

Revisiting the Golden Age and its heroes

A historical comparative research into the changes in the public representation of the Dutch Golden Age and its heroes: Michiel de Ruyter and Jan Pieterszoon Coen.

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Abstract

In recent years the public representation of the Dutch Golden Age has been under revision. The current debate about the legacy and celebration of the Golden Age arises from a growing desire for an inclusive history of the Netherlands. The increasing resistance to the glorification of the Golden Age and its heroes has led to a revised public representation of this period. This thesis answers the question how the public representation of the Golden Age, and specifically its heroes, have changed over time. The goal of this research is to further explore the relations of shared memory and Dutch nationalism in connection to the Golden Age, with the focus on the changes in the heroic status of two Golden Age heroes. By combining theories of nationalism, shared memory and post-colonialism as well as the use of methods in conceptual history and comparative history, three main conclusions were drawn: (1) The Golden Age term was used more often between 1945 and 1995, and almost always expressed a positive or glorifying sentiment. (2) The comparison shows that Michiel de Ruyter's (1607-1676) heroic status increased with the influence of post-colonialism for his position on multiculturalism and anti-slavery. However, Jan Pieterszoon Coen's (1587-1629) heroic status has been partly tarnished because he was framed as a symbol of colonialism and mass murder. (3) The decreasing heroic status of Coen did not seem to affect the public representation of the Golden Age as an entity. Partially because his violent actions were seen as extraordinary and were exclusively ascribed to him and not to the zeitgeist of the Golden Age. Many thus dissociated themselves from Coen's unnecessary violence but honoured the memory of the Golden Age.

Keywords: Golden Age – Nationalism – Heroification – Shared memory – Michiel de Ruyter – JP Coen.

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Introduction

In contemporary Dutch society there is an on-going debate about the legacy of the Golden Age (1587-1713). This discussion became heated on 12 September 2019, when the *Amsterdam Museum* announced that they replaced the term ‘Golden Age’ with seventeenth century.¹ The curator of this museum, Tom van der Molen, provides substantiation for the replacement in his publication; *Whose Golden Age?*² In this essay he expressed his concerns about the Golden Age terminology, which according to him, provides a one-sided perspective on this period - a narrative of glory, artistic and literary progress, wealth and economic improvement.³ He argued that alongside the societal progress, the majority of the population experienced poverty, and perhaps more significant, in the name of this societal progress many Dutchmen were involved in dehumanizing actions, such as slavery and murder.⁴ Van der Molen argues that a name change provides more room for a holistic and inclusive framing of this period.

There is, however, also critique on the suggestion for name change. For instance, according to historian Maarten Prak, the term Golden Age reaches a wide audience: “You can then use the term to also address the dark side, the other story. Precisely through the emergence and use of the term Golden Age, facets such as slavery have been addressed.”⁵ Politicians have also responded with astonishments to the name change. The Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, for example, expressed his disbelief: “bullocks, I get so tired of these sorts of things. Holland was in the Golden Age as powerful as the United States now. We can be extremely proud of that.”⁶

This public debate about the Golden Age reflects a larger debate about the way the history is projected and often used for the promotion of Dutch nationalism.⁷ Military historian Christ Klep stated that already in the early nineteenth century the creation of myths around the glorious Golden Age were a significant part of the development of Dutch nationalism.⁸ Referring to Ernest Renan’s

¹ Tom van der Molen, “Whose golden Age On A Term That's Not Fit For Purpose”, *Amsterdams Museum* : 2019 9 pages [online source] consulted December 12, 2019 <https://www.amsterdammuseum.nl/en/amsterdam-museum-stop-using-term-%E2%80%98golden-age%E2%80%99>

² Ibid.

³ Maarten Prak, *Gouden Eeuw, Het raadsel van de Republiek*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

⁴ Van der Molen, “Whose Golden Age?”

⁵ “Nooit meer Gouden Eeuw, interview with Maarten Prak & Suze Zijlstra” RadioNPO1, presentator Laura Stek, interview with Maarten Prak. September 15, 2019. <https://www.nporadio1.nl/ovt/onderwerpen/43754-2019-09-15-nooit-meer-gouden-eeuw>

⁶ Mark Rutte, “Rutte over het weghalen Gouden Eeuw wat een onzin.” *Telegraaf*, September 13, 2019. Prime Minister the Netherlands, <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/1775123184/rutte-over-weghalen-gouden-eeuw-wat-een-onzin>.

Translated by the author from Dutch, original quote: “Onzin, ik word hier zo moe van. Het geweest Holland was in de Gouden Eeuw net zo machtig als de VS nu. Daar mogen we razend trots op zijn”.

⁷ Stefan Berger, “National histories and the promotion of nationalism in historiography – the pitfalls of methodological nationalism,” In *Writing the history of nationalism*, ed. Stefan Berger and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 35.

⁸ Christ Klep, *Van wereldmacht tot braafste jongetje: onze militaire identiteit door de jaren heen*, (Amsterdam: Polak en van Gennep, 2019), 18.

famous speech of 1882, he emphasized that not only remembering but also forgetting the past had been an important part of the construction of the nation.⁹ In the Netherlands, Klep argued, we have witnessed a constant but highly selective process of remembering the Golden Age.¹⁰

Klep showed on the other hand, that nationalism and selective memory, and thus the glorification of the Golden Age, has been under review for some time. The discussion about the Golden Age and its place in Dutch history is thus not a new discussion. For instance, in 1941 historian Johan Huizinga published a book called *De Nederlandsche beschaving in de zeventiende eeuw*, in which he made clear that the term Golden Age does not resonate with the experiences of the Golden Age.¹¹ More recently the public opinion about the representation of famous historical figures of the Golden Age has become subject of debate.¹² For instance, memory activists assailed the statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen in 2011.¹³ According to Yifat Gutman, memory activists seek to influence public debate by using past oriented politics and by rewriting and revisiting history.¹⁴

The current debate about the legacy and celebration of the Golden Age arises from a renewed interest in a more inclusive and holistic account of Dutch history.¹⁵ There is a lot of research into the Golden Age, presenting it as a culturally, economically and artistically progressive time, which often also includes the more negative aspects of the period.¹⁶ This thesis will therefore focus on the changes in public representation of the Golden Age over time. This will give insight in the way history is projected in relation to nationalism and the Golden Age, an overview of change in this perception is missing.

In this thesis I will explore the relation between Dutch history and nationalism and representations of the Golden Age, with a focus on changes in the heroic status of Golden Age heroes. This approach of heroism gives insight in how the Golden Age has been remembered. According to Anthony Smith, heroes have been used by nations to provide people a sense of morality and to promote certain qualities. Heroes have often been used as an image of the good and used by the state

⁹ Ernest Renan, *Wat is een natie?* translated by Coos Huijsen & Geerten Walling, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2013), 57

¹⁰ Klep, "Onze militaire identiteit door de eeuwen heen", 20.

¹¹ Johan Huizinga, *Nederlands beschaving in de zeventiende eeuw*. (Haarlem: Edition Fac Simile, 1941), 176-177.

¹² This discussion is not only visible in the Netherlands. All over the world heroes of the past are stripped from society. For instance, in Bristol (UK) and in Belgium different statues of heroes involved in slavery or other dehumanizing actions are removed. In this thesis the focus is on the Dutch Context, however the trends visible in the Netherlands also seem to reflect worldwide societal change.

¹³ ANP Redactie, "Statue JP Coen back in Hoorn", Parool, October 19, 2011. <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/beeld-jp-coen-terug-in-hoorn-kosten-20-000-euro~bac82719/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F%22>

¹⁴ Yifat Gutman, "Looking backward to the future: counter-memory as oppositional knowledge production in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," *Current Sociology*, no. 1, 55. (January 2017): 65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115584644>

¹⁵ Over the last weeks there seems to be a new wave of criticism towards the role of shared memory in society in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. Which resulted in the removal of several statues all over the world by memory activist. However due to the timing of this thesis this is not part of my research, I refer here to the removal of the Golden Age term in several places in the public domain which highlighted in the last months of 2019.

¹⁶ For instance, Maarten Prak, Christ Klep, Johan Huizinga, Pieter Lodewijk Muller.

as a nationalist symbol. The way the public representation of heroes changes over time, gives thus insight in the way nationalistic sentiment changes.¹⁷ In the first chapter, I will further explain these relations. In short, this thesis will thus focus on the changing public representation of the Golden Age in the Netherland and answer the question: *How did the public representation of the Golden Age and its heroes change over time?*

To fully grasp how the public representation of heroes might have changed over time, influential movements, such as globalisation and post colonialism, will be discussed. My hypothesis is that the public representation of the Golden Age and its heroes has been altered while Dutch society received new information about the history of slavery and other dehumanizing events for which their nation has been responsible in its colonial past. In the 1980s, the post-colonial critique grew significantly around the world, with influential publications such as Edward Said's *Orientalism*.¹⁸

Alongside, Dutch society changed by influences of multiculturalism and globalization which altered the societal ideals of the Netherlands from a more nationalistic view into a tolerant and 'anti-nationalist nationalism'.¹⁹ Josip Kesip and Jan Willem Duyvendak explain this anti-nationalist self-image as "the rejection of the bad nationalism and the acceptance of good nationalism."²⁰ Kesip and Duyvendak argue that this has produced a somewhat paradoxical self-image: Dutch identity, in their view, has been based on a common anti-nationalist attitude, which itself is a form of nationalism. This provides the Dutch with certain lightness towards nationalistic statements and this often has created a self-embarrassment of the Netherlands, which in his turn provides the rejection of dominant nationalistic narratives.²¹ This, according to my hypothesis, has promoted a more critical view of the Golden Age period in the Netherlands.

