

The Familial State

Ruling Families and
Merchant Capitalism in
Early Modern Europe

JULIA ADAMS

Cornell University Press

Ithaca and London

General Library System
University of Wisconsin - Madison
728 State Street
Madison, WI 53706-1494
U.S.A.

A volume in

THE WILDER HOUSE SERIES
IN POLITICS, HISTORY,
AND CULTURE

edited by David Laitin
George Steinmetz

Cornell University Press gratefully acknowledges the receipt of a grant from the University of Michigan, which helped in the publication of this book.

Copyright © 2005 by Cornell University
All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher. For information, address Cornell University Press, Sage House, 512 East State Street, Ithaca, New York 14850.

First published 2005 by Cornell University Press
Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Adams, Julia.

The familial state : ruling families and merchant capitalism in early modern Europe / Julia Adams.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8014-3308-8 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. State, The—History. 2. Netherlands—Commerce—History—17th century. 3. Mercantile system—Netherlands—History—17th century. 4. Elite (Social sciences)—Netherlands—History—17th century. 5. Mercantile system—Great Britain—History—18th century. 6. Mercantile system—France—History—18th century. I. Title: Ruling families and merchant capitalism in early modern Europe. II. Title.

Cornell University Press strives to use environmentally responsible suppliers and materials to the fullest extent possible in the publishing of its books. Such materials include vegetable-based, low-VOC inks and acid-free papers that are recycled, totally chlorine-free, or partly composed of nonwood fibers. For further information, visit our website at www.cornellpress.cornell.edu.

Cloth printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

6941121
To my parents, Virginia Rives Adams (1931–2000)
and Thomas Tilley Adams

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: The Netherlands as Point of Departure	i
1. The Patrimonial Nexus and Theories of State Formation	13
2. State Making, Hegemony, and Corporate Conflict in the Dutch Golden Age	38
3. The Familial State and the Rise of the Netherlands	75
4. Patrimonial Problems, Familial States, and Chartered Companies in Seventeenth-Century Europe	106
5. Dutch Decline: The Loyalty of the Patriarch or the "Betrayal of the Bourgeoisie"?	137
6. France, England, and the Enigmatic Eighteenth Century	164
Conclusion	197
References	203
Index	231

Acknowledgments

This book began life in the Sociology Department of the University of Wisconsin, where I had the benefit of a wonderful advisor, Erik Olin Wright. I thank Erik, Chas Camic, Suzanne Desan, Richard Lächmann, Rob Howell, Ann Orloff, and Ron Aminzade for their terrific support and advice. Like Mark Gould, who introduced me to historical sociology at Haverford College, they have become treasured friends as well as inspiring academic interlocutors.

My initial research was generously funded by a Chateaubriand Fellowship from the French government and a Social Science Research Council dissertation fellowship. The University Fellowship I received from the Sociology Department at the University of Wisconsin was a much-appreciated support during the initial writing year.

During my research time abroad, I was befriended and helped along by many kind souls. I am especially grateful to Femme Gaastra, Els van Eyck van Heslinga, and Marjolein 't Hart. I benefited both from their organizational aid and from reading their superb historical work. I am also indebted to the staff of Columbia University's outpost in Paris, Reid Hall, and the friendly fellow researchers I met there, all of whom made that stage of my work more pleasant and fruitful.

My years as an assistant professor were spent at the University of Michigan and, because Michigan combines a terrific Sociology Department with unparalleled interdisciplinarity, I can't imagine a better intellectual home for me at that stage of my work. At Michigan I incorporated the family and gender dimensions that fundamentally changed what had been an argument in classical political economy and made it effectively a completely new book. It also meant more research and writing. I spend a great semester based in Edinburgh, Scotland, doing just that. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the International Social Sciences Institute (ISSI) for hosting me and to my friend Sharon Witherspoon for her bountiful hospitality.

My colleagues at Michigan, departmental and extra-departmental, were a never-ending source of intellectual inspiration. Here I mention only

those who had a direct impact on this particular book, but that hardly does justice to my sense of broader intellectual obligation to those colleagues and to Michigan's exciting academic atmosphere. An early version of chapter 2 was read by the Sociology Study Group (which at that time included me, Müge Goçek, Howard Kimeldorf, and Jeff Paige), and the introduction was dissected by the Goils Group (the lineup then consisting of Sonya Rose, Julie Skurski, Peggy Somers, Jackie Stevens, and Ann Stoler). It was Geoff Eley's idea that I present materials from chapter 3 at the Program in the Comparative Study of Social Transformations (CSST), and I profited from his reactions and from CSST's intellectual dynamism. Arland Thornton gave me helpful written comments after I gave an earlier draft of that same chapter at the Family Studies Seminar at the Institute for Social Research. These spaces, plus the Early Modern Group, the Institute for the Humanities, and the Michigan Society of Fellows, were all wonderful interdisciplinary venues for talk. I also learned much from conversations with Kerry Ward, fellow VOC aficionado; Val Kivelson; and Linda Gregerson, with whom I co-taught an inspiring course on early modern European history. I owe Celeste Brusati a big thank you for her expertise in Dutch Golden Age art and society. Most of all, however, I thank George Steinmetz, long-time friend and fellow laborer in the social theory trenches, who in addition to his many other intellectual virtues has always been compelled by the arguments in this book. When he was at the University of Chicago, George, along with David Laitin, also had an editorial hand in the book which appears as the last in the excellent Wilder House series that they co-edited.

While at Michigan, I benefited from an American Council of Learned Societies fellowship, National Endowment for the Humanities and Fulbright summer grants, and leave time and general research support from the University of Michigan. I am also grateful to the journals *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (CSSH) and *Theory and Society*, which published earlier versions of chapters 2 and 3 respectively. Ray Grew, then editor of CSSH, and Chuck Tilly, at *Theory and Society*, gave me insightful written comments that made their way into the final versions.

In a project that has extended over a number of years and sustained several interruptions, it is difficult to remember—much less to separate out!—which formal academic presentations were dedicated specifically to arguments that appear here rather than in other related intellectual projects. But as near as I can recall, I presented such materials to the sociology departments of Columbia University, Northwestern University, University of California at

Los Angeles, and University of Minnesota. I also discussed portions of the manuscript at talks at the Fordham University History Department; the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Wassenaar, Holland; the Social Theory Workshop at the University of Chicago; and at various conferences. I'd like to thank the audiences at all of those venues for their stimulating questions and comments.

At different points in the life of the book, Michael Burawoy, Richard Lachmann, Barbara Laslett, Steve Pincus, and Art Stinchcombe gave me marvelously helpful written feedback. I was not able to act on all their suggestions, but the book is stronger because of their critical comments. My greatest intellectual debt, however, is to Nancy Curtin. She has argued with me and shared her deep (seemingly bottomless) knowledge of early modern England, and she bucked me up at a particularly fraught juncture, when I came close to abandoning the project. I owe her a lot.

Roger Haydon, my editor at Cornell University Press, deserves special mention for his amazing capacity to combine intellectual acuteness, a great sense of humor, and saintly patience. He's needed all three qualities in order to wrest the manuscript from my hands. I also appreciate the help I've received from Teresa Jesionowski, Julie Nemer, and Kathy Wood. And to the indispensable Pat Preston, who has made that manuscript a legible one, often apparently against my efforts, I say a big thank you.

Acknowledgments are a little like family lineages. How fitting, then, that my fundamental debts are to family: my aunt Nancy and uncle Claude, who made me so welcome during my Paris sojourns; my dear siblings Janet, Claire, and Doug; and my husband Jeff Jordan and son Andrew Adams Jordan, enormous and delightful distractions. Surely the fact that the book ultimately did get done is related to Andrew's reaching the age when he began trying to, as he said, "put in some new words" when I'd left the text up on the computer. That was a sign: time to finish up. Perhaps I can blame any mistakes in the book on his editorial interventions.

With all my remaining childhood narcissism, I wish that my mother had lived to see the publication of this book. She was, as my father is, a lover of history, and they communicated their enthusiasm to me. I feel tremendously blessed to have had their love and support. Sharper than a serpent's tooth I may have been at times, especially during the adolescent years, but never thankless. I dedicate this book to both of them.

JULIA ADAMS

New Haven, Connecticut

The Familial State

Introduction: The Netherlands as Point of Departure

To anyone curious about the rise of states in early modern Europe, or the making of the modern world more generally, the Netherlands might seem an idiosyncratic launching point. The seven United Provinces of the Netherlands, also known as the Dutch Republic, were tiny even when bunched together and had a relatively small population.¹ The Republic was just emerging into political autonomy at the close of the sixteenth century, too, and was caught up in a revolt against its erstwhile Spanish overlord that lasted for eighty long years, until independence was ratified in 1648. No wonder, then, that those looking to understand evolving forms of state power are wont to turn their eyes elsewhere. Yet the Netherlands was a world-historical actor in the formative early modern era, conventionally taken to span the period between 1500 and 1800—so much so that it is now indelibly associated with the seventeenth century, sometimes called the Dutch Golden Age. During those years the Dutch forged the first global commercial/colonial system and established an unprecedented position of world power. The Netherlands also witnessed the development of a brilliant national culture, paradoxically celebrating and disturbed by its own unforeseen abundance.² Dutch developments in general, and its politico-economic arrangements in particular, shaped the political histories of other regions and countries in Europe and the colonial territories in the East and West Indies. If the

¹ When it comes to things Dutch, terminology can be confusing. Throughout this book, *the Netherlands* refers to the seven United Provinces, also known as the Dutch Republic. *Holland* is the largest of those provinces. The term *Low Countries* covers what is approximately the present-day Netherlands and Belgium. *Dutch* denotes the inhabitants of the Netherlands and their language. The United Provinces had about 1.5 million inhabitants in 1600, compared to some 10 million in Iberia and 16–20 million in neighboring France.

² This paradox is eloquently depicted in Schama (1987).

Dutch Republic ultimately declined—and we will have to examine whether it did or not—it did so after playing a most influential role.

