louw	Pietersz	Burger	
Paul	Retief		Burger	
Frans	Retief		oud Ouderling	
Charel	Marais		Burger	
Gabriel	Du Toit		Burger	
Casper	Rijneken		Burger	
Petrus	Le Roex		Burger	

Jacob	Van Leeuwen		Burger	
Jacob	Momberg		Burger	
David	De Villiers	Jan Pietersz	oud Heemraad	
Coenraad	Eb		Burger	
Willem	Oudshoorn		Burger	
Floris	Visser	de Jonge	Burger	
Johannes	Mostert	Louisz	Burger	
Johannes Bartholomeus	Kreuger		Burger	
Johannes	Le Roux	de Jonge	Burger	
Nicolaas Diderik	Muller		Burger	signed with x
Cornelis	Brits		Burger	
Cornelis Jacob	Brits		Burger	
Johan Georg	Steijtler		Burger	
Christiaan	Liebenberg		Burger	
Mosis	Davids		Burger	
Engelbertus	Felix		Burger	signed with x
Marx Nicolaas	Mohr		Burger	
Jacob	Mostert	Louisz	Burger	
Claas	Jonasz		Burger	
Jan Christiaan	Bam		Burger	
Jan Jacob	De Bessner		Burger	
Bartholomeus	Schonken		Burger	
Johan George	Sousman		Burger	
Johan Andries	Heijsse		Burger	
Dirk	Mostert		Burger	
Harmanus Barend	Van Der Schijff		Burger	
Jonas Albertus	Van Der Poel		Burger	
Carel Fredrik	Reijmers		Burger	
Jacob Fredrik	Bek		Burger	
Michiel	Dursling		Burger	
Jacobus Johannes	Mos		Burger	
Lucas	Hegter		Burger	
Frans Hendrik	Stapelberg		Burger	
Jan Hendrik	Thomas		Burger	
Barend Hendrik	Elderbroek		Burger	
Daniel	Hugo	Danielsz	Burger	
Petrus Jacobus	Du Toit		Burger	
Bartholomeus	Van Der Vijver		Burger	
Gerrit Hendrik	Catenbrink		Burger	
Pieter	Coenradi		Burger	
Gerrit	Victor		Burger	
Gerrit	Van Der Bijl		Burger	
Andries Christoffel	Van Der Bijl		Burger	
Jan	Laubscher		Burger	
Paul	Roux		Burger	
Adriaan	Van Brakel		oud Capitein	Senior
Adriaan	Van Brakel	Junior	Burger	
Salomon Johannes	Cats		Burger	
Gerardus Jacobus	Willemsen		Burger	
Joseph	Pero		Burger	

Select Sources

Western Cape Archives and Record Service, Cape Town (WCARS)

C – Council of Policy

C 131:	Resolutions, 1753
C 132:	Resolutions, 1754
C 141:	Resolutions, 1763
C 143:	Resolutions, 1765
C 144:	Resolutions, 1766
C 146:	Resolutions, 1768
C 148:	Resolutions, 1770
C 150:	Resolutions, 1772
C 151:	Resolutions, 1773
C 152:	Resolutions, 1774
C 153:	Resolutions, 1775
C 154:	Resolutions, 1776
C 155:	Resolutions, 1777
C 156:	Resolutions, 1778
C 157:	Resolutions, 1779
C 158:	Resolutions, 1780
C 159-160:	Resolutions, 1781
C 161-162:	Resolutions, 1782
C 165:	Resolutions, 1783
C 166:	Resolutions, 1784
C 168:	Resolutions, 1785
C 171:	Resolutions, 1786
C 174:	Resolutions, 1787
C 177:	Resolutions, 1788
C 184:	Resolutions, 1789
C 1101:	Petitions and Nominations, 1739-40
C 1118:	Petitions and Nominations, 1751
C 1151:	Petitions and Nominations, 1769-70
C 1155:	Petitions and Nominations, 1772
C 1166:	Petitions and Nominations, 1776
C 1168:	Petitions and Nominations, 1777
C 1171-1172:	Petitions and Nominations, 1778
C 1173:	Petitions and Nominations, 1779

C 1180:	Petitions and Nominations, 1782
C 1184:	Petitions and Nominations, 1783
C 2282:	Proclamation (Plakkaat) Books, 1745-53
C 2283:	Proclamation (Plakkaat) Books, 1754-60
C 2285:	Proclamation (Plakkaat) Books, 1766-75
C 2661:	Oath Books, 1692-1748
C 2662 - 2664:	Oath Books, 1748-1795
C 2665:	Burgher Complaints, 1716-82
C 2673:	Burgher Complaints, 1777-79
C 2674:	Burgher Complaints, 1779-84
C 2689 – 2696:	Cape Disputes (Kaapsche Geschillen) I-IV, 1779-1785
C 2716:	Lease Conditions, 1762-64
C 2721 - 2729:	Lease Conditions, 1775-95