Due to a combination of post-colonialism, multiculturalism and the new self-image of Dutch society the traditional worship of this era has thus been undermined. The inclusion of different cultures, religions and backgrounds in Dutch society, especially during the second half of the 20th century has paved the ground for a historical controversy, ultimately also affecting the status of its national heroes.

Methods

To test this hypothesis, I use different methods, most importantly a conceptual history method of the Golden Age term, and a historical comparison of two significant heroes of the seventeenth century.

¹⁷ Maria Grever and Kees Ribbens, *Nationale identiteit en meervoudig verleden*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 128.

¹⁸ Reference to: Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Pantheon, 1978).

¹⁹ Josip Kešić and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "Anti-nationalist nationalism: the paradox of Dutch national identity." *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no.3 (May 2016), 1. DOI: 10.1111/nana.12187.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

The conceptual history method gave insight in how the meaning of the term Golden Age changed over time. With the help of a process tracing method, using the Dutch online newspaper bank, *Delpher*, the amount of times the term was used in newspapers was analysed, that is, during the period from 1800-1995, which includes the entire range of the database. Then I analysed the context in which the term was used to indicate what sentiment was reinforced by using the term from 1941 onwards.^{22,23}

Newspapers reinforce of nationalistic sentiment and are a useful source for studying public reinterpretations of the past. Seth Lewis argues that newspapers are a way of expressing nationalism. Drawing on the influential theories of nationalism by Benedict Anderson²⁴ and Micheal Billig,²⁵ he emphasized: “From the start, the newspaper has had an important role in creating and sustaining imagined communities. It forges a national history, a shared sense of place, as it links time and space.”²⁶ Further elaboration about the method and results of this conceptual history method will be provided in chapter two.

In order to give a substantiated answer to the question how the public representation of the Golden Age heroes changed over time, I offer a comparative study between two heroic figures of the Golden Age. The two historical figures compared are Michiel de Ruyter²⁷ and Jan Pieterszoon Coen.²⁸ De Ruyter was the commander of the entire Dutch Armada during the first, second and third Anglo-Dutch wars. He was the second Dutchman who retained a statue in the Netherlands and because of his heroic status already during his life, detectable for instance in his nickname *bestevaer*, which means great grandfather. De Ruyter has been one of the most named individuals from the Golden Age and sometimes even named as the founder of the Netherlands. Coen had the function of *Gouverneur Generaal* for the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) and was the founder of Batavia in 1619, the central city of the overseas empire of the Netherlands. His reputation is controversial and was already so during his life. De Ruyter and Coen are compared because of three main reasons. First, they both are named often in current debates about the legacy of the Golden Age. Second, both were seen as heroes at the end of the nineteenth century and were celebrated with statues in their honour. Third, at first glance, it seems that although they were both considered heroes the

²² The second and third step of this research will also be focussed on the period after 1941, the publication of Huizinga. However, it may be that sometimes the analysis will refer to episodes before 1941.

²³ The research of Tom van der Molen is not an academic publication, however his research suggests that after around 1940 the golden age term is used a lot more than in the years before. It is suspected that my research will have a similar outcome.

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, (New York: Verso: revised edition, 2016).

²⁵ Micheal Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (Londen: Sage, 1995).

²⁶ Seth C. Lewis, "News, nationalism, and the imagined community: The case of bilingual journalism in Spain." *Journalism Studies* 9, no. 3 (April 2008), 416. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700801999212>.

²⁷ Michiel de Ruyter 1607-1676, was a Dutch seafarer in the seventeenth century. His nickname in his day was *bestevaer*. Roughly translated as grandfather or greatest seafarer.

²⁸ Jan Pieterszoon Coen or JP Coen, 1587-1629. Was Gouverneur – Generaal for the VOC in the East. He was the founder of Batavia.

protectory of their heroic status diverged over time. De Ruyter's heroic status increased over the last years, whereas Coen's heroic status seems to be decreasing. In chapters three and four specific descriptions of my methods will be explained, and the changing status of the two national heroes will be analysed.²⁹

Thesis structure

The first chapter discusses concepts used in this thesis, such as the theory of nationalism, the Golden Age, the theory of heroification and post-colonialism.

The second chapter concerns the way the term Golden Age is represented over time. The goal of this chapter is to show how and in what context the term Golden Age is used over time. This will give insight in how the Golden Age is worshiped over time.

The third chapter focuses on the public representation of the legacy of De Ruyter. This chapter focusses on the way he and his legacy are described and worshiped over time. His heroic status will give insight into the way De Ruyter and the Golden Age are idealised or rejected and the developments that have led to a shift in their heroic status.

The last chapter offers a description of the changes in heroic status of Coen. Following a similar construction as the chapter about De Ruyter. With the use of Coen as a comparison to De Ruyter insight will be gathered in what is still remembered and celebrated and will give insight in how the Golden Age is worshiped.

In the conclusion a comparison between the heroic status of Coen and De Ruyter will provide an answer to the main question how the public representation of the Golden Age and its heroes changed over time.

²⁹ In Appendix A further substantiation for the case selection is provided.

Chapter 1 Theories, Concepts and Historiography

This thesis focusses on the changes in public representation of heroes of the Golden Age period in the Netherlands. To conduct this analysis this chapter will explore theories and concepts that are used throughout this thesis. The main concepts and theories explained here are the relationship of nationalism with memory, the relationship between nationalism, heroification and Golden Ages and the theory of post colonialism. Related to the Dutch context and specifically the Golden Age period.

1.1 Nationalism and memory

Before I elaborate on the connection between the concept of nationalism and Golden Ages, I will discuss the concept of nationalism and the relation to shared memory to elaborate on my understandings of nationalism and the application of this term in my thesis.

Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, three main scholars of nationalism in the west, explain the origin of nationalism as a product of modernization.³⁰ All three fall in the modernist school of nationalism, but they differ slightly in their views on what nationalism entails.³¹ Anderson sees nationalism as the creation of an imagined political community, “imagined as both sovereign and inherently limited.”³² It is imagined because there is no possibility that all members of a society know each other, but still there is a feeling of connection between inhabitants of a nation. It is imagined as limited because a nation has, however elastic, boundaries and it is imagined as sovereign because nationalism arose after the break with dynastic realms, which decentralised power to all citizens.³³ Gellner also sees nationalism as a product of modernisation, however they differ on which part of modernization became a catalyst for nationalism.³⁴ Gellner explains nationalism, and the creations of nations in general, on the basis of industrialisation,³⁵³⁶ while Anderson bases his theory on print capitalism.³⁷ Anderson argues that print-capitalism created the possibility of communication through homogenous empty time, which reinforced the need for an imagined nation. Anderson’s argumentation is thus based on a constructivist approach to nationalism, “which holds

³⁰ Berger, “National histories and promotion of nationalism”, 20.

³¹ Ibid. 39.

³² Anderson “Imagined communities,” 6.

³³ Ibid. 6.

³⁴ Berger, “National histories and promotion of nationalism”, 22.

³⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 1.

³⁶ Haim Gerber, “The limits of contractedness: memory an nationalism in the Arab Middle East”, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10, no. 3, (June 2004), 252, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.2004.00166.x>.

³⁷ Anderson “imagined communities,” 26.

that truth, knowledge and reality are socially constructed.”³⁸ However Gellner uses a more functionalistic approach to nationalism and searches for one overall theory on nationalism.

Eric Hobsbawm argues that nationalism is created simultaneously with modernization. Hobsbawm theory is similar to the theory of Gellner, however he states that there is not one definition of nationalism or the nation. For Hobsbawm nationalism is an ideology, which requires a set of conditions, such as political, technological, administrative and economic features, to rise and to spread.³⁹

In contrast to these modernist views on nationalism, other scholars such as Anthony Smith, take an evolutionist perspective.⁴⁰ Smith states that nations are in general modern, but they do have a connection with earlier categories, communities and memories.⁴¹ Smith focusses on the relation between nationalism and shared memory. He adapts the theory of Ernest Gellner, by opposing his creationist view of nations and implying an evolutionist view. This evolutionist view is based on the role of shared memories of a collective past, which according to Smith “nations require shared memories to give their often heterogenous citizenry a common habitat, a source of pride and dignity, and a common destiny.”⁴² However, in nation building and the continuous legitimation of the nation, Gellner, Anderson, Smith and Hobsbawm, all acknowledge that shared memory plays a part in nationalism.⁴³

Above a debate about the origin of the theory of nationalism and nations in general is described. In this thesis nationalism will be based upon the concept of nationalism, as inherently imagined, in combination with the concept of shared memory.