This book puts the Netherlands at center stage for still another reason: it can illuminate processes of early modern European development and mechanisms of politico-economic stability and change more generally. The Dutch Republic has been flagged by social scientists before as a potentially instructive case, even a foundational one in the making of modernity, but it has proved surprisingly hard to assimilate. World-systems analysts, for instance, beginning with Immanuel Wallerstein, have not only underlined but helped us see the fundamental role of the Netherlands as the first hegemonic power in the rise of a globally extended system. Of course world-systems analysts see *hegemony* in a specific way, as defined by the reproduction and appropriation of economic surplus, flowing from the global specialization and rationalization that supposedly gives rise to the efficiency and higher labor productivity that is the hallmark of capitalism. As capital accumulates, they argue, it is secured by exchange on the world market, with, in Wallerstein's phrase, "the nonmarket assist of state machineries" (1974–89, 1: 38). A "strong" state makes possible and secures world hegemony. And there's the rub: although the Netherlands was first among equals in the Golden Age, the Dutch state falls stubbornly outside the dictates of the theory. Throughout the early modern era, the Netherlands had what Wallerstein himself calls a "jerry-rigged" political apparatus (1974–89, 2: 38), an apparently weak and ramshackle affair. How could this have jibed with the far-flung dominance of the Golden Age? And why didn't the ruling elite of the Netherlands mobilize the tremendous influx of resources to do something about that state, restructuring with an eye to maintaining the conditions within which their mercantile system flourished? World-systems theory wavers on the first question and remains silent on the second, even as it marks the passage of the torch of hegemony from the Netherlands to England in the eighteenth century.³ The Netherlands is a theoretical irritant out of proportion to its small size. In this world-systems analysis is symptomatic; the same is true of other theoretical systems, whose proponents have wanted to devise—usually as a vehicle for explaining the Great Revolutions of early modern Europe—a general-theoretic or at least single-paradigm explanation of state formation and breakdown.

³ In Adams (1994b), I provide an extensive discussion of the relationship between world-systems analysis and the Dutch case.

But anomalies and irritants are potentially productive. "States have flourished which meet none of the criteria of the political scientist," writes Joseph Strayer (1970), "for example the Netherlands in the seventeenth century" (5). Perhaps social science criteria have been too limited. Partisans of all theoretical approaches could benefit from taking a closer look at the Netherlands, whether they are focusing on the protracted transition from feudalism to capitalist democracy that sociologists have been arguing about for decades (and will probably argue about forever) or the leap from classical patriarchy to modern forms of institutionalized male dominance canvassed in recent feminist theory. It is surprising, but to suggest this still involves swimming against the scholarly tide, for England and France continue to stand as the canonical cases of European political development. It is an "ever-present temptation" in social science, as Charles Tilly notes, to take those countries as exemplars of "successful" state formation "and all others as failures to be explained by features of the French and English experience that they lacked" (1994, 16–17). This caution is equally important for feminist theories of early modern European politics because their overwhelming emphasis on the courtly arrangements of France and England has encouraged a tendency to treat nascent states as reducible to a king—a single capital F Father—or at most a royal family. When the monarch (or the court) stands in for the whole of early modern European high politics and one node is taken to substitute for a complex and uneven network of governance, I argue, the gendered, familial character of Old Regime states is actually underplayed. Highlighting the Dutch state, which lacked a monarch but was nonetheless a patriarchal patrimonial formation, is my way of supplying a corrective and widening the potential contribution of gender analysis to theories of state building. En route I hope to revise our collective view of what transpired in the more canonical cases as well.

At the core of this problem and of this book, therefore, lies the enigma of the Dutch state: an Ariadne's thread that can help us unravel the knotty role of transitional states in early modern Europe. Chapter 1 sets out from the sociological literature on state formation in Europe and goes on to develop a general conceptual approach to states in formation that integrates feminist theory and an enriched Weberian concept of patrimonial power—that characteristic form of rule in which a ruler (such as a monarch or a lesser lord or stadholder, literally "stateholder") and the corporations that the ruler recognizes or sponsors

jointly do politics and share the prerogatives of sovereignty.⁴ I think of these states under construction as familial states, stressing the ideal-typical tie between paternal political rule and the multiple arrangements among the family heads that inhabit and shape the evolving political organizations and the economic flows they managed.

In chapters 2 and 3, I argue that a particular form of governance—an institutional nexus fusing a set of elite patriarchal families with a merchant capitalist class and a locally grounded patrimonial state—was a key factor in the spectacular ascent of the Dutch. Elite merchant-regent family heads managed to lay claim to parts of the Dutch state, which became the *de facto* property of family lineages and clans. These ruling families assumed the mantle of time-honored traditionalism while wielding state office and privilege in some strikingly innovative ways—notably in launching the huge sovereign chartered companies targeted at the East and West Indies that formed the sprawling Dutch overseas empire and the future of Dutch domestic politics. The companies also forged the template for the first great wave of empire: they were economic and military forces with which all comers had to contend, and they were widely imitated by other European hopefuls, leaving their traces in the interior of these metropolitan states as well. These privileged spots in the Dutch state lured men in several interconnected ways. They entitled the lucky few who held them to make claims on flows of resources and to take authoritative, far-reaching decisions. They also enshrined and expanded the glory of family lineages, particularly the status of their leading male representatives who occupied the posts. Chapter 3 foregrounds this gendered familial aspect of patrimonial power in the rise of the Dutch. Political privilege was the backdrop against which the identity of family scions took shape, the setting in which specific forms of elite masculinity celebrating a man's statist pedigree were enacted and elaborated. Perhaps this sounds strange, for the popular and scholarly image of the United Provinces is typically one of doughty individualistic burghers, not patriarchal power plays and elite lineage politics. Yet it is precisely in the Netherlands, where global commercial capitalist dominance was grafted to localized familial rule, that the uneven and contradictory development definitive of early modern patrimonial states—and therefore also their empires—is starkly revealed.

⁴ On the concept of patrimonialism, see Weber (1968 [1922], 226, 293–97, 1006–7, 1010–13, 1022–23, 1028–31). Chapter 1 explores this idea at more length.

The glory of the Golden Age dimmed in the late seventeenth century, and the spectacular rise was followed by the downturn that lent early modern Dutch history its dramatic zigzag shape. Dutch decline was partly due to what we think of as exogenous factors, as many historians and social scientists have asserted. Perhaps this was only to be expected: given the interregional and international integration that the Dutch leader helped create, mounting pressure told on the Netherlands' vulnerable entrepôt role. My claim, pursued in chapter 5, is that the zag in the Dutch zigzag also reflects a particular form of state construction and a partial collapse not well accounted for in the theoretical literature on state formation. The missing piece of the puzzle is the patrimonial institutional nexus. The elite family heads, the merchant-regents, armed with the powerful concept of paternal rule, were able to take over the state, reforging generations of elite politico-economic authority. The Dutch patriarchs went on to invent a series of ingenious patrimonial pacts that further reinforced local genealogies of office. They effectively locked a dispersed and localized form of political privilege into place, one that guaranteed their families places in the economic sun but sharply limited state capacities in the eighteenth century. Try as they might—and they did try—the elite could not come to grips with this latter problem, much less solve it. Chapter 5 contends that in the Dutch case the family investments in forms of politico-economic privilege supported continued political fragmentation. Thus, the unique three-way patrimonial configuration that fostered the rise of the Netherlands helped unravel its form of governance and its global empire a century later.

The canonical cases, France and England, serve first of all as the backdrop against which I assess my claim that the Netherlands' unique version of governance contributed to the formation and ultimately the dissolution of Dutch hegemony. To some scholars, the early modern Netherlands looks so unusual, so different from the canonical cases, that its idiosyncracies seem to preclude any such comparison: Wasn't it a capitalist enclave hemmed in by continental feudalisms? a burgher republic surrounded by monarchies like France, which embraced an aristocratic absolutism, and England, which inclined toward a mixed monarchical/estatist system? Although they are easily overstated, these differences are important. They inflected the link between states and rulers foregrounded here, as we shall see, and were reflected in how the various protonational elites understood their own exercise of sovereignty and the relationship of sovereignty itself.

In this vein, chapters 4 and 6 underscore unexplored similarities in the dynamics of patrimonial development and decline. In France and England as well as the Netherlands, coalitions of men—or, more precisely, men who represented elite patriarchal families—came to possess and control pieces of patrimonial states, deploying them to intergenerational family advantage. These coalitions implanted themselves in the evolving state apparatuses and spinoff sovereign companies that revolutionized the mechanisms of overseas capital accumulation and projected newly multiplied military force abroad. These states in the making therefore came to resemble one another in certain important ways. They featured converging kinds of political conflict and cohesion, for example, and strikingly similar institutional innovations and rigidities as family heads collectively devised ways to grasp their privileges more tightly. The men themselves changed because of their families' having sunk their roots into state office. Among other things, they become the authors of reinvented forms of patriarchal political authority. In all three sites, this involved not simply their own rule but also the cultural claims and institutional moves of superordinate "political fathers"—monarchs and monarchical substitutes. Conversely, by virtue of this common platform of rule and reconstitution of political claims-making, key differences emerged in the class content of the ruling family coalitions, in their uneasy relationships with monarchical dynastic projects, and in their articulation with changing forms of elite masculinity. These differences carved out distinctive trajectories of domestic state formation and colonial ventures. The conventional picture of politics in eighteenth-century northern Europe is one of Dutch decline, English triumph, and French collapse. This is crude but not wrong. Here I explore the causal mechanism of domestic patrimonial forms—the three-way institutional nexus of elite families, state, and economic flows—and their overseas expansion.

The book as a whole also tells a consistent story of mutual influence within an emergent global formation. Once the United Provinces of the Netherlands had gained their position in the teeth of Iberian resistance, France and England became the principal rivals in the international commercial/colonial stakes, covetous of the munificent flow of resources into the Netherlands and the political position that made it possible. Sometimes this tricornered relationship was collaborative; sometimes it exploded in internecine war. And as Dutch dominance gathered force, the rulers of the contending states deliberately set themselves to copy, perfect, and surpass key Dutch institutions while alternately harassing and collaborating with

the United Provinces on its home turf and at its colonial outposts. The burgeoning world network of relationships among patrimonial powers—including the dynastic ties that linked them—undermined the terms of the Netherlands' dominance, transforming the opportunity structures available to all state builders. The Dutch *tertius gaudens*—or *de lachende derde*, in the Dutch proverb—was no longer laughing.⁵

The constitution of the basic elements of this tricornered relationship, particularly the founding of the key chartered companies at the behest of elites and their home states, sets the terms of the beginning of my historical narrative; the supersession of this mode of doing family politics and business marks the end. En route, I draw on several sources: manuscript and printed primary sources or archival records of Dutch politico-economic negotiations, elite family documents, and local contracts regarding elite office-holding and a wealth of secondary source materials on the Netherlands, France, England, and other relevant countries and regions, including collective biographies, or prosopographies, of Dutch urban regencies. I also make use of information on the 303 members of the Holland and Zeeland chambers of the Dutch East Indies Company (1602–1795), in which I supplement the excellent data that were gathered under the auspices of the Werkgroep Elites at Leiden University, the Netherlands.⁶

The Netherlands is a small country, but I see it as the vehicle for tackling theoretical issues of the largest possible interest.