BKR – Burgher Military Council

BKR 2:	Minute Book, 1767-93
BKR 5:	Papers Received, 1712-95
BKR 8:	Diverse Papers, 1768-95
BKR 9:	Diverse Muster Rolls, 1780-95

BRD – Burgher Council

BRD 1:	Minute Book, 1769-85
BRD 13:	Letters Received, 1707-81
BRD 24:	Tax lists, 1773, 1783
BRD 25:	Tax lists, 1787-95
BRD 41:	Diverse Papers, 1711-1800

J – Returns for Taxation Purposes

J 210-211:	Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, 1777-79
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M – Miscellaneous Documents

M 41:	Funeral Notices
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MOOC – Master of the Supreme Court

MOOC 6/1, vol.1-3:	Death Register, 1758-97
MOOC 14/62:	Estate & Distribution Accounts, 1784-1785
MOOC 23/9:	Attestations, 1774-78

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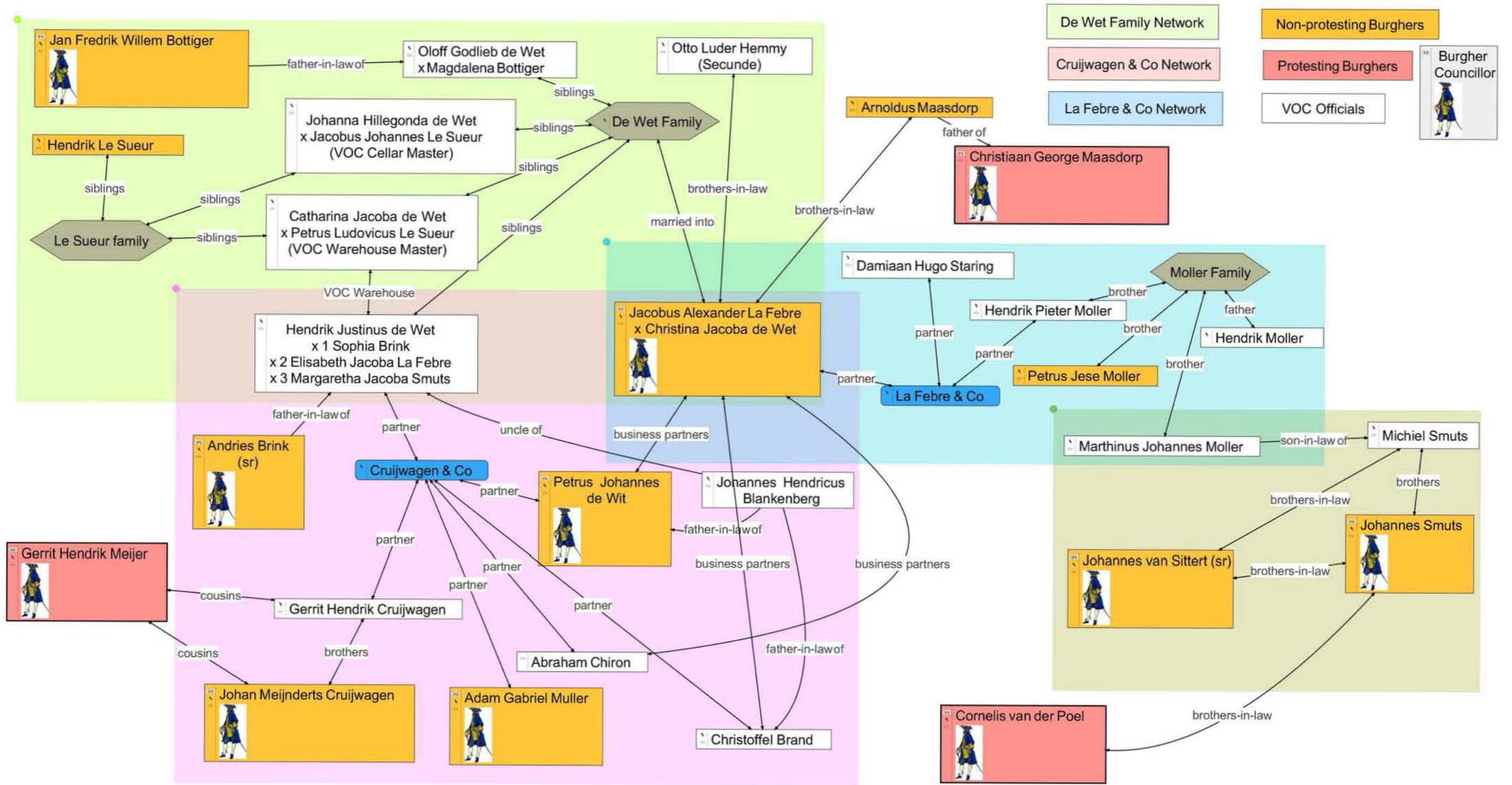
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Appendix 4: Database of Cape burghers (1770s, 1780s)

Appendix 2: Burgher Councillors - ruling faction



Appendix 3: Farming Community Network - protesters