The role of shared memory in the theory of nationalism can be seen in different ways. On the one hand, according to Maria Grever, shared memory, that will be defined as “a specific type of historical consciousness, which refers to the formation of dominant historical images within a community or society through influential texts, monuments, stamps, rituals, national anniversaries and memorial days” forms the basis of historical culture.⁴⁴ It can be seen as the nation's cultural background, based on shared historical experiences, that are recognised by members of the society. For Grever, a sense of historical consciousness has to be central in order to experience a connection to a society.⁴⁵ Anderson also sees the importance of a shared memory for a nation, according to him,

³⁸ Christian Wicke, “Constructivism in the history of nationalism since 1945”, In *Writing the history of nationalism*, ed. Stefan Berger and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury, 2019): 131.

³⁹ Anthony Smith, “Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner’s Theory of Modernity,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 2, no.3 (November, 1996B): 373, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8219.1996.tb00004.x>.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 375.

⁴¹ Ibid, 388.

⁴² Ibid, 384.

⁴³ Ibid, 388.

⁴⁴ Maria Grever, “The pantheon of feminist culture: women’s movements and organization of memory,” *Gender and History*, (December 2002): 365, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00062>.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 366

this can create a sense of belonging to the nation and can provide the basis of the shared culture.⁴⁶ So the concept of shared memory plays a significant role in the creation of an imagined community or invented tradition, because the shared memory of a collective past can legitimize action and the cement group cohesion.⁴⁷

On the other hand, there is also a risk in the combination of shared memory and shared history and nationalism according to Berger.⁴⁸ He expresses his concerns with the changeability and the malleability in different context of historiographical nationalism. This concern holds that history writers on nationalism often play a role in promoting nationalism. Berger suggest that national histories have to be written with high self-reflexivity in order to avoid bias, high self-reflexivity opens different ways history can be written.

Taking the concerns of Berger into account, I will use the concept of shared memory⁴⁹ in combination with the concept of nationalism, as inherently imagined.

1.2 Nationalism, heroification and Golden Ages

Anthony Smith emphasizes the significant place that shared memories have for the formation of nations.⁵⁰ This shared memory of a collective past often consist of a Golden Age. Smith defines Golden Ages as: “the idealized memories of a Golden Age, or Golden Ages, of virtue, heroism, beauty, learning, holiness, power and wealth, an era distinguished for its collective dignity and external prestige.”⁵¹ Their significant role in nation formation is based on four functions, according to Smith. The first function is that a Golden Age can provide a normative framework for an evolving community. The memory or a Golden Age helps to define what can be seen as desirable qualities and what can be seen as abnormal or unwanted behaviour. A second function of the ideal of Golden Ages can be found in the stimulation of regeneration. This can be seen in the recreation of the ideal of former generations. A third function of the memory of a Golden Age can be seen in the suggestion of potential through filiation. Smith states that “The Golden Ages reveal to the latter-day community its ‘authentic’ self and bids it rediscovers and realize that self under quite different conditions.”⁵² The fourth and last function of the memory of Golden Ages is that it is closely connected to “a sense of collective destiny.”⁵³

⁴⁶ Anderson, “Imagined communities”, 201.

⁴⁷ Grever, “Women’s movements and organization of memory,” 367.

⁴⁸ Berger, “National histories and promotion of nationalism,” 39.

⁴⁹ As explained in section 1.2

⁵⁰ Anthony Smith, “The resurgence of nationalism? Myth and Memory in the renewal of Nations”, *British journal of sociology* 47, no. 4, (December: 1996A), 583, doi:10.2307/591074.

⁵¹ Ibid, 583.

⁵² Ibid, 584.

⁵³ Ibid, 584.

In other words, remembering Golden Ages in the past provides a community with a normative character and simultaneously creates a sense of direction, regeneration and potential. The memory of a Golden Age can even justify self-sacrifice in name of the nation. Often the ones that have are announced to be heroes, their value system and character often serve as an example for contemporary citizens.⁵⁴ In other words, the shared memory of a Golden Age in its entirety is based on the combined qualities, actions and efforts of heroes of that period, which provides contemporary citizens with example figures. Nataliya Donilova and Ekaterina Kolpinskaya further investigate the role of heroification, which can be seen as a discursive device of encouraging politically and morally desirable behaviour.⁵⁵ They explain that heroes are often used to motivate people in acting appropriately and responsible in the interest of the common good.⁵⁶ Therefore they argue that most heroes that are part of historical consciousness can be seen as ultimate do-gooders. However, they state that the concept of heroes needs to be stretched so it also can include contemporary heroes like celebrity icons, this is necessary because of a visible change in contemporary popular heroism.⁵⁷

The concept stretching of heroism to include contemporary heroes in heroism studies suggested by Donilova and Kolpinskaya, may not be relevant in this case because seventeenth century heroes are not the new heroes they focus on. However, the underlying change they describe in what can be seen as a hero, is an interesting component to my question in the changes of heroic status of heroes of the seventeenth century.

In this paragraph, I have elaborated on the theory on heroism and Golden Ages in connection to nationalism. In short, it can be said that the memory of Golden Ages can provide a normative framework for a society and that every Golden Age needs heroes who represent these normative values. The concept of heroification has been addressed in order to explain the significant role that heroes have in the creation of a nation. In the next section I will focus on the influence of post – colonialism on the memory of the Golden Age of the Netherlands.

1.3 Post-Colonialism and the Dutch Golden Age

The Dutch Golden Age is seen as the period that roughly can be translated to the seventeenth century. During this period the Netherlands was called *De Republiek der Zeven Vereenigde Nederlanden*. It consisted of seven independent states, led by a governor, and roughly consisted of the same area as the current Netherlands. For this thesis a full description of this time period is unfruitful, a brief

⁵⁴ Ibid, 585

⁵⁵ Nataliya Donilova & Ekaterina Kolpinskaya, “The politics of heroes through the prism of popular heroism”, *British Politics* 15, no.1, (March, 2019): 1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41293-019-00105-8>

⁵⁶ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 1.

description to provide context will suffice. The sixteen and early seventeenth century was a period characterized by ongoing struggle and turmoil. This struggle was mostly focused about the way religion was exerted between protestants and Catholics. The freedom of religion for citizens of the republic, signed by Willem van Oranje, provoked an eighty-year war with surrounding countries who were opposed to this freedom of religion.⁵⁸ During this period the republic was not yet an independent country but was ruled by different governors from surrounding areas. In 1581 the Spanish king was deposed and replaced by a French governor. Only in 1588 the Netherlands became a republic deciding that the sovereignty no longer was attributed to a king or governor, but to the states.⁵⁹ The Republic itself, however, was not undivided, there was a long conflict between royalist and statesmen.

The Golden Age of the Netherlands started during this conflict and the conflict itself was part of the period.⁶⁰ This resulted in overseas battles and rivalry but also in battles and wars closer to home. The newly formed republic found room to invest in overseas trade and grew out to be a significant player in world trade.⁶¹ The Dutch Golden Age coincided with the age of colonialism and the Netherlands was an active player in the colonialization of the east. During the Golden Ages the Netherlands was involved in slavery, colonialization and plundering of foreign lands and wars. Although the dehumanizing action, the Golden Age was for a long time mostly remembered for its wealth, the intellectual and industrial development, and the art and craftsmanship this era brought to the Netherlands.

This memory of the Golden Age was however altered through time, one of these alterations was the result of post colonialism, in chapter three and four this will be applied to the changes in heroic status, but a short description will help to understand the change in society.

Post-colonial theory highlighted around 1975-1980, one of the earliest and most influential publication was Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, published in 1978. In *Orientalism* Said emphasized that the world became divided in the 'West' and the 'East', after the colonial ages.⁶² But that this distinction is still part of the reason how we look at the world. He called this phenomenon 'orientalism', which he described as "an institution which then provided the lens through which the 'Orient' would be viewed and controlled; but equally this control itself spawned these ways of knowing, studying, believing and writing."⁶³ In other words; due to colonialism the world got divided in the civilized west and the other, uncivilized colonies. This projection on the world became part of

⁵⁸ Jur van Goor, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen Koopman-Koning* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020), 14-15.

⁵⁹ Prak, "Gouden Eeuw", 24-32.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 73.

⁶¹ Ibid, 55.

⁶² Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Pantheon, 1978), 94.

⁶³ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, (London Routledge, 2015, 3 ed.) 61.

the legitimization and the self-conception of the West.⁶⁴ Colonialism therefore is not only part of history; the consequences are still discernible in society.⁶⁵

This post colonialist critique also influenced the shared memory of colonial times in the Netherlands. It opened up renewed critique towards the Dutch role in colonialism, imperialism and especially towards slavery and genocide. Post colonialist critique is not the sole reason why the heroic status may have changed over time, but it is certain that it provoked new criticism and a new perspective to interpret the Golden Age and its heroes. This post colonialist critique will be applied in the changes of heroic status of De Ruyter (chapter three) and Coen (chapter four).