Cases, Mechanisms, Institutions, and Speculations

A few analytical strategies pursued in this book are worth signaling in advance. First is the role of case studies. We recognize the "big cases" of the Netherlands, France, and England as countries then, as now, conventionally delimited by malleable geographic borders. Here they are also nicknames, shorthand for empirical sites where developing state, elite families, and class relations are linked in coherent patterns or *gestalts* and whose borders may vary over time without disturbing their political integrity or conceptual unity. Considered in highly abstract terms, chapter 1 argues, each of these master cases can be seen as a version of a single template of patriarchal patrimonialism. Or, rather, we can revise and put

⁵ Georg Simmel (1950 [1923]) penned the classic analysis of the vicissitudes of the *tertius gaudens*, or laughing third party, in a tricornered relationship.

⁶ I am particularly grateful to Dr. Femme Gaastra for making these materials available to me.

to use Max Weber's ideal type to spotlight certain "deep analogies" (Stinchcombe 1978). Claims to sovereignty were couched in formally identical ways, for example, and the capacity to make economic and political claims was delegated to corporate groups along similar lines. I also argue that a single form of elite family household characteristic of north-west Europe was entangled with emergent state power.⁷ Establishing these broadly shared features and the configurational connections among them (Ragin 2000, chap. 3) will enable me to draw certain sweeping comparisons, and to treat the Netherlands, France, and England as comparable at the outset of the period under examination.

At less lofty levels of abstraction and analysis, however, political structures varied tremendously on the very component dimensions that deep analogies highlight. Relationships between the monarch and corporate elites gave rise to political arrangements ranging from estatist to absolutist in the seventeenth century, as we will see, with the Netherlands on the former end of the continuum, France on the latter, and England in between. Sovereign power was more or less locally or centrally organized. States and their associated corporations might be more or less dependent on certain groups or practices for resources, political support, and symbolic legitimacy. They might be inhabited by merchant family cliques, seigneurial family lineages, or composed of complex combinations and alliances of the two. And so on. Historically distinctive political visions also left their mark on each state. Differences such as these were not simply decorative; they shaped social outcomes that matter for the historical narrative. At certain points in my overall story, therefore, some of these mechanisms become the focus and the relevant units or cases for comparative analysis of political stability and change.⁸ The challenge is to take these causal clusters and shallower analogies, detach them from the grand sweep of larger total historical sequences, and then reassemble them into newly meaningful and more manageable series that help us better understand long-term historical stability and transformation. This is also an analytical narrative, a story of how certain men developed and operated a key institutional hinge, one that was first a tool for global hegemonic projects and later a millstone around their necks.

⁷ This family structure was nuclear, with stem extensions, centered around the father, and it combined aspects of bilateral and patrilineal descent (see Seccombe 1992). Some historians and sociologists refer to the form as "western," juxtaposing it to the joint family of eastern provenance, but I resist eliding structural features and geography.

⁸ Ragin and Becker (1992) is an excellent edited collection on the problems of defining and using cases. Many definitions of *causal mechanism* abound in today's social science literature, but I have found Stinchcombe's (1991) approach particularly useful.

As some personal, group, and institutional histories intersect with others that are also changing—pervading individual domains and reorganizing ties among them—they come together in time-bound conjunctures.⁹ "Things happen because of constellations of factors," as Andrew Abbott (1992) remarks, "not because of a few fundamental effects acting independently" (68). When Holland's merchant capitalists sought to anchor themselves and their families in the state, just to give one simplified example, and were struggling mightily with Stadholder and Prince Willem II over state policy, the smallpox germ intervened in what seemed to the merchants like the nick of time, carrying off Willem, who left behind him only a posthumous son, and making possible the merchants' ascendancy in the First Stadholderless Period. Many such conjunctures—or points where separate causal streams converge—came and went in the course of hundreds of years of history and in an unfolding system of global reach. For us, they are defined by intersecting local theories that together set one another's scope conditions. I do not claim to have specified all the relevant constellations or theorized the manifold processes that engendered them—that would be an inherently impossible task in any event. You will not, for example, find a theory of smallpox in this book. What is relevant in this instance is the character of the familial state. A vulnerable leader can go down because of all manner of things, but this particular leader could not easily be replaced because contemporaries saw themselves as bound by the rules of family patrilineal succession in politics. And because this familial element was key to the organization of power, any event or process or line of determination—anything from volcanic eruptions to apocalyptic religious doctrines—would have been routed through and imprinted by this particular institutional space that I describe. Politics is the art of the possible¹⁰—but possible worlds are enclosed within historical institutional horizons. I make an overarching argument for the importance of a specific institution—patriarchal patrilineal relations of rule, interlocked with politico-economic development—in constructing and framing those horizons in early modern Europe.

⁹ Sociologists from a variety of theoretical perspectives seem to be converging on this point. In a recent debate between Somers (1998) and Kiser and Hechter (1991, 1998), for example, both argue that forms of path dependence are essential parts of social science inquiry, although they disagree about most other issues, including the relationship between causal narrative on the one hand and narrative strategies of explanation on the other. See also Adams, Clemens, and Orloff (2005).

¹⁰ The phrase "Politics is the art of the possible" is attributed to Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898).

The actors themselves see some of these historical possibilities (and no doubt others that we do not) and react to them on the basis of the ongoing accumulation of the historical past as they recall and reconstruct it, mixing memory, strategy, and desire. Ideally, those operations of historical memory and projection into the future—to the extent that we researchers can see and decipher them—would be fully incorporated into the evolving nature of each case and the overall field of action as well. In this book, the major actors whose fortunes I trace are elite men, men at the apex of an emerging global social formation. In their reconstructed self-presentations, they place themselves as the subjects of kings and princes but also—and perhaps more so over time—as the subjects of history. In fact, this book captures what I take to be a key intermediate stage in cultural representation, in which these men portray themselves as politico-economic representatives and leading agents of their family lineages. I do try to register the tremendous creativity and venturesomeness of these men and the ways that they loosed dynamic social energies whose effects we moderns still feel, coupled with the seamy underside of their innovations, including dramatic increases in exploitation, new forms of slavery and patriarchy. They themselves felt the sharp end of the stick of their own institutional inventions, which should give comfort to moralists everywhere. But the point is not to perform some operation of ideological unmasking or to insist on the bad faith of the actors, but to try to respect the historical frames for their motivations and actions and the complexity of their collective legacies.

Macrohistorical work seems to me to call for a curious combination of humility and boldness on the part of the researcher. Why humility? The relatively small number of cases or historical paths that we study consists of overdetermined social processes, in which there are often more causes than outcomes. One response to this problem is to retain fully deterministic, lawlike models, to hunger after hypothetico-deductive general theory, but to purge certain processes or causal factors on the grounds that they cannot be adequately measured. Radical surgery of this sort does not eliminate those elusive causes and processes, however; it merely fails to assess them, introducing systematic bias into one's account. I hope to wend an intervening way between this unsatisfactory approach and a purely historical event-based style of narrative explanation. Partisans of sociological "covering laws" in the manner of the physical sciences may find this intermediary path vexing, but it seems to me unavoidable when we undertake large-scale historical problems, perhaps particularly so in early modern Europe, where dispersed forms of power engendered a special kind of

indeterminacy, which should be reflected in, and not glossed over by, our sociological accounts.

There is another reason for humility. Even the master cases in my account are immensely complicated by interdependence, only some of which can be dodged by changing levels of abstraction or employing fancy methodological footwork. And in fact their evolving interdependence is a crucial part of my story. Under these conditions, macrosociologists may keep on formulating general laws about the elements of a system, but they will never be able to rigorously test most of them from the standpoint of strict scientific method. Counterfactual speculations become as important as facts given this state of affairs. Controversy continues to dog the use of counterfactuals, even though facts themselves are now widely recognized as social constructions, indispensable to think with but surrounded by their own sticky issues. Yet social scientists rely on counterfactuals all the time (they are implicit in every regression equation), whether they know it or not. To pin down a supposed causal effect, we must situate ourselves within a hypothetical conceptual space, imagining that everything about a given process remains the same except for the characteristic or process we are investigating. The difference between the actual outcome and the likely outcome in the counterfactual situation is the theoretical causal effect. Thus Max Weber defined a counterfactual as the "mental construction of a course of events which is altered through modifications in one of more 'conditions'" (Weber 1949 [1905], 173). Sometimes we have the facts to make confident claims evaluating the modification; at other times, especially in macrohistorical work, we do not. Counterfactual speculation is key in such situations, although it must be disciplined, reined in, to be useful. "We must be very careful in defining counterfactuals," caution Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994), "although they are obviously counter to the facts, they must be reasonable and it should be possible for the counterfactual event to have occurred under precisely stated circumstances" (77–78). But just what counts as reasonable? King, Keohane, and Verba do not help us here! An interpretive and analogical sense of the texture of history is one important source of ideas and, to the extent that I have achieved that as an autodidact, it is largely from reading and talking to historians.¹¹

¹¹ I have also found helpful the discussions of idiographic counterfactual argumentation in Hawthorn (1991) and Tetlock and Belkin (1996, 7).

But even the finest-grained and most historically situated interpretive sense would not be enough without social theory, and this is where the boldness inherent in macrohistorical research enters in. By this I do not mean the chimera of a general social theory that incorporates or trounces all others, although my narrative does serve to eliminate some narrower approaches that have been proposed as candidates for such a general-theoretic explanation of state formation, colonialism, and revolution (see chap. 1). Instead, by systematically incorporating family and gender into the structures of global political economy, I concentrate on charting what I take to be new territory in the study of the formation of European states. Unfolding a comparative-historical narrative informed and guided by theory enables me to improve our maps of the key institutional configuration in early modern politics and to weigh its potential articulation with a range of factors, opportunities, and constraints that intersect with the doings of elite men at the institutional fulcrum point they inhabited, redesigned, and wielded. This approach is systematic and structuralist because I believe that, even when it is not possible to show that any one factor or mechanism is necessary or sufficient or to weigh their interaction with empirical precision, it is still important to make theoretical arguments about history as clearly and systematically as we can. But this approach refuses the quixotic fantasy of final theoretical closure in favor of the collective project of opening new questions, new possibilities for focused historical comparison, and of constructing historical social theory and new possibilities for explanation. I hope that *The Familial State* helps build the foundation of a more adequate explanation of historical hegemones, of varying patterns of state formation and collapse in early modern Europe.

I

The Patrimonial Nexus and Theories of State Formation

If a state can be defined as an organization that wields sovereign control over territories and populations, in the last instance by force, then early modern European states were emphatically states in the making.¹ Of course states are always being made and remade, whether in trivial or fundamental ways, and it is tempting to think about eliminating the concept of state altogether, perhaps in favor of a more flexible idea of changing “degrees of stateness” (Nettl 1968). But if all eras are transitional, to paraphrase George Orwell, some eras are more transitional than others. This book begins at an important fulcrum point in the history of state formation, when aspiring rulers in late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Europe had developed and advanced the basic claims to sovereignty to authoritative regulation of political activities and communities that I take to be the cultural bedrock of statehood yet were grappling with incessant problems of trying to project and delegate sovereign power while upholding recognized claims to it.²

These would-be sovereigns and state builders were finding that their territorial and regulatory reach systematically exceeded their grasp. Within the fluctuating boundaries of nascent states, rulers did not always

¹ A state can be said to be constituted when regulation and (in the last instance) coercion are anchored in a relatively distinct and differentiated organization. Some form of this institutional definition, derived from Max Weber but minus the criterion of legitimacy, has been widely adopted. See, for example, Giddens (1985, 121), Mann (1993, 55), Poggi (1990), Skocpol (1979, 22), and Tilly (1975, 27).

² Hinsley’s useful little book (1986 [1966]) defines its subject as a concept that “originally and for a long time expressed the idea that there is a final and absolute authority in the political community” (1). This concept was explicitly defined by European political theorists in the late sixteenth century. See, for example, Bodin (1992).

have the means to simply impose their rule permanently; the exiguous organizations at their disposal lacked what Michael Mann (1993, 59–61) calls the “infrastructural power” to enforce most of their commands. Rulers had to make deals if they were to be effective, which might involve ceding certain sovereign powers to corporate estates, guilds, towns, chartered companies, and so on. They were also building states from the ground up by forging workable arrangements that linked together sovereign enclaves into a single ongoing network or cartel under broader jurisdiction. The aggregated corporate origins of some of these sovereign cartels lingered on in their names—including the United Provinces of the Netherlands (the Dutch Republic’s full federated title). This chapter, and the book as a whole, argues that these pervasive political deals and delegations of sovereignty created some distinctive political opportunities and pitfalls for early modern state builders.

State formation also proceeded in the face of multiple contending claims and claimants to sovereignty. The geographically uneven legacy of feudalism and empire had dispersed effective power among a series of manorial political economies, autonomous towns, and other enclaves, closely clustered in some areas of Europe, thin on the ground in others (Anderson 1974b; Hall 1986). “Europe had *always* been politically fragmented, despite even the best efforts of the Romans . . .” insists Paul Kennedy (1987, 17). Max Weber suggests that the presence of these multiple powers, and the juridical and military multicephality that they entailed, was one of Europe’s distinguishing social features.³ Even in areas that boasted a single titular ruler, a motley collection of seigneuries, principalities, bishoprics, city-states, and other corporations jostled for supremacy, often over the same geographical space. At this moment of blooming, buzzing confusion, circa 1500, there were some five hundred or so entities with pretensions to sovereign status, compared to about thirty in present-day Europe (Tilly 1990, 42–43). Moreover, there was nothing approaching an organized states system that overarched the fray. The representatives of emergent states were putting forward innovative claims to sovereign rights over territory,

³ Later scholars have tended to agree. For example, Barkey (1994) compares this background aspect of European state making with the unitary Ottoman Empire, whereas Lieberman (2003) emphasizes the political dispersion of feudal and early modern Europe as a point of difference with Southeast Asia. For a contrary perspective, see Lewis and Wigen (1997, 99–100). They contend that similarities in fragmentation of power characterized all pre-modern Eurasian states.

streams of goods, and populations while working out the ground rules by which such claims would be negotiated and adjudicated.⁴

What states, and state sovereignty, were to be was itself an open question in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Was a state an emanation of divine right? a social contract? a collection of feudal families? These urgent political questions—all versions of “Who shall govern, how, and on what grounds?”—were insistently raised by European men and women, whether they sought to buttress established styles of sovereignty or imagined and demanded novel forms of self-rule. Chapter 2 opens with the Dutch Revolt (and the ensuing Eighty Years War of liberation against Habsburg Spain), a concentrated burst of popular and patrician political creativity and the opening salvo in the great European conflicts that included the French Fronde and the English Revolution during the seventeenth century.

The way in which a state, or any individual or aggregate actor for that matter, comes to define itself, set goals, and forge alliances should always be viewed as problematic and malleable rather than being prematurely solved by assumptions that actors necessarily have stable, fixed identities or constant and preexisting interests. So the new historical institutionalists remind us (Thelen and Steinmo 1992, 7–11), and their methodological caution goes double, it seems to me, for early modern Europe, in which foundational political institutions were being created *de novo*. The goals articulated for states, the rules regulating the pursuit of those ends, and the character of the political actors involved were all being hammered out, within a cultural framework that assumed that the mass of people would simply be excluded from any routine political decision-making role. My study focuses on patricians, not plebs. It addresses the evolving nature of ruling elites, the relationships among them, and the patrimonial political institutions by which they governed and were governed. This in no way denies the historical importance of popular political activity in western Europe, of course, but the overall argument takes it as given that this activity is of interest for my purposes only insofar as it evoked reciprocal reactions from states and ruling elites. Rather than exhaustively describing a picture of social reality, this study depicts a key hinge or joint in the anatomy of state formation. The analytical entry point is that of the collective ruler, comprising both relationships among rulers and those between rulers and their staffs or agents. This is the favored approach of a

⁴ See Bartelson (1995) regarding the emergence of formal diplomacy as an alternative to war.

more venerable historical institutionalist, Max Weber, and his concept of "patrimonialism" offers a jumping-off point from which we can begin to make sense of these liminal, divided forms of rule. What you will find in this chapter, then, instead of any sort of general theory of state formation or transition from feudalism to capitalism, is a dissection of an institutional nexus that I argue was the key mechanism for early modern rule.

A Plethora of Patrimonial Powers

Patrimonialism⁵ is a concept, an ideal type, by which Weber meant to capture a certain style of rule, a distinctive mode of governance that mimics and extends the rules of the game prevalent in rulers' family-households. The familial is a crucial part of early modern rulers' authority, but I bracket it for a bit to pursue the dimension of household administration. In a single state, political power and administration are considered the ruler's "personal property," distinguishing the patrimonial office from the bureaucratic separation of "private" and "official" with which "we moderns" are more familiar. The ruler therefore exercises power with wide discretion, although he is also circumscribed by what can be interpreted as "sacred tradition" (Weber 1968 [1922], 1028–29). Patrimonial rulers typically rule, and consolidate and extend their reach, by granting politico-economic privileges to followers or agents of some sort. In Europe, where corporate groups had long-established legitimacy, those agents were likely to be corporate groups or estates, which were then liable for certain reciprocal obligations to the ruler.⁶ This hoary practice enabled rulers in early modern Europe to gather funds and deploy power while corporate elites, in turn, got economic concessions, political representation, derived symbolic status, and, crucially, family advancement. In the broadest sense, then, patrimonial political systems become ones in which a ruler (such as a monarch or a lesser lord or stadholder) and corporations that the ruler recognizes or sponsors jointly carry out political tasks and share the prerogatives of sovereignty.

⁵ On the concept of patrimonialism, see Max Weber (1968 [1922], 226, 293–97, 1006–7, 1010–13, 1022–23, 1028–31).

⁶ As Bossenga (1991, 5) notes, the French word *privilege* itself derives from the Latin for "private laws": "that is, laws allowing members of one particular group or territory to enjoy advantages that others did not possess." Burns (1980) discusses patrimonial rulers' consolidation of authority by creating new corporate bodies as well as reviving purportedly traditional ones.

Weber (1968 [1922], 1031–32) argues that the original seeds of patrimonial domination lie in the patterns of governance in a ruler's or chief's household, particularly in the moment when dependents are granted fiefs, benefices, or other politico-economic privileges and immunities, becoming officials and clients of their ruler and now patron, while separating themselves from his household to form their own households. This situation gives rise to a style of administration structured by the ruler's ad hoc, unstable, and always revocable delegation of powers, in sharp contrast, according to Weber (1028–31), to the ideal-typical rational-legal bureaucracy of impersonal rules, clear-cut spheres of competence, and ordered hierarchies of personnel and procedures. Perhaps all good origin myths contain at least a grain of truth. But whether or not we believe the story that Weber tells about the genesis of patrimonial domination, we can recognize that, once in place, this style of rule encourages troublesome tensions and tendencies.

First, patrimonial governance tends to parcellize downward. The practice of consolidating and extending rule by delegating sovereign powers to officials and corporate elites, together with the fuzzy boundary between office and incumbent, ensures that patrimonial structures continually threaten to devolve into multiple segmented headships. "Accordingly, some degree of appropriation of office is endemic; in extreme cases of decentralized patrimonialism, all government authority—with corresponding economic rights—may be treated as a private possession" (Theobald 1982, 555), or if not private, precisely, as an extension of the appropriating family-household. As a purely formal property of patrimonial rule, this says nothing, yet, about the substantive nature of the person or people doing the appropriating or about what they might be expected to do with their takings.