⁶⁴ Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 63.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

Chapter 2 The Development of the concept ‘Golden Age’ in Dutch context

Before analysing the status of Golden Age heroes, it is useful to look at how the Golden Age term is used as a concept in the Netherlands over time. Therefore, in this chapter the conceptual history method is used, to give insight in how often and in which contexts the term Golden Age is used over time. Erich Rothacker and Otto Brunner developed conceptual history method around the 1930s. They combined elements of social history with the history of concepts.⁶⁶ They based the conceptual history method on the German concept of *Begriffsgeschichte* that can be traced back to Georg Hegel.⁶⁷ Conceptual history “aims to study societies of the past and social change by examining how key social and political concepts change their meanings over time.”⁶⁸ Kai Vogelsang emphasizes that conceptual history needs to take the entire conceptual network, the entire framework that the term fits in, including the counter and associated concepts, into account.⁶⁹ Conceptual history starts from the premises that “concepts and social structures are intimately connected.”⁷⁰ It therefore entails the influences provided by the environment, counter and associated concepts and the distinction between the words and concepts. It is therefore that conceptual history is often based on different sources, from philosophical texts to ordinary diaries, dictionaries and newspapers, something I will also apply in my analysis.⁷¹ The combination of all these sources can reveal the changes in the changes in meaning of term over time and therefore societies of the past can be understood.

In order to explore the public representation of the Golden Age, the aim of this chapter is to explore how often, in which way and in which contexts the Golden Age has been represented over time.

2.1 The popularisation of the Golden Age

To explore how often the Golden Age is mentioned over time we have to go back to the origin of the concept of the Golden Age in the Netherlands. According to Hans Goedkoop and Kees Zandvliet, writer and philosopher Joost van den Vondel first mentioned the Golden Age in the Dutch context.⁷² It remains doubtful, however, if Van de Vondel meant the same time period, because he himself still

⁶⁶ Kai Vogelsang “Conceptual history: a short introduction” *Orients Extremus* 51, no. 1 (2012): 9. www.jstor.org/stable/24047785.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

⁶⁸ Anders Helsing “What is a conceptual method?” [English translation and summary of] Christian Volmond and Anders Helsing, *Fra fortid til historie* (Copenhagen: Columbus, 2017): 2. Accessed through: <https://www.clear-project.net/system/files/What%20is%20Conceptual%20History%20A%20Hassing.pdf>

⁶⁹ Vogelsang, “Conceptual history” 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 15.

⁷² Hans Goedkoop and Kees Zandvliet, *Gouden Eeuw proeftuin van onze wereld*, (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2012), 184.

lived in what today is referred to as Golden Age, the seventeenth century.⁷³ Another often selected first mentioning is that of Arnold Houbraken in 1718. Houbraken wrote in his biography of Ludolf Bakhuizen, “In that time [referring to before 1700] it was the Golden age for art, and the golden apples (now scarily to be found and only by difficult roads and sweat) dropped of their own accord into the mouths of the artist.”⁷⁴ However a certain begin point of the term Golden Age in the Dutch context, referring to the seventeenth century, difficult to trace back.

In the late nineteenth century historian Pieter Lodewijk Muller described the seventeenth century, as the Golden Age. In his book, *Onze Gouden Eeuw* (1896), he emphasized: “Our Golden Age, do I need to tell anyone what I take it to mean? Is there one civilized Dutch person who doesn’t know those words can only apply to that part of our history bounded by Leicester’s departure in 1587 and the Peace of Utrecht in 1713?”⁷⁵ In Muller’s description, he made clear that everyone who calls him or herself Dutch should know what the Golden Age means. He also expressed the feeling of pride people should get from the fact that it is an important part of the Dutch History.

Throughout this study, the further development of the meaning of this Golden Age is researched using the conceptual history method, which gives insight in the context and the sentiments attached to the term. This method not only examines the change of the literal meaning of the concept, but its focus is mostly on the underlying social changes.⁷⁶ In researching the changed public perception of the Golden Age, first the amount of times the term is used in newspapers articles over the last decades is researched. This data consists of every newspaper from 1790 onwards.

For this research the term “Golden Age” is entered in the Dutch Royal online Newspaper Library Delpher. In the first step of this research, the total amount of times the Golden Age was mentioned in the entire Dutch Royal Online Newspaper Library Delpher was gathered. In total, the term was mentioned 28.335 times in the years 1790 to 1995. The graphic below shows the amount of mentioning’s since 1790 per decade. This can be seen as a crude yardstick, but the graphic shows a steep increase in recent mass media coverage of the Golden Age.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid, 183.

⁷⁴ Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*. (Amsterdam: Houbraken, 1718-1721): 237. Translation by Tom van der Molen, “*Whose Golden Age?*” Original quote in Dutch: ‘*T was in dien tyd de Gulde Eeuw voor de Konst, en de goude appelen (nu door akelige wegen en zweet naauw te vinden) dropen den Konstenaars van zelf in den mond.*’

⁷⁵ Pieter Lodewijk Muller, *Onze Gouden Eeuw vol I*, (Leiden: AW Sijthoff 1896): 1. Translation by Tom van der Molen, “*Whose Golden Age?*” Original quote: ‘*Onze Gouden Eeuw, behoef ik aan iemand te zeggen wat ik daaronder versta? Is er één beschaafd Nederlander, die niet weet, dat die woorden alleen kunnen gelden van dat tijdvak onzer geschiedenis, dat besloten ligt tusschen het vertrek van Leicester in 1587 en den vrede van Utrecht in 1713.*’

⁷⁶ Hessing, “*What is a conceptual method?*” 2.

⁷⁷ There has to be taken into account, that it was not possible to track down every article and made sure that the newspaper was specifically addressing the Dutch Golden Age. Only for the years after 1940, there has been looked if the newspaper was talking about the Dutch Golden Age. Over that 55 years, only 9 out of 246 articles were about other Golden Ages, such as the Spanish or the Swedish Golden Age.

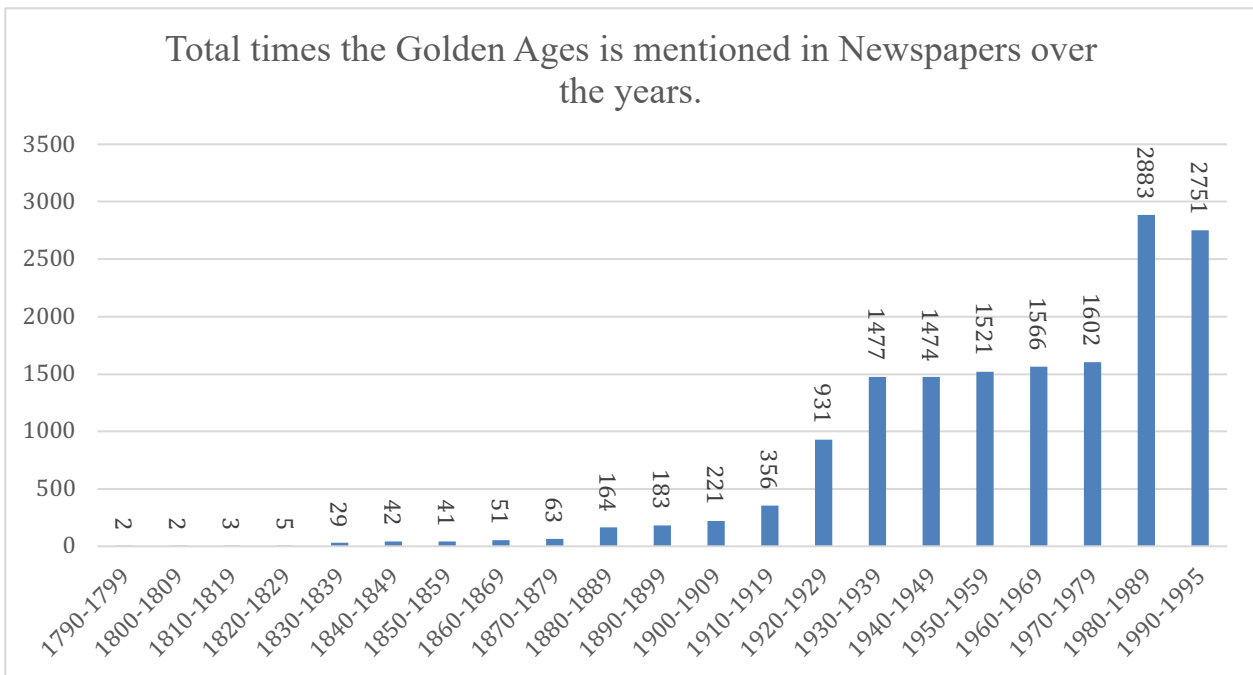


Figure 1 Total times the Golden Age is mentioned over the years as composed by the author

The Delpher Archive only contains the period until 1995. But we see is that in the five years between 1990 and 1995 alone, the Golden Age was used almost as many times as the ten years before. These results suggest that there is a notable increase in the use of the concept of the Golden Age.

This figure suggests an enormous increase in the use of the term over time. For example, the amount of times the Golden Age was mentioned between 1980 and 1989 was almost 1,8 times more than the mentioning in 1970 and 1979. But also, earlier between 1880 to 1889 and 1890 to 1899 the amount of mentions tripled. It must be made clear, however, that this quantitative method does not explicate what caused the surge of mentioning, it is possible that the use of the Golden Age concept increased because of other factors, such as an increase in the amount of published newspapers or that the Golden Age term is used to describe other nations glorifying ages. Nevertheless, the increase is so clear, that it highly suggests that the term is used more often.