Second, still on a formal level, we can expect these organizations to be crosscut by peculiarly patterned tensions. One likely fault line runs between the rulers and corporate elites. Their mutual dependence was a hallmark of early modern European states, whether the crown had the upper hand, as in the absolutist tendency that we see in France, or the elite-headed corporations did, as in the estatist mode that chapter 2 argues prevailed in the seventeenth-century Netherlands.⁷ As analytical terms that indicate the locus of sovereignty, they are not meant to imply

⁷ Regarding estatism, see Max Weber's comments on "rule by notables (honoratores)" (1968 [1922], 1009–10, 1038–42). The term *estatism* is preferable, in my view, because it makes explicit the conceptual and historical parallel to absolutism that I want to emphasize.

that corporate officeholders lacked any regulative power in absolutist regimes or that the monarch or stadholder completely disappeared when corporate elites dominated decision making. Today's scholars often exaggerate the supposedly unchecked power wielded by absolutist monarchs, so it still escapes notice that these two modes of exercising power were close cousins. They are prone to the same kinds of strains, both between rulers and corporate elites and among the corporations themselves, that might well be assigned incompatible mandates and overlapping jurisdictions. In such polities, corporate bodies were "constrained chiefly by the concurrent, traditional rights vested in *other* individuals and bodies" (Poggi 1990, 48–49). Those rights and privileges were avowedly traditional, but they were not always mutually exclusive or placidly accepted. Whether these tensions merely simmered or exploded outright, they would continue to be developmentally significant until that time when states became superordinate powerholders and the decision-making and regulatory functions of the key patrimonial corporations were abolished—an event that, as we see in chapter 6, can be precisely dated.

Patrimonial rule is a fixed form that paradoxically allows for institutional innovation. This is the third developmental tendency that I explore below. In his pioneering analysis of what he calls "historical bureaucratic empires," Smuel N. Eisenstadt (1963) stresses the capacity of patrimonial rulers and their dependents to capture uncommitted, "free-floating resources" and redirect them to substantially new enterprises, which may run the gamut from mere spendthrift waste to a more productive expansion of sovereignty into new substantive areas to new moves toward rational-legal bureaucratic centralization, strengthening the lineaments of state formation. The content of these enterprises and what their political consequences may be are best left to concrete historical investigation, and are dealt with throughout this book. Two things are clear, however. First, patrimonial rulers will face serious challenges when they radically depart from perceived past practice, especially in trying to expand the range of their own power base and sovereign reach. In the long run, as Eisenstadt argues, innovations that systematically recreate and expand free-floating resources are likely to undermine accepted bases of social cohesion and reproduction, endangering the very conditions of rule that they support. Second, rulers will also have to confront entrenched beliefs about the proper place of political power, which is considered legitimate only as long as it remains within the bounds of precedent and time-honored "tradition" (Weber 1968 [1922], 1020). "These traditional beliefs do not entail

the constant repetition of custom," notes Mark Gould, glossing Weber, "but they do necessitate a legitimation of innovation in terms of past practice" (Gould 1987, 168). Traditionalism in this sense is a cultural construct. Just how far rulers and their challengers could (or would) stretch discursive definitions of "the traditional" in the face of elite and popular resistance remains to be historically explored.

One of the most dramatic instances of state innovation in early modern Europe was the founding of the chartered merchant and colonial companies, huge enterprises that undertook to project state sovereignty over great distances. The East and West Indies companies, formed in the Netherlands, France, and England around 1600, combined state-sponsored monopolies on objects or areas of trade, sovereign rights over a territory and its inhabitants, and capital supplied by private investors. These behemoths propelled the first great wave of European empire and colonialism. They interest me particularly because they were key parts of the metropolitan states' mercantile/colonial apparatuses and policies that, like the fiscal structures with which they overlapped, were on the cutting edge of state-building processes.⁸ By comparing at key points how and under whose authority the politics of international commercial and colonial links are organized, by exploring where the boundaries of state authority are drawn and redrawn, and by asking how and why these boundaries shift, we can clarify the driving forces of Dutch, French, and English politico-economic development.

In Which States Charter Sovereign Companies . . .

The companies were the fruits of a centuries-long gestation period. We can trace one line of their institutional pedigree to the long, continuing development of the legal form of the corporation, issuing in the revolutionary concept of shareholding, in which private persons delegated rights to dispose of parts of their property. Another forerunner was the habit of collaboration between entrepreneurial elites and political authorities, adumbrated in fourteenth-century Genoa and prominent in the Iberian colonial enterprises of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which government and merchants worked together while remaining institutionally

⁸ For analyses of fiscal structures as a leading edge of state formation, see, for example, Ardant (1975), Braun (1975), Lachmann and Adams (1988), Levi (1988), Mann (1980), Schumpeter (1954 [1918]), and 't Hart (1993).

separate (Coornaert 1967, 221, 229–34). Clearly the great companies did not spring forth like Athena from Zeus's head, born fully formed and battle-ready. What was politically novel about the companies of the 1600s and 1700s, however, was their sheer scale and reach, their institutional permanence, and most of all the uneasy coupling of their delegated sovereign rights and their mandate to pursue commercial profits and colonial power on behalf of their home state. Unlike the sixteenth-century Portuguese *Estado da India*, the great companies of the 1600s and 1700s fused aspects of delegated sovereignty and profit-making firm in "a unique European and especially north-west European phenomenon," writes Niels Steensgaard; nevertheless, they were not really "developmental deviations," as he contends (1981, 247, 251). On the contrary, rulers in early modern Europe often created situations of artificial scarcity and rent-seeking by granting and enforcing monopolies, using their comparative advantage in violence to insist on and enforce specific property rights advantageous to them. Chartered companies were extreme but clearly recognizable legacies of this *modus operandi* (Ekelund and Tollison 1981, 19–25; Levi 1988, 112–13, 122; North and Thomas 1973, 99–100).

Nonetheless the companies represented enticing new instruments of metropolitan mercantilist advancement, from the ruler's point of view, because the political capacity of patrimonial states rested on the organization and resources of corporate groups (and on the instruments that the state had to regulate their activities), as well as on the state's own institutions, such as they were. The formal access to the resources and expertise of merchant capitalists that the company form seemed to promise meant that rulers could dream of siphoning off an ever-larger share of the world's trade goods and bullion via the companies. In an age of politically enforced world trade, these hopes were intimately, in fact indissolubly, tied to visions of the companies as means to expansive state power at home and abroad (Heckscher 1955 [1931]; Viner 1969 [1948]). All else being equal, predatory rulers were torn between their desire to foster sovereign corporations, and their inclination to abrogate charters, demanding new protection payoffs or creating new monopolies to increase their own profits (Lane 1979). For merchants, and for corporate elites and investors in general, all necessarily dependent on the ruler's whim, patrimonial rule spelled both opportunity and deep uncertainty.

As the most important of the state's constituent corporations with sovereign ambitions, the companies appear in several guises in this book. They were, first of all, symptoms or barometers of metropolitan rule,

combining, in the most concentrated way, thoroughly characteristic patrimonial forms of accumulation with institutions of political regulation and force. Thus chapters 2 and 4 argue that the uncertainty that was endemic to patrimonial rule was minimized when corporate elites controlled the levers of power—that is, when the monarch or stadholder was politically subordinated to the estates, as in the Netherlands of the Golden Age—and was accentuated when the crown held the balance of power or when power was contested, as in seventeenth-century France and England, respectively. Furthermore, I argue that the companies registered the imprint of the ongoing struggle between elite and ruler, and among diverse elite factions, in their forms and in the relative contours of their colonial enterprises.⁹ If the directors were landed seigneurs, rather than merchant capitalists, and failed to grasp or interest themselves in the basics of reproducing colonial commerce over the long run, the enterprise's chances of getting off the ground, much less succeeding, would likely be greatly lessened. Formally speaking, privilege holders in chartered companies possessed, often virtually owned, the means of administration, and the directors were in an unparalleled position to dictate policy. What were the directors' identities and outlooks? From whence arose their resources and capacities? To answer these questions, as I try to do below, we need to explore other bodies of theory, to bring them into relationship with one another, and to sift relevant historical materials.

The companies were also wayward sovereign actors in their own right in the emergent global commercial/colonial system. "It is surely true to say that the Dutch East Indies Company is not only a trading company but also a state," remarked company director Coenraad van Beuningen in the 1680s, summing up the corporation's sovereign power as well as its fused politico-economic character. Thus, the following chapters treat the sovereign companies as generative, not merely reflective, of state formation in Europe, via the conjoined mechanisms of trade and empire. In the words of Michael Doyle (1986, 45), "Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic,

⁹ The work of Steensgaard (1974) and Lane (1979) has suggested that the enterprises that used force largely to plunder and attack competitors tended to receive diminishing returns (Steensgaard argues that the Portuguese *Estado da India* was a prime example). Those that used force to extort payment from "customers" for "protection" against real and imagined threats enjoyed increasing returns by stabilizing the trade environment and gained a competitive advantage by selling goods at a price high enough to cover the costs of protection, yet lower than competitors' prices (Lane 1979, 45–46).

social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire." No one study can deal with all aspects of the imperial trading projects, even one that limits its compass to the impact on the metropole, as this one does.¹⁰ Nevertheless, any coherent story of European state formation must devote some attention to imperial commerce and therefore to the sovereign companies.

Some scholars, such as Ann Stoler (1995) and Edward Said (1993), have traced the subtle impact of nineteenth-century Western colonial practices on various aspects of metropolitan culture. An analysis of the earlier period—of early modern metropolitan political development—must attend to boomerang effects of a cruder sort as well. Economic resources flowed to the metropole through the companies' pipelines; power struggles among companies, and between the companies and states, reconstituted the evolving matrix of overlapping political economies. Colonialism made for moral deformations in metropolitan populations, more or less subtle imprints that endure to this day. But if the companies did well—tricky term because, the more successful they were, the more thoroughgoing and potentially terrible their colonial legacy might be—then the metropole stood to gain immeasurably in this cruder sense: from the expansion of sovereignty over trade routes, colonized peoples, and territory; from the primitive accumulation of capital; from the promotion of metropolitan life chances; and even from the validation of religious faith. But this was true only, I argue, for certain metropolitan groups and under certain social conditions. Even in Holland, the rising tide did not lift all boats.