2.2 Pillarization and the Golden Age term

In order to provide a more detailed description how the Golden Age was used in national newspaper, the following analysis will focus on the period between 1940-1995 and will contain the differences per newspaper. The starting point of this data analysis has been put on the year 1941, because of the publication of Johan Huizinga's book: *Nederland's beschaving in de Zeventiende Eeuw* (Dutch society in the seventeenth century).⁷⁸ I chose this book as the starting point because he is the first

⁷⁸ Huizinga, "Nederlands beschaving in de zeventiende eeuw." 3.

(known) author who challenges the concept of the Golden Age. He actively chose not to use the concept of the Golden Age, a choice he explained:

“It’s the term Golden Age itself that’s the problem. It comes from Aureau Aetas, the cloud cuckoo land of Greek mythology that vexed us slightly in Ovid when we were at school. If our prosperous era has to have a name, let it be about timber and steel, pitch and tar, paint and ink, daring and piety, spirit and imagination.”⁷⁹

Huizinga argued in 1941 that the name of the Golden Ages for the seventeenth century is creating some sort of a mythical picture of a time, which is not comparable to the real events of the seventeenth century.⁸⁰

In order to fully understand the development of the concept of the Golden Age after 1941 pillarization needs to be taken into account. Pillarization is the political and religious segregation of society, based on four different pillars. Each pillar had its own national newspaper:⁸¹ The liberal newspaper *De Telegraaf* (est. 1893), the Socialistic newspaper *Het Parool* (est. 1940), the Catholic Newspaper *De Volkskrant* (est. 1919) and the Protestant newspaper *De Trouw* (est 1943). These four pillars differ in their ideology.⁸² The different ideologies may lead to differences in the amount of mentions and in the way the term is used.

To grasp the evolution of the concept of the Golden Age only ‘articles’ were selected in the data. ‘Advertisements’ and ‘illustrations’ were excluded from analysis, because advertisements and illustrations almost always portray a positive sentiment for commercial gain, a brief consideration of these advertisements confirmed this. The years of establishment of the newspapers were taken into account in the analysis. The results are displayed in figure 2.

⁷⁹ Huizinga, “Nederlands beschaving in de zeventiende eeuw,” Translated by the author, 175-17.

⁸⁰ Tom van der Molen. “Whose Golden Age?” 2.

⁸¹ Arend Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek*. (Amsterdam: University Press, 2008): 56.

⁸² Lijphart, “Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering,” 57.

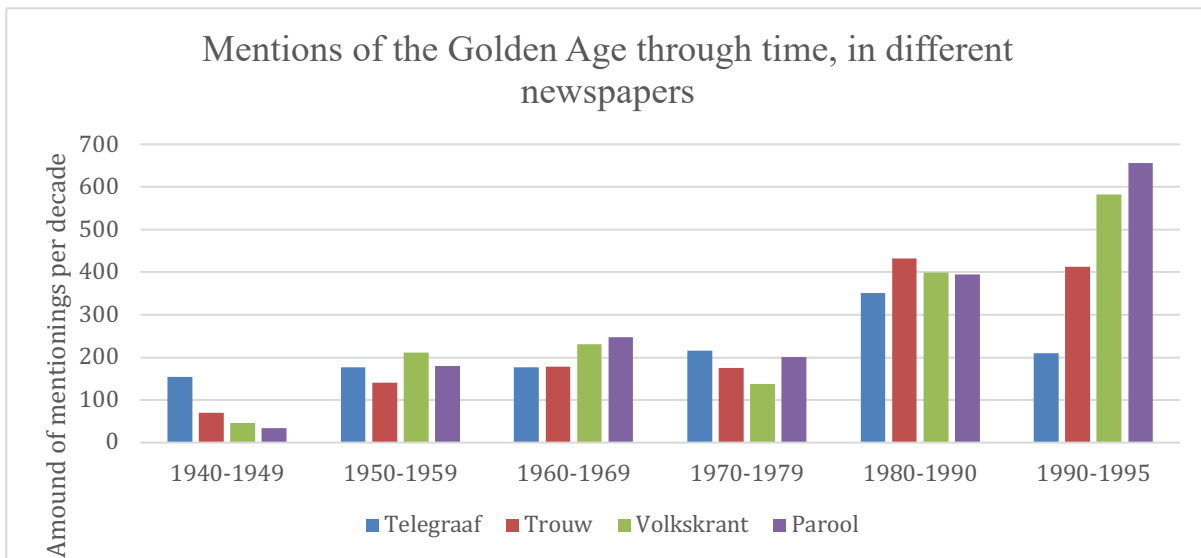


Figure 2 Mentions of the Golden Age trough time in different newspapers as composed by the author

Three main conclusions stem from figure 2. First it becomes visible that during the fifties, sixties and seventies all four pillars did not seem to differ in their mentions of the Golden Age. Also, in the 1980s the difference between the newspapers remain minimal. However, all pillars increase in the amount of mentions of the Golden Age. Second, in the 1990s a difference arises between the newspaper. The *Parool* and the *Volkskrant* publish a lot more articles that mention the Golden Age compared to the previous decade, but the *Telegraaf* only publish half of the years before. In the *Trouw* the growth seems to have stagnated. However, already in the 1960s most religious and socio-political barriers, created during pillarization lifted, because the Dutch society became secularized.⁸³ Lastly, it is interesting to see that the *Telegraaf* is not in line with the overall rise of mentioning of the Golden Age. It drops in that last years to only 200 articles about the Golden Ages. This cannot be explained by analysing the pillarization, because the newspapers became segregated from a singular pillar, as explained above. But although the differentiation of the newspapers based on pillarization may have faded, a difference in for instance political alliance is still noticeable in these newspapers.

These results only show a rise in the use of the word Golden Age; however, these results do not explain the meaning of the Golden Age. What it does show is a renewed interesse and a drastic increase around 1980, and that pillarization most likely did not influence this increase, because in 1980 the pillars differences between the pillars faded. Besides, the increase in usage of the term suggests that there is still need for the memory of the Golden Age. In the next section a deeper analysis will show by in which context and which sentiment the term endorses over time.

⁸³ Lijphart, “Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering,” 29.

2.3 The way the Golden Age has been used in newspapers

To highlight which sentiment was expressed by the term Golden Age, the definition of the term needs to be taken into account, because it seems that an implied idealisation is contained in the concept itself.⁸⁴ The Dutch dictionary provides two definitions. First, referring to the Dutch context: “The Golden Age or Golden Era is a period in the Dutch History that for the most part coincides with the seventeenth century. The Northern part of the Netherlands flourished in the fields of trade, science and art.”⁸⁵ The other main explanation of the Golden Age, is not in terms of history, but in terms of a phenomenon. The Golden Age is defined as a phenomenon as: “A Golden Age is a term used to describe a period in history where for instance a nation or a culture protrudes above others, and where this culture or nations experienced great prosperity or great productivity in for instance art or science.”⁸⁶ It therefore not directly related to a singular context, but it is a symbol for a good and progressive time.

In other words, the term Golden Age on his own, without a specific context involved, already implies an idealisation of a period, it refers to a prosperous, flourishing and highly valued part of shared history. However, the notion of the Golden Age is also heavily criticised for instance by post-colonial critique academics, because it often relates to the overpowering of one culture onto the other. In this section the central question is in what way the Golden Age is described in newspaper articles.⁸⁷

To research in which context the newspapers used the Golden Age, 15 articles per decade per newspaper were randomly selected: five from the first year of the decade, five from the middle and five from the last (that is, of the four national newspapers discussed above). This is a small selection of 60 newspapers per decade (in total 360 articles), because of this small selection conclusions about the entire decade cannot be made with certainty. However, by random selecting the articles, I can estimate an overall overflow. After analysing I labelled the articles based on which sentiment they express about the Golden Age. I used three different labels: Negative, Positive and Unclear. The

⁸⁴ Smith, “The resurgence of nationalism,” 583.

⁸⁵ Nederlandse encyclopedie, “Gouden Eeuw,” Accessed March 26, 2020.

https://www.encyclo.nl/begrip/Gouden_Eeuw Translated by author, original quote:

“De gouden eeuw is een periode in de Nederlandse geschiedenis die goeddeels samenvalt met de zeventiende eeuw. De noordelijke Nederlanden, die samen met de Republiek der Zeven verenigde Nederlanden vormden, maakten een bloeiperiode door op het gebied van handel, wetenschap en kunst.

⁸⁶ Nederlandse encyclopedie, “Gouden Eeuw,” Accessed March 26, 2020.

https://www.encyclo.nl/begrip/Gouden_Eeuw. Translated by author, original quote:

“Een gouden eeuw of gouden tijdperk is een term die wordt gebruikt om te verwijzen naar een periode in de geschiedenis van bijvoorbeeld een land of cultuur dat op een bepaald gebied boven andere periodes uitsteekt. Een gouden eeuw kan een periode in een land zijn waarin grote voorspoed heerste, of bijvoorbeeld heel productief was in een bepaald veld.”