Merchant Capitalism and State Formation

Long-distance commerce was the leading economic (or politico-economic) sector in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, the source of enormous profits and the cutting edge of organizational experimentation.¹¹ Its dynamism depended on the interstitial role of merchants in a

¹⁰ There is a vast literature on the companies that deals with their operation on the ground in the colonies. A useful English-language introduction is Furber (1976). Elsewhere (Adams 1996) I deal with principal-agent problems and other features of the internal workings of company organization.

¹¹ For organizational innovations central to such state institutions as mercantilist policies, central banking, and public debt, see North and Thomas (1973, 95, 152–56) and de Vries (1976, 228–32).

largely precapitalist world, extending from the Americas to Africa to Asia to Europe and beyond. Their superprofits derived both from trade with feudal economies in Europe, in spices, grain, textiles, and other commodities, and from the enforced extraction of surplus, via the chartered companies, from tributary modes of production in colonies abroad. There they could also tap a part of the profits derived from using peasant and slave labor at less than the cost of its reproduction, as the Dutch did in the Moluccan spice islands and the Surinam sugar plantations (van Zanden 1993). Because of the products and distances involved, because they coerced some of those with whom they traded, and because home markets were politically regulated, long-distance traders could assume a relatively inelastic demand for the goods they controlled (Dobb 1963 [1947], 202; Magnusson 1978). Merchant capital derived some of its extraordinary vitality from the paradoxical persistence of autarchic productive enclaves and politically restricted monopoly markets at home and abroad and from the growth of free labor and capital available in some areas of the European metropole—particularly in Holland and England, precocious developers par excellence, where free wage labor and rural and urban petty commodity production coexisted with feudal institutions throughout the early modern period (Dobb 1963 [1947]).¹²

On the one hand, resources from trade and commercialized agriculture concentrated in cities, promoting demographic growth, simplifying resource extraction, and, we expect, stimulating state formation. "We might imagine a continuum," writes Charles Tilly, "from an imperial Russia in which a cumbersome state apparatus grew up to wrest military men and resources from a huge but uncommercialized economy, to a Dutch Republic which relied heavily on navies, ran its military forces on temporary grants from its city-dominated provinces, easily drew taxes from customs and excise, and never created a substantial central bureaucracy" (1990, 95). Commercialization promotes "free-floating resources" of the sort dear to Eisenstadt: men, money, and materials that can be directed toward state projects, including war, empire, and those prosaic processes that expanded state capacity, bureaucratization, and centralization. Some

¹² These areas experienced a protracted transitional period in which no one mode of production was dominant. As Sweezy puts it, "the forms of labor relations that were most common in the statistical sense were unstable and incapable of providing the basis of a viable social order" (1978 [1950], 51). Producers tended to be partially divorced from the land and no longer able to provide completely for their own subsistence, but whether this was due to colonial force, to enclosures (Cohen and Weitzman 1975, 161–76), to peasant by-employment (Kriedte 1981, 141), or to endogenous demographic growth (Tilly 1984) varied. See also Gould (1987).

sociologists, including Paul Sweezy (1978 [1950]) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1980), have gone so far as to argue that the expansion of markets was the major driving force in the process of development and differentiation in Europe. On the other hand, the passage from patrimonialism, when rulers relied on independent brokers or contractors to provide armed force and state loans, to a state's capacity to mobilize its own population and handle its fisc directly was mined with potential obstacles.¹³

Several related factors intervened between inflows of commercial capital and metropolitan politico-economic development during the centuries-long transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe. The first was property or class relations. Generally speaking, commercial expansion favors sustained development when capital has been released from feudal institutional restrictions, such as guilds and restrictive monopoly charters, and the class structure is organized around free wage labor. "Only under conditions of free wage labor will the individual producing units (combining labor power and means of production) be forced to sell in order to buy, to buy in order to survive and reproduce, and ultimately to expand and innovate to maintain this position in relationship to other competing productive units" (Brenner 1977, 32). Otherwise, as Robert Brenner argues, commercially driven development eventually runs up against the limits of a feudal agrarian economy. Those limits characterized most regions of Europe through the eighteenth century and even beyond, where peasantries were the primary engine of production and the surplus they produced continued to be exacted by political means by crowns, manors, churches, and the elites of other ruling institutions. In that context, the spread of markets may even slow productive innovation by intensifying lords' (and others') extra-economic coercion of the peasantry (Brenner 1978, 124–25; Dobb 1963 [1947], 42; see also Marx 1967 [1867], 325–31).

Any precapitalist mode of production structures the social space in which merchant capital is deployed. It is not simply that important trades and industries are closely linked to the agrarian foundation. The expansion of interregional markets, domestic and foreign, is also limited. In early modern Europe, these markets were in any case based on politically enforced monopolies or monopsonies of scarce goods rather than on the sale of mass quantities at low prices. In that context, particular

¹³ See Adams (1994b) for a more detailed assessment of the virtues and shortcomings of world-systems analysis in the development of the early modern Netherlands.

metropolitan merchant groupings could make their mark on political institutions, whereas others were denied the opportunity. Merchants could also exit the circuit of capital accumulation with relative ease. Even those who were emancipated from direct political controls were not systematically compelled by competitive pressures, as Mark Gould points out (1987, 129–35). They could withdraw their resources from trade or manufacturing and invest them in state privileges—a course of action resentfully rendered in several languages by the phrase "the betrayal of the bourgeoisie." A patrimonial politico-economic opportunity structure made that choice possible, and the greater profits and prestige to be had often made it desirable as well.

The second factor was the corporate organization of the elites based in local and regional governments, including but not limited to the large-scale merchants crucial to massive commercial and colonial projects. They could sometimes act in concert to oppose rulers' attempts to tax or otherwise extract resources or to compel rulers to adopt changes in politico-economic organization, whether for war-making or other state projects, including religious and dynastic aims. Under certain circumstances, including the familial ones that I explore later in this chapter and throughout the book, this capacity might issue in stable pacts among members of the elite grounded in one or more political institutions. And with the strengthening of lateral bonds came the possibility of pooling and managing vertical patronage relations, enabling elites to collectively mobilize their clients, even against the behest of monarchs. In this fashion, the urban merchant oligarchies could become part and parcel of state structures—they could become powerful rulers themselves. Of course, the development of enduring corporate bodies and even representative assemblies could strengthen monarchs and other superordinate rulers as well, by enabling them to tax the "landed and trading rich" with the latter's consent (Mann 1986, 477).¹⁴ As Thomas Ertman (1997, 28–34) argues in his analysis of the vicissitudes of constitutionalism and parliamentarism in early modern Europe, different forms of representation can act as independent influences on infrastructural development.

Corporate organization, and the kind of power and visibility with which it invested elites, also encouraged (and was implicated in) venal office-holding practices, which are now much less likely than representative assemblies to be

¹⁴ Charles Tilly (1990) also points to this possibility in his discussion of the "dangerous liaisons" between urban-based ruling elites and state builders in early modern Europe.

celebrated by historians and sociologists but which remain a crucial element of early modern European state formation all the same. Venality was a money-making instrument that enabled rulers to target influential elites (including big-time merchant capitalists) and to draw them into the embrace of the state. Rulers would typically sell or rent privileges and offices to aspirants for a certain period, in exchange for a lump sum or periodic payments. This was a key instance of the larger style of patrimonial accumulation and governance by which rulers created situations of artificial scarcity in the form of state-guaranteed economic privileges of one sort or another and awarded, loaned, or sold them to favored individuals or groups. Recall that privileges also incorporated a range of sovereign prerogatives, extending even to making war on foreign powers in the case of the chartered companies.

This style of conducting politics may seem a shaky foundation for predictable governance and accumulation—two key conditions for development. Rulers in feudal and early modern Europe who traded protection and justice for revenue not only proffered or withdrew favors at will, but often did so as a matter of expediency, to capture more resources or clout in the short run. Even the favored recipients of rulers' largesse could never count on its continuing on the agreed-on terms. Property rights—including claims to sovereign power—were liable to systematic violation. But political privilege often assumed a seemingly traditional fixity, even in the rare cases that rulers could afford to redeem it or had the power to override it, undergirded when corporate elites could collectively organize to defend their stake in the state. Thus, I argue in later chapters that venality and associated styles of patrimonial governance welded states to the political goals and reproduction of particular elites as those elites in turn tightened their grip on pieces of patrimonial power. Under certain conditions, this dynamic encouraged politico-economic rigidity, entrenched fragmentation of sovereignty, and diminished state capacity. Under others, it fostered plural, decentralized possibilities that might be seized by innovative individuals or groups, or even centralized revolution from above.

A third important factor intervening between commercialization and state building was the status of intercorporate political relations. The multiple sovereign corporations, loosely anchored in a number of European countries, led relatively autonomous lives as seekers after global territorial and trading rights. Just as Theda Skocpol posits with respect to full-blown states, corporations with sovereign rights were uneasily poised at the interstices, "between domestic socio-political orders and the transnational

relations within which they must maneuver for survival and advantage in relation to other states" (Skocpol 1985, 8; see also 1979, 29–31). They also interacted with other, similar sovereign corporations at home and abroad, and a goodly part of this interaction was armed, dangerous, and consequential for the emergent global order (Adams 1994b; Spruyt 1994; Thomson 1994). Corporations thus faced some pressures that were quite similar to those their parent states were experiencing. Sociologists and political scientists have repeatedly emphasized that European rulers' desperate search for unprecedented sums of money and credit for war, lest they be wiped off the map, often unwittingly reshaped states.¹⁵ So if they were to avoid being absorbed by competitors—if they were to eliminate their competitors instead—corporations had to create an infrastructure for their armed forces, both homegrown and mercenary, and keep up with technological innovations in war even as those innovations drove the costs of maintaining armed forces through the roof.

Metropolitan states could be a last line of resort for chartered companies in military or fiscal trouble. To the extent that this was the case, we might expect the companies' enthusiasm for waging war to drive metropolitan states' bureaucratization and centralization—if it didn't bankrupt them first. But war making and state making are not necessarily mutually reinforcing dynamics. The simultaneous existence of overlapping state and substate sovereignties multiplies the contingencies involved in sovereign state formation by several orders of magnitude. Contending corporations with pretensions to far-flung trade routes and territories can introduce military entanglements on multiple fronts. If those commitments come home to haunt metropolitan states, they are liable to invite what Paul Kennedy (1987) has called, in another context, imperial overextension, even politico-economic collapse. It is also possible that intercorporate conflicts and their ad hoc resolutions could spur metropolitan rulers' hesitant steps toward creating a normative framework transcending struggles among individual states—rules of the diplomatic game that might even serve as a functional substitute for making war.¹⁶ Or, of course, bankruptcy, political extinction or other neo-Darwinian nightmares might be the outcome. All of these moves in turn could affect

¹⁵ See, for example, Skocpol (1979), Tilly (1985, 1990), and Mann (1980, 1993).

¹⁶ There is not a lot of agreement among sociologists about the importance of this overarching framework. Contrast, for example, Poggi's claim that "among sovereign states there is no higher rationality or normative solidarity, only the exercise of distributive power, normlessness, and anarchy" (1990, 23–5) with Mann's "In multi-power-actor civilizations, like Europe or the modern West, geopolitical relations exist within a broader civilization

the companies and the politico-economic arrangements within the territories claimed by each European state.

Note that there were also openings for new forms of lateral concerted action here, even in the heat of competition or battle, new possibilities for men's thinking about their collective corporate selves and corporate others as potential allies, able to decide important matters without a ruler's intervention or say-so. This was heady stuff and potentially very dangerous to both the hierarchical organization of patrimonial rule and the stabilities of hegemony.

Given these intervening factors and the many indeterminacies they introduce, it is at the least premature—and probably wrong—to argue that merchant capital and companies had any one single impact on metropolitan development and state building. Perhaps they preempted economic development, as Maurice Dobb insists (1963 [1947], 121–22). But I think that Dobb is too hasty. The companies established the colonial system, after all, based largely on slave-plantation and settler colonies, which later served as a captured market for the metropole; under those conditions, and others, they may have acted as a “forced draught” fanning development at home, as Eric Hobsbawm has speculated with respect to England (1967, 46–47, 53–56; see also Luxemburg 1951 [1913]). We will have to see. It is clear, however, that there are simply no guarantees that expanding markets will cumulate in any particular type of state form or (more broadly) capitalist development in the metropole. This is so even if development is interpreted in a strictly economic sense, as Shiue (2003) shows in her comparison of economic development in China and early modern Europe. And politically, merchant capital may strengthen patrimonial politico-economic organization as it embeds conservative elite oligarchies into patrimonial states. The impact of merchant capital, especially the sovereign companies, simply cannot be settled in advance, without historical analysis.

The Familial State

My argument so far has dealt with the politico-economic aspects of state formation, taking off from Max Weber's classical commentaries on patrimonial

embodying transnational and transgovernmental power networks and norms” (1993, 50). Among students of international relations, Rosecrance (1986) is unusual in that he analyzes states as embodying distinctive norms.

evolution and devolution. This section ventures beyond that terrain, surveying the familial and gender-specific features of patrimonial politics. As many early modern contemporaries noticed, whether enviously or critically, the state builder, monied man, and family patriarch tended to be one and the same. This was no accident. Politically secured private accumulation promoted a man's honor, his family, and his hopeful line of descent; conversely, the reputation of his lineage qualified him to occupy lucrative state positions and to pass them along to his sons, nephews, and grandsons. In more structural terms, one of the general arguments of this book is that paternal authority and patriarchal status are core dimensions of patrimonial rule; entwined with the articulations of political privilege and property relations specific to the times, they could be expected to shape the development of the Dutch and other European states in a range of specific ways, as canvassed in the remainder of this book.

When we ponder the times and places when fathers ruled¹⁷—and not merely incidentally, but by virtue of their paternal status—we tend to think in terms of precapitalist, stateless societies. This is a reasonable reflex, encouraged by a vast anthropological literature on the symbols and practices of paternal power in these societies and on family lineages as primary political actors. But with the rise of capitalism and national states, it is generally suggested, kinship gives way to kingship, lineage control to formal administrative regulation, paternal power to a neutered politics or (in some feminist versions) generically enforced male dominance, and families fade from macropolitics. It is not too much to say that the administrative system in these primitive states, unlike the lineage or tribal structure in the stateless societies, “is never the kinship system writ large, but is organized on totally different principles” (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1958, quoted in Hinsley 1986 [1966]).¹⁸ Much important anthropological work charts the passage from kin-centered to statist systems. Nevertheless, such a stark conceptual division is useless for those of us interested in early modern Europe or in any other liminal period or place in which elite families and states meshed.

¹⁷ *When Fathers Ruled* is the evocative title of Ozment (1983), dealing with family life in Reformation Europe. More broadly, of course, “rule of the father” is the translation of the Greek *patriarchy*. Taking the term to index any belief or social system that awards men precedence and power on the basis of paternal status, I use this concept patriarchy to represent a tactical compromise between the narrowest definitions, stressing the exercise of paternal rights alone, and the most general, emphasizing male dominance.

¹⁸ See Gailey (1988) and Silverblatt (1987).

The exception for Europeanists—that is, the site in which analysts have traced commonalities or *longue durée* continuities with the pervasive familism of stateless societies—is of course the monarchy. It was in thirteenth-century England and France that “the hereditary right to the crown on the part of the eldest son became . . . deeply engrained as an ‘indefeasible right’ and an incontestable, if unwritten, law of the realm” (Kantorowicz 1957, 333). The *crown* itself was a useful fiction, and as such it interwove many symbolic strands, embodying hereditary royal privilege, sovereign rights, the composite body of king and household, and medieval legal traditions stressing the corporate oneness of father and son (381–82, 391–95). No doubt it was this particular religious tradition of corporate indissolubility that enabled rulers to accept corporate bodies as legitimate partners in rule—a trope that could be deployed to authorize later parliamentary actions and (as we see in chapters 5 and 6) the much later stirrings of democratic discourse. In any case, courtly rituals revolving around the royal and crypto-royal family-households of medieval and early modern Europe assumed these core meanings as a backdrop, in moments of opposition or parody as well as veneration and reconstitution.¹⁹

Ritualized representations of the crown, and of rulership more broadly, also dramatized the sexual division of labor inherent in courtly political culture. But it took much ideological and political labor to shore up the principles of gender difference institutionalized in European monarchies, as recent feminist work has shown.²⁰ Early modern European courts were organized around distinctions among men as well as the male-female hierarchies that today’s social scientists are more attuned to expect. Key to any anatomy of monarchical rule under patrimonialism are representations of relations between fathers and sons (and, by extension, more and less privileged sons) as dominant and subordinate masculinities ordered around images of fatherhood and filiality and the political relations among father-rulers conducted on the basis of their socially recognized paternal status.

The lineaments of stability of monarchical power, as we see in the following chapters, are also characteristic points of pressure. When a ruling sovereign is female or when a female regency is created to fill a hiatus in the male lineage, when a royal dynasty is being founded by a “new man”

¹⁹ See Wilentz’s (1985) edited collection on political ritual. The publicity of absolutist familial courtly ritual is beautifully captured by Gianfranco Poggi in a famous passage about the king of France (1978, 68–69).

²⁰ See, for example, Pateman (1988), Weil (2000), Jones (1993), and Miller (1998).

(dynastically speaking, a fatherless son), when a king fails to enforce gender hierarchies in his family-household, or is merely thought to have transgressed them in some way—these are standard situations in which we expect the gender-specific foundations of political order to be foregrounded and undermined. Insofar as the king’s authority is the mimetic basis for other men’s, local relations of paternity and filiality will also be disrupted. Thus, feminist theorists and historians have convincingly argued that chaotic monarchical gender orders destabilized rule in the prequel to the great revolutions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, which eventually unseated various father-kings in favor of fractious fraternal male citizenries.²¹

These insights, and the use of *patriarchy*, can be extended beyond monarchies so that it becomes possible to capture the various points of intersection between family and masculinity that were so central to elite political cultures of early modern Europe. The capacity to father children, for example, especially sons, was celebrated as a *sine qua non* of elite manhood as well as the fount of continuity of family lineages. Paternity was interpreted through the optic of official ideologies of masculine activity, creativity, and power that extended beyond lineal reproduction to a more general sense of political husbandry and direction.²² What I am signaling here is not only the centrality but also the cultural character of the symbol of the father-ruler, its historical plasticity, and potential appropriability by social actors—even women! When women were invested as monarchs in their own right, for example, as in the much-analyzed case of Elizabeth I of England, they were wont to emphasize supposedly paternal qualities and capacities alongside their femininity to enforce their pretensions to royal legitimacy.²³ Thus, my use of the concept of patriarchy is broader

²¹ Pateman (1988, chap. 4); Landes (1988, chap. 4); Hunt (1992, chap. 6). Adams (2005) discusses the patriarchal element of postmodernism in more detail.

²² In his discussion of late-medieval political theory, Kantorowicz registers the influence of a philosophical heritage shaped by Aristotelian notions of generation—including beliefs that seminal fluid is charged with power “deriving from the soul of the begetter and impressing itself on the son”—as well as the Stoic doctrine of “seminal principles,” all overlaid with a Christian religious twist (1957, 332). Given the close symbolic connection between male procreativity and patrimonial state power, it should not surprise us to find that courtly socialization practices dramatized the phallus. See, for example, Marvick’s analysis of a court doctor’s journal dealing with the socialization of Louis XIII of France (1986, chap. 3).