⁸⁷ Seth C. Lewis, “News, Nationalism and the imagined community,” 416.

article would get the positive label when there was mentioned a certain pride, or a sentiment to return to this period. For instance, in an article in the *Telegraaf* of March 30, 1965 the author wrote:

“The Golden Age was not only Rembrandt and Frans Hal. But above all: trade, shipbuilding, locks, sense of adventure, entrepreneurial spirit and many other adventures. The quality of the European civilization will also be determined by the way we approach the new age: with enthusiasm, imagination and curiosity, or with smugness about our cultural heritage and full of contempt for that new rapid materialism.”⁸⁸

In the quote mentioned above, the author wrote about the spirit of the Golden Ages, which he idealised and also saw as the ideal way to meet the next period in history.

Articles that were labelled as negative, if they contained information about negative aspects of the Golden Age, for instance the segregation of society, slavery or contained critique on the term. For instance, in the *Volkskrant* of July 8, 1959 the uneven distribution of wealth was emphasized “The blossoming of the Golden Age came to the North, while the south gradually declined, almost disappearing from the line of the cultural stage.”⁸⁹

A final category consisted of the unclear statements in newspapers. They either emphasized both negative and positive aspects, or it just used the term, but the rest of the article did not focus on the Golden Age. For instance: in the *Trouw* on May 9, 1985 an article about soothing signals, the author also used the concept of the Golden Age. He writes: “I realized that I knew nothing else about this gesture. Was it my mother’s own? Or have all Dutch women been doing this since the Golden Age? Or since the migration of the population? And are fathers doing it too?”⁹⁰ In this statement the author uses the concept of the Golden Age, but in the article no sentiment seems to be attached to it. The author only refers to the Golden Ages as a time period.

⁸⁸ Delpher, “Gouden Eeuw” *Telegraaf*, March 30, 1965. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten>. Translated by author, original: “*De gouden eeuw was niet alleen Rembrandt en Frans Hals. Maar vooral: handel, scheepsbouw, sluisen, zin voor avontuur, ondernemingslust etc. Het niveau van de komende Europese beschaving zal eveneens bepaald worden door de wijze waarop wij de nieuwe tijd tegemoet treden: met enthousiasme, verbeeldingskracht en nieuwsgierigheid, dan wel zelfvoldaan over ons culturele erfdeel en vol minachting over dat nieuwe snelle materialisme.*”

⁸⁹ Volkskrant, “verspreiding herinnering”, *Volkskrant*, July 8, 1959. Accessed March 16, 2020. <http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten>. Translated by author, original quote: “*In het noorden kwam de bloei der Gouden eeuw, terwijl het zuiden geleidelijk aan tot diep verval kwam, en bijna uit de rij der cultuurstaten verdween.*”

⁹⁰ Trouw, “kalmtegebaren”, *Trouw*, May 9, 1985. Accessed March 18, 2020. <http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten>. Translated by the author, original quote: “*Ik realiseerde mij dat ik verder niets van dit gebaar wist. Was het eigen aan mijn moeder? Of doen alle Nederlandse vrouwen dit sinds de Gouden eeuw? Of sinds de volksverhuizing? En doen vaders het ook?*”

The 360 articles divided over four newspapers and six different decades, I labelled in one of these three categories. Table 1 shows the results of this analysis. In table 1 there is not made a differentiation on the bases of newspapers.

	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1990	1990-1995
Positive	67,3%	76,7%	73,3%	59,0%	68,3%	60,0%
Negative	1,8%	5,0%	8,3%	11,5%	11,7%	10,0%
Unclear	30,9%	18,3%	18,3%	29,5%	20,0%	30,0%
N=	55	60	60	61	60	60

Table 1 Results of use of Golden Age term as composed by the author

In table 1, it becomes clear that the Golden Age term is used in different ways, while over the years, the sentiment was mainly positive. The share of negative articles increased slightly over the years, from 1,8% in 1940-1949 to 10% in 1990-1995. While the amount of unclear and positive articles fluctuated over time. Therefore, we can conclude that although the negative sentiment seems to grow slightly, the term is mostly used as an idealisation of the seventeenth century, at least until 1995.

The last step I took was to look for differences in the sentiment between the different newspapers. The same data shown in the previous paragraph was used to check for the influence of pillarization. These results are shown below.

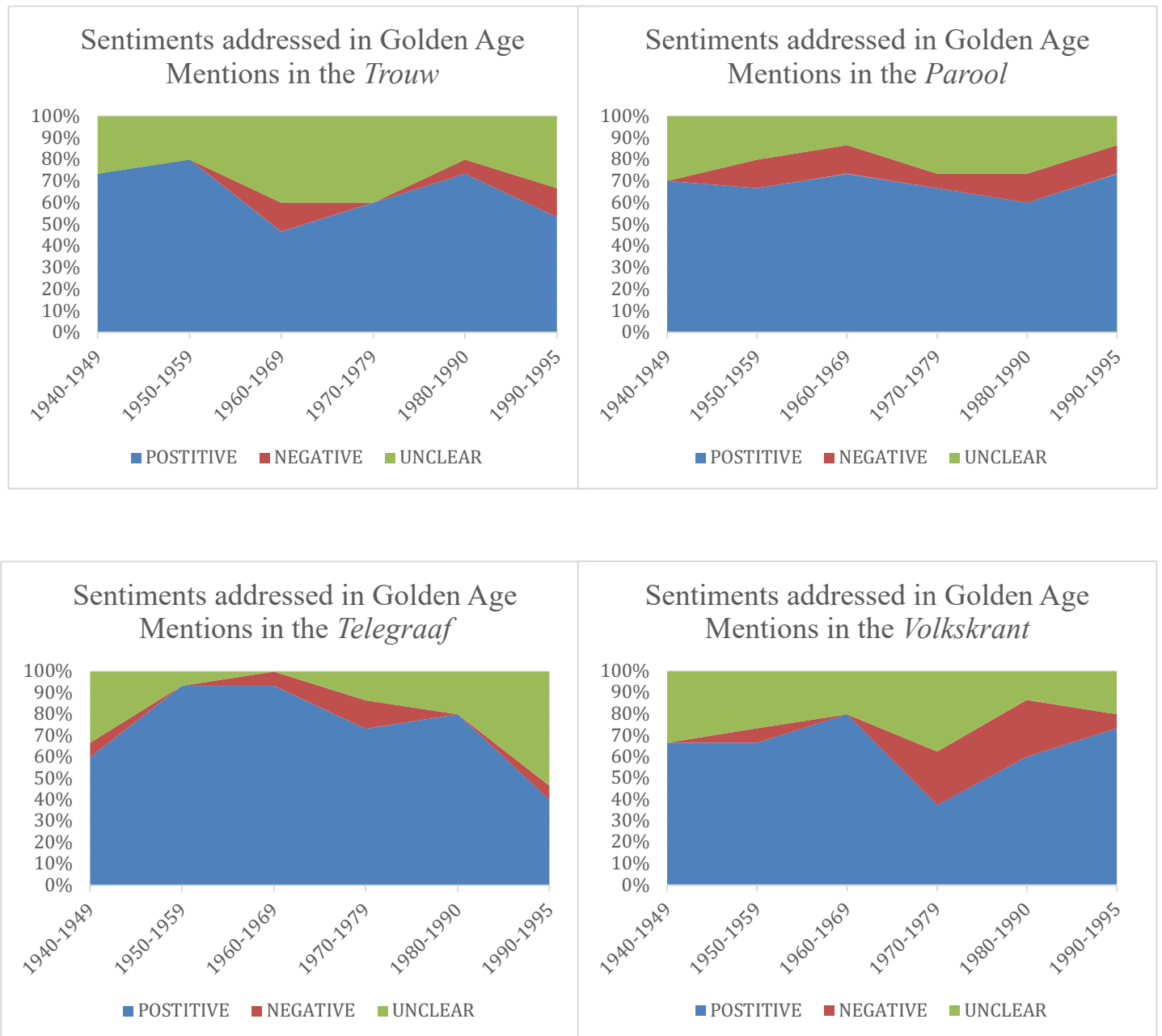


Figure 1 Sentiments addressed in different newspapers: *Trouw*, *Parool*, *Telegraaf* & *Volkskrant*

Figure 3 shows a percentage stacked area chart of the sentiments attached to the Golden Age term differentiated on newspapers.⁹¹ Overall no distinctive differences between the newspapers and the representation of the Golden Age term could be detected because of constant fluctuation over time. Although some results are worth highlighting. In the *Telegraaf* a decline in positive attached sentiments seem to have started, this might indicate a small change in the representation of the Golden Age. A second result that is worth notable is an outlier visible in the *Volkskrant* between 1970-1979,

⁹¹ See Appendix B for the underlying data.

that showed a drop in positive attached sentiments. But overall, due to constant fluctuation no clear results can be drawn from analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion this chapter focussed on the way the term Golden Age term has developed in the Dutch context between 1940 and 1995. A conceptual history method was used to provide insight in the way the concept and its meaning have developed.

First the origin of the term in the Dutch context was explained and with the use of newspaper research the popularisation of the term was analysed. It became clear that over time the concept is used more often in mass media.

Hereafter the same results were controlled for the influence of pillarization, which made that different socio – political and religious groups had their own institutions and therefore their own newspapers. This gave some insight in the use of the term in different political groups, however, the most remarkable difference appeared after 1980 when society already was highly secularised. This made it impossible to make a generalisation about how different socio-political groups used the term.

Finally, the content of newspaper articles was analysed, to explore if the concept of the Golden Age was used in a positive, negative or unclear manner. This research led to the conclusion that over time, the term has mostly been used in a positive sense.

In conclusion, the use of the term Golden increased in the course of 1941-1995. But the way that it was used barely changed. The Golden Age was used in a positive manner, one that resembles the virtues of hard work and elaborate trading. An example modern society still adheres to.

Chapter 3 The heroic status of Michiel de Ruyter

In chapter two the public representation of the Golden Age has been discussed. It became clear that there was an increase in the amount of times the term Golden Age was used in newspaper articles during 1945-1995. The way these articles described the Golden Age appeared to be mostly in a positive sense. However, after 1995, it appears that this representation may have changed, because in 2019 the *Amsterdam's museum* stopped using the term. In order to fully grasp the changes in public representation, the following two chapters will entail detailed descriptions of the changes in public representation of two significant figures of the seventeenth century: Michiel de Ruyter (chapter three) and Jan Pieterszoon Coen (chapter four). Following from the literature research in chapter one, the change in heroic status of heroes of the Golden Ages can provide insight in how the Golden Age has been remembered.⁹² As Nataliya Donilova and Ekaterina Kolpinskaya explain, heroes can be seen as “a cultural specific socio-political construction which simultaneously engenders and co-constitutes identities of a social group whilst also functioning as an important resource of identification with a distinctive political community.”⁹³ In chapter one the connection between nationalism and heroism was already clarified. In this chapter the focus will be on the changes in heroism throughout time. In particular, I will focus on De Ruyter lieutenant-admiral and later commander of the entire Dutch marine during the Dutch Golden Age.

I used a revisionist approach to investigate changes in his heroic status. Revisionist history can be seen as a consequence of the minority rights movement that began after World War II.⁹⁴ This led to changes in collective memory in different parts of the world. This change was driven by influences of postcolonialism critique⁹⁵ and different political groups that approved or disapproved of the glorification of different heroes.⁹⁶ The status of a hero could thus be altered by the influence of postcolonialism, an example of this influence becomes clear in the research of Howard Schuman, Barry Schwartz and Hannah D’Arcy, who investigated the changes in heroic status of Christopher Columbus. That the heroic status is questioned in academia does however not mean that the public representation of the hero in question also necessarily changes.⁹⁷ To answer the question how the public representation is changed different sources such as biographies, documentaries, films and public symbols are used.

⁹² Smith, “The resurgence of nationalism,” 583.

⁹³ Danilova and Kolpinskaya. "The politics of heroes through the prism of popular heroism," 3.

⁹⁴ Howard Schuman, Barry Schwartz, and Hannah d’Arcy. "Elite revisionists and popular beliefs: Christopher Columbus, hero or villain?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (February 2005): 2. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfi001

⁹⁵ As explained in chapter 1.

⁹⁶ Danilova and Kolpinskaya. "The politics of heroes through the prism of popular heroism," 3.

⁹⁷ Schuman, Schwartz and d’Arcy "Elite revisionists, Christopher Columbus, hero or villain?" 7.

This chapter will be divided into three paragraphs. In the first section biographies are used to describe the life of De Ruyter and the influence of newfound information on his heroic status. In the second section, the role of De Ruyter in politics is discussed. In this section the way different political parties have used the memory of De Ruyter to substantiate their ideologies will be outlined. Third, the way his legacy is preserved are described with the use of documentaries, the popular movie *Michiel de Ruyter* (2015), visual school material and his place in the Dutch Historical Canon.⁹⁸

3.1 The life of Michiel de Ruyter

Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter was born in 1607 in Vlissingen. De Ruyter spend almost his entire life on sea.⁹⁹ He worked his way up to captain of a ship by the age of 16, working in international trade operations. At the age of 45, De Ruyter wanted to retire, due to the wealth he accumulated from his navel career he could live a comfortable life. His life took another turn, because of the threatening Anglo-Dutch Wars, Grand pensionary of Holland Johan de Witt promoted him to commander in chief in 1651.¹⁰⁰ Under De Ruyter's supervision, peace was signed after an devastating victory over the English war fleet in 1667.¹⁰¹ This event is often seen as the highlight of De Ruyter's career. He stayed commander of chief until his death in 1676 near Sicily after he was sent out with a weak squadron to support Spain against France.¹⁰² Because of his rank, his legacy, and his own journals, his life is well documented. He was buried in the *Nieuwe Kerk* in Amsterdam, after a four-hour long ceremony in his honor.¹⁰³ Never before, anybody had received such a state provided funeral in 1676.

De Ruyter's life has been captured in different biographies. The first biography dates back to 1687 and is written by Gerard Brandt. This biography was commissioned by his son, Engel de Ruyter. This voluminous biography showed the life of De Ruyter as a mythological figure of wealth, courage, love, bravery and humbleness.¹⁰⁴ This biography would long be the only one and was translated into many languages, which shows the amount of interest in the memory of De Ruyter, not only in the Netherlands but also beyond. Only in 1928 a new biography was written by Petrus Johannes Blok. Although it used other resources as well, the biography of Blok is almost of the same volume and

⁹⁸ Maria Grever, *Plurality, narrative and the historical canon. Beyond the Canon*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 32. The Dutch historical Canon was introduced in 2006 and altered every few years, the project has the goal to represent the collective memory of the Netherlands.

⁹⁹ Ronald Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechterhand van Nederland: Biografie van Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter*. (Amsterdam: de arbeiderspers, 1996): 17.

¹⁰⁰ Prud'homme van Reine, "De Ruyter," 18. According to biographer Prod'humme van Reine De Ruyter could not have achieved so much in life without the support of De Witt.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 13.

¹⁰² Ibid, 14.

¹⁰³ Rijksmuseum "Armour worn at the funeral of Michiel de Ruyter. Object number: NG-NM-528 accessed on 4 may 2020 through: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/NG-NM-528>

¹⁰⁴ Prud'homme van Reine, "De Ruyter," 14.

entails the same heroic aspects of courage and pride. These biographies and the story of De Ruyter were adapted by Ronald Prud'homme van Reine, who wrote a new biography in 1996. This biography challenges the earlier biographies glorifying sentiments.

This biography challenges for instance the most famous battle De Ruyter is known for, the battle of Chatham on 22 June 1667.¹⁰⁵ On this day eight English warships were burned or captured under the command of De Ruyter.¹⁰⁶ This resulted in the end of the second Anglo Dutch war in July 1667. De Ruyter was credited with this victory, however Prud'homme van Reine shows that De Ruyter was not present at the battle.¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, one of many myths about De Ruyter, who is still seen as one of the main heroic figures of the Netherlands.¹⁰⁸ So although new information discloses that De Ruyter was not really present on this day, this evidence is neglected, in for instance the movie about his life that aired in 2015 depicts his presence during the battle. This endorses the statement of Donilova and Kolpinskaya that academic information about heroes does not always have effect of the heroic status.¹⁰⁹

His reputation was already outstanding during his life, this was for instance visible in his nickname *beste vaer*. Two major achievements contributed to his legacy as a founding father of the Netherlands: he won the battle of Chatham and he was able to avoid a combined English and Spanish war in 1669.¹¹⁰ After his death he was still publicly remembered, for instance to commemorate his legacy a statue was placed in his birthplace Vlissingen in 1840.¹¹¹ His legacy was also preserved with his portrait on 100 gulden banknotes from 1970 until 1986.¹¹² De Ruyter was also remembered during the 100-, 200-, 300- and 400- year commemoration of his death. And 2007 was announced as the *Michiel de Ruyter year* and entailed multiple celebrations and commemorations of his life.¹¹³ Not only in the Netherlands he is remembered as one of the greatest admirals, in whole Europe he is acknowledged as such, for instance in Hungary there also is a statue in his honor.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ In England this battle is remembered as the Raid on the Medway 1667.

¹⁰⁶ Prud'homme van Reine, "De Ruyter," 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Klep, "Onze militaire identiteit door de eeuwen heen," 181.

¹⁰⁹ Schuman, Schwartz and d'Arcy. "Elite revisionists, Columbus, hero or villain?" 7.

¹¹⁰ Seije Slager, "De Zeeuwse admiraal past in elk denkbaar hokje", *Trouw*, March 23, 2007. Accessed on 7 May 2020 <http://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/de-zeeuwse-admiraal-past-in-elk-denkbaar-hokje~bebb8de4/>.

¹¹¹ Zeeuwse Ankers "Monumenten voor een zeeheld" *Zeeuwse Ankers*. Date unknown. Accessed May 4, 2020. <https://www.zeeuwseankers.nl/verhaal/monumenten-voor-een-zeeheld>

¹¹² Het Parool, "einde aan 100 guldenbiljetten van de Ruyter," *Parool*, June 25, 2016. Accessed May 4, 2020.: <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/einde-aan-100-guldenbiljet-van-de-ruyter~b07f6fd3/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>

¹¹³ Enne Koops, "Michiel de Ruyter (1607-1676) – Nederlandse admiraal en zeeheld" *Historiek*, December 2, 2019. Accessed May 4, 2020. <https://historiek.net/michiel-de-ruyter-admiraal-en-zeeheld/66185/>.

¹¹⁴ Zeeuwse Ankers "Monumenten voor een zeeheld."

3.2 Michiel de Ruyter and Dutch Politics

Aside from his celebrations and other public commemorations of his legacy, his memory is also used by politicians to emphasize their beliefs and ideas for society.¹¹⁵ Politicians used the legacy of De Ruyter to highlight sentiments and characteristics of de Ruyter that they find preferable. In this section the way De Ruyter is used in politics is described in order to show the change in public representation of his heroic status. Below five turning points are used to explicate the way De Ruyter is commemorated.

The memory of De Ruyter is used for contrasting purposes by different political parties. During the Second World War, Anton Mussert, one of the founders of the Nationalist Socialist Movement of the Netherlands (NSB) used the legacy of De Ruyter for political gain.¹¹⁶ He had a painting of De Ruyter in his office and would ask: “*Bestevaer [nickname de Ruyter], am I doing it right?*”¹¹⁷ Aside from individual inspiration, Mussert also used the memory of De Ruyter for war propaganda. Mussert emphasized De Ruyter’s bravery, fighting spirit, perseverance and his tactical insights in order to promote the NSB. De Ruyter was projected as a man who fought for his country and his people and somebody who did everything to keep foreigners out.¹¹⁸

Partly because of the association of De Ruyter with the NSB, prime minister from 1973 until 1977, and leader of the Labor Party (PVDa), Joop den Uyl, dissociated himself with the 300-year anniversary of De Ruyter. He expressed that “he didn’t want anything to do with such a militant man.”¹¹⁹ The celebration of De Ruyter in 1976 was therefore from minimizing influence. According to historian Christ Klep, De Ruyter’s image was tarnished during the 1960s and 1970s.

In the 1980s however, the heroic status of De Ruyter increased, with the influence of post colonialist critique the legacy of De Ruyter was reframed. Although post colonialist critique often negatively influenced the memory of the Golden Age, De Ruyter’s heroic status was rebuilt. Due to stories about that he liberated slaves in Africa, that he encouraged different cultures on his ships and that he conducted peaceful negotiations with Moroccan traders, a new multiculturalist framing of De Ruyter appeared.¹²⁰ The famous story about his ‘slave friend’ Jan Compagnie altered his image that was tarnished by the NSB, and he was embraced as a more multiculturalist hero.

¹¹⁵ Lotte Jensen. *De verheerlijking van het verleden Helden, literatuur en natievorming in de negentiende eeuw*. (Nijmegen: uitgeverij Vantilt, second edition 2016): 12.

¹¹⁶ Klep, “Onze militaire identiteit door de eeuwen heen,” 180.

¹¹⁷ Kromhout, “Het ware gezicht van de NSB”, *Historisch Nieuwsblad*. April 19, 2016, accessed 7 May 2020. <https://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/het-ware-gezicht-van-de-nsb/>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Klep, “Onze militaire identiteit door de eeuwen heen,” 181.

¹²⁰ Prud’homme van Reine, “De Ruyter,” 11.

This multiculturalist framing of De Ruyter did not stay unchallenged. In 2010 Geert Wilders, leader of the Party of Freedom (PVV) used the sentiment also used by Mussert, when he portrayed as De Ruyter for *Veronica Magazine*.¹²¹ He emphasized the nationalistic nature and the level of devotion of De Ruyter. “*He is one of the biggest heroes, he wasn’t afraid for anything or anyone.*”¹²² He used the memory of De Ruyter for his political interest, his party strives towards a segregated Dutch society, one that is divided along ethno-religious lines, striving to diminish and in exclude other religious influences. In his tweet on August 9, 2016 he posted himself in his De Ruyter outfit with the line: “*Nederland terugveroveren*” (“Recapture the Netherlands”).¹²³

However, in 2010 the heroic status of De Ruyter was already solidly based upon new information that De Ruyter was in favor of multiculturalism. Over time the stories of him helping men escape from slavery formed one of the dominant narratives about his life. This led to different public celebrations in his honor. For instance, in 2004 De Ruyter was number 6 in the election for most influential Dutchman.¹²⁴ And in 2015 a film, which cost eight million euros, created in his honor was received with open arms, 500.000 people visited this film during the first month it showed in theaters.¹²⁵ So, although the sentiment that Wilders emphasized resonated with some. Many others criticized Wilders for misinterpreting the legacy of De Ruyter.

Although the heroic status of De Ruyter proved to be solid during the early twenty-first century, there is still discussion if his heroic status is deserved or created by the state to implement a nationalist sentiment.

3.3 Michiel de Ruyter and memory activism

In addition to political parties, De Ruyter’s heroism is also used by memory activist to influence the public debate. The main group who resist the heroification of De Ruyter call themselves *Michiel de Rover* (Michiel the Robber). They were influenced by post-colonialist critique and strive towards a society that eliminate the glorification of the colonial period. They reject the multiculturalist framing

¹²¹ Volkskrant editors, “Geert Wilders poseert als held Michiel de Ruyter met hero” *Volkskrant*, June 1, 2016. Accessed May 2, 2020. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/geert-wilders-poseert-als-held-michiel-de-ruyter-met-hero~bdff6aaf/a>

¹²² Algemeen Dagblad, editors “Wilders wil Nederland terugveroveren maar op wie,” August 10, 2016 accessed: May 2, 2020. https://www.ad.nl/privacy-gate/accept?redirectUri=%2fbinnenland%2fwilders-wil-nederland-terugveroveren-maar-op-wie%7ea5ff649e%2f%3freferrer%3dhttps%3a%2f%2fwww.google.com%2f&pwv=4&pws=functional%7Canalytcs%7Ccontent_recommendation%7Ctargeted_advertising%7Csocial_media&days=390&referrer=

¹²³ Geert Wilders (@geertwilderspvv), “Nederland terugveroveren” Twitter text, August 9, 2016. <https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv/status/763113354357538821/photo/1> accessed 7 may 2020.

¹²⁴ Klep, “Onze militaire identiteit door de eeuwen heen,” 171.

¹²⁵ Omroep Brabant. “Half miljoen mensen voor Michiel de Ruyter,” *Omroep Brabant*, March 3, 2015.

<https://www.omroepbrabant.nl/nieuws/2054524/half-miljoen-bezoekers-voor-michiel-de-ruyter> accessed May 7, 2020.

of De Ruyter, because they state that he gained his wealth by robbing other parts of the world and argue that De Ruyter was involved in conquering the world.¹²⁶

This action group strives towards a new view of De Ruyter. They argue that he is often idealized and glorified and that negative aspects of his life and personality have to be included in the memory of De Ruyter. They reject the movie about De Ruyter, because it did not include reference to the power difference in the world and the way De Ruyter took part in the robbing of other continents.¹²⁷ Although this sentiment is widespread and many reviewers noted the absence of criticism in the movie, the movie was still attended by 500.000 people. And the public representation of De Ruyter in daily life was not altered negatively. For instance, his heroic status is still preserved in 150 street names and a statue in his birthplace Vlissingen and even in Hungary. Also, in different non-fiction and fiction literature his legacy is endorsed.¹²⁸

Following the study of Schuman, Schwartz and Darcy, the school curriculum concerning a hero can be seen as the way public representation is passed down to generations.¹²⁹ It is therefore fruitful to analyze whether the critical view, given by memory activist, are part of the school material. The Dutch school curriculum is based on the Canon of the Netherlands, where the Dutch official history is recorded. De Ruyter also forms a part of this official history. To analyze the public representation of De Ruyter the school curriculum is examined. For this research sixteen video's that are used in primary and secondary school were analyzed.¹³⁰

This analysis brought two main conclusions. First, it became clear that in every video De Ruyter is described as one of the greatest naval heroes through time. In 80% of the videos they give De Ruyter credit for the fact that the Netherlands is still a country and is not a part of France or England.¹³¹ Either this became clear by the way De Ruyter was described as: "brave", "smart" or "heroic" or this statement was made directly, for example: "De Ruyter was the greatest hero of all, without him we would speak French or Spanish. Without him the Netherlands would no longer exist."¹³² Furthermore, his biggest success, the battle of Chatham, is described in almost every video.

¹²⁶ Mimi, "Michiel de rover het wegwassen van het zwart het witwassen van de geschiedenis en het ontkleuren van het collectieve geheugen," *Doorbraak*, January 28, 2015. Accessed May 13, 2020. <https://www.doorbraak.eu/michiel-de-rover-het-wegwassen-van-zwart-het-witwassen-van-de-geschiedenis-en-het-ontkleuren-van-het-collectieve-geheugen/>.

¹²⁷ Joris Belgers, "Michiel de Ruyter de Louis van Gaal van zijn tijd" *Volkskrant*, January, 26, 2015. Accessed May 7, 2020. <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/michiel-de-ruyter-de-louis-van-gaal-van-zijn-tijd~b9f230b6/>

¹²⁸ Lotte Jensen. "Heldenverering in Nederland", *Ex tempore* 30, no.1, (2011), 6.

¹²⁹ Schuman, Schwartz and d'Arcy. "Elite revisionists, Columbus, hero or villain," 2.

¹³⁰ In the appendix C more information about the selection process of the sources is available.

¹³¹ In appendix C the data is shown.

¹³² Schooltv, "