²³ See, for example, Axton (1977), and Helgerson (1992, 298) on Elizabeth I’s “empowering doubleness.” If kings had two bodies, one corporeal and the other organizational, then queens juggled at least three.

than the idea of a family form characterized by male headship (Secombe 1992, 30) and more historically precise than the use common in radical feminist theory, in which the term designates all forms of institutionalized male dominance (MacKinnon 1989). By patriarchy, I mean an image or ideology of paternal rule that may link familial with macropolitical, economic, or other sociocultural practices. Weber himself saw patriarchal domination not only as the purest logical form of traditional authority but as the historical seed of patrimonialism. His definition of *patrimonialism* actually has a patriarchal core. But as I have argued elsewhere (Adams 2005), Weber sees father rule as a natural rather than a sociocultural phenomenon: "The woman is dependent because of the normal superiority of the physical and intellectual energies of the male . . ." (Weber 1968 [1922], 1007). This is not surprising, given the times in which he wrote and the foundational role in his writings of conceptual oppositions associated, for Weber, with fixed notions of masculinity and femininity. Now, equipped with a sense of the cultural construction of principles of political authority and with more tools with which to analyze them, we can do better.²⁴

Nevertheless, sociological theories of state formation have remained remarkably resistant to specifically feminist concepts, observations, and insights and even to what every schoolchild knows: that elite families and states were intimately interlocked in early modern Europe. The sociology of patrimonial state power and systems of office-holding has bypassed the gendered, familial rules of reproduction of the system itself. This is a serious omission because, when the reproduction of monarchies and ruling elites rests on gendered family principles (including the symbolics of paternal authority, marriage, and inheritance), family patterns are also directly constitutive of societal modes of politico-economic reproduction. They help determine how political alliances are formed and how power is transferred, how new members of the elite are recruited, how political rule is legitimated, and when it founders. Yet analysts of European state formation have failed to capture these dimensions theoretically, even as they have repeatedly registered the empirical presence of family and gender in high, and especially courtly, politics.²⁵ In alerting us to these dimensions of feudal and early modern European monarchies,

²⁴ This includes, of course, the ways in which people produce notions of gender from their observations of biological sex differences—and what they take to be biological sex differences.

²⁵ One example is Perry Anderson's (1974a) otherwise superb work on the "lineages" of the absolutist state.

feminist theorists and historians have therefore made it possible to see exciting new distinctions and to deploy them analytically. "We believe," write Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner (1989), "that the concepts of social reproduction and gender allow for explanations that are more historical and dynamic, that recognize both human agency and social structure. It is in this way that history as a process of structuring can be more fully understood" (400). This book attempts to specify this belief to early modern Europe, to show that gender and family are neglected constituents of the development of state power and institutions, and to outline as precisely as possible the historical mechanisms by which gender and family made a difference.

Feminist theory, for its part, has failed to address and incorporate sociological theories of state formation. As a result, feminist analyses of early modern European politics have exhibited certain generic gaps and problems. The monarch or court is often elided with the whole of high politics, so that one site comes to stand in for the sprawling, contested network of patrimonial governance.²⁶ Conversely, the state tends to be interpreted as if it were analogous, if not reducible, to a single royal family. A third problem is the collapse of historical institutional analysis into the cultural space, most commonly when state building is folded into the construction of national belongingness. State and nation formation may well be related—I believe they are—but they are not the same thing. Finally, and most problematically, contemporaries' commentaries and philosophical meditations on states are taken to reflect what states actually were. Landes (1988), Pateman (1988), and Jones (1993), for example, have served up brilliant critical rereadings of Rousseau (Landes) and the classical English contract theorists (Pateman and Jones), but have also advanced broad claims about state formation per se on that basis. All of these are metonymical moves, taking the part for the whole. They elide important distinctions among states, on the one hand, and obscure similarities between monarchical-absolutist and republican-establisment politics, on the other.

In particular, in my opinion, they miss the potential political importance of familial coalitions of male officeholders implanted in the wider apparatus of rule. The male heads of elite families sought control over state offices

²⁶ See, for example, Hunt (1992) and Pateman (1988). This problem also plagues Helgerson's (1992) ground-breaking work on forms of nationhood in early modern England. As he himself says, disarmingly, "In compiling this list I have done little more than add 'state' to formulations that I made earlier in terms of the monarchy."

and perquisites, the source of prestige and revenue as well as decision-making power, and consolidated the position of their lineages by exchanging women in complex intermarriages. In struggling to ensure that their sons, their patrimony, and their name endured and prospered, elite family heads also created family mythologies honoring their own lineages and their right, as fathers, to govern. They successfully laid claim to parts of their respective states and their corporate projections in the Netherlands, France, England, Iberia, and elsewhere in Europe. They converted positions of sovereignty into the property of their descendants when they seized hold of inheritable offices and privileges, both individually and in coalitions or cliques. This appropriation established elite authority and identity on an intergenerational basis, I argue, while wedding the patrimonial state and company policy to concrete family goals.²⁷ Another strand of feminist work can help us signally at this point, and I explicitly draw on it in the succeeding chapters: the excellent work of historians—including historians of gender—who have dealt with family and office-holding in Old Regime Europe. One theoretical challenge that this book takes on is to further develop and integrate arguments and findings about how elites created and were disciplined by the familial dimension of patrimonial privilege, dependent on and in struggle against monarchs and their functional substitutes, the avatars of overarching principles of ruling fatherhood. “Can’t live with ’em, can’t live without ’em” might have been the motto of both rulers and elites with respect to one another—they were all part of the collective ruler and the familial apparatus of governance.

As the patriarchal family and lineal networks and ideologies were woven into the web of patrimonial power, they formed what we might call a familial state. With this rather abstract term, I mean to highlight two points. First, gendered familial criteria are constitutive of macropolitical authority. In the case of early modern Europe, rulers—not simply monarchs but also corporate elites—grounded their political claims on the basis of hereditary qualification and patriarchal power rather than on the basis of adherence to rational-legal procedure or other substantive standards of justice (to put the issue in Max Weber’s terms). Second, the important political offices and privileges are distributed to agents on the

²⁷ van Dijk and Roorda (1971), Stone and Stone (1986), and Giesey (1977) have published pioneering historical work on elite families, marriage and inheritance practices, and the pursuit of offices and perquisites in the early modern Netherlands, England, and France, respectively. None has systematically studied the mutual influence of those family practices and state development.

basis of their publicly performed gender identities, their perceived family ties and position. Rather than portraying elite patrilineages and kin groups as simply having been displaced by states in Europe, therefore, these dimensions help make sense of the periods—centuries long, in Europe—in which the two were closely articulated.

Precisely when—that is, at what historical conjuncture—certain elites implanted their families in states and sovereign spinoffs was also potentially important for politico-economic development. Stephen Krasner’s (1984) model of “punctuated equilibrium” in politics, derived from Steven Jay Gould’s and Niles Eldredge’s (1977) concept, holds that the stable social arrangements that structure politics-as-usual are periodically disrupted by crises that undermine these arrangements, opening up the possibility of abrupt institutional transformation and thus for heated conflicts over the shape of change. In patrimonial contexts, the family coalitions that control the state during these fluid periods have a decisive say over future institutional arrangements and policy. They were an “initiating nucleus” or clique, a “small exclusive group of persons with a common interest,” desire, or goal (Dalton 1959, chap. 3); they could be expected to forward the goals of particular lineages and kin groups, as well as staking claims to the state on behalf of family members and clients. The specificity of these groups, as well as the manner of their political installation, lay behind their differential capacity to take advantage of what Ronald Burt Jr. (1992) calls “structural holes” in the global competition for power and resources (including colonies). Leading representatives of these groups also devised broad interelite pacts, deals, or settlements that regulated the form, enforcement, and intergenerational supply and demand of patrimonial privilege. The Dutch elite pioneered key aspects of these patrimonial pacts, as we see in chapter 5, as they did so many other early modern innovations that were later picked up and elaborated by contending European elites.

But if patrimonial state formation can be seen as a process of tying together nodes in a single cartel or network, in mutable arrangements that are variably centralized and contingently integrated, then elite family pacts or settlements in moments of political crisis are also likely to affect the long-term possibilities for political flexibility. Along these lines, Mancur Olson (1984) has argued persuasively that the repeated rise and institutionalization of cliques or power groups are a more general dynamic that has fostered institutional stagnation in a wide variety of societies the world over. But not always, I hasten to add. In the chapters that

follow, I explore the dynamics associated both with the familism of these particular cliques or groups and with patriarchy as their articulating political principle.²⁸ I also examine the breakdown and—in England's case—supersession of the familial mode of political organization. There the ruling families had a hand in their own taming and transcendence.

By now readers will have gathered that I do not see gendered family practices as the sole dimension or cause of social change. In the fabric of history, they were but one thread, although an important and analytically repressed one. In the following chapters, I avoid the synecdochal leanings of feminist theory, particularly when associated with monocausal claims regarding gender and political transformation. Strong theories are good, and this tendency to theoretical closure testifies, in a backhanded way, to the compelling coherence of the corpus of feminist work. But reducing the entirety of early modern European states to fathers writ large (or at most, families or lineages) will not do—patrimonial polities were broader than that. Elite family-households, kin groups, and patrilineages functioned as core institutional centers, around which formed institutions that departed from the established ways of conducting business and new organizations controlling the principal concentrated means of regulation and coercion within territories in Europe and farther abroad. The top-most echelons of rule could remain obdurately familial while the lower-level offices were rationalized, bureaucratized, and staffed by patronage ties.²⁹ This at least was a possible line of development.

I examine two key sites of institutional innovation in the chapters to come: the chartered companies and other corporate bodies, and the political crucible of interfamily relations itself. These patrimonial organizations were families embedded in states that they were inventing as they went along. Thus, a patrimonial family regime could institute rational-legal bureaucratic reforms, and those reforms could in turn shape family-style rule. And given the decentered nature of patrimonial authority in western Europe, such change was possible in any apparatus and at all levels. I identify these points of transition while asking several larger questions:

²⁸ In fact, this wider optic helps resolve Olson's own puzzlement about France, which he takes to be an anomaly with respect to his model.

²⁹ As Parsons (1966, 21–25) suggests, it may be useful to think of a state taking shape as political activities are organized in specific institutions and roles in the nascent state sector are handed out according to a set of distinct, specialized requirements rather than according to incumbents' roles in other institutions—including the family. But this is useful only if we keep in mind that, once instituted, the lines between state and nonstate can again be blurred.

When will family regimes seek to block such reforms? favor a patronage system in which offices are structured bureaucratically but officeholders continue to be recruited according to particularistic—including familial—criteria? press for a revolution from above by abolishing patrimonial privilege altogether?

Family and gender are perennial and protean building blocks of political authority. They are also unstable and dynamic concepts. This has not prevented them from profoundly shaping and fixing political discourses and forms of governance, which in early modern Europe included monarchies, republics, chartered companies, and all manner of corporate organizations. These discourses and institutions, in turn, changed the definitions of masculinity and femininity in the early modern elites, as well as more broadly, and the contours of family behavior and the definitions of family itself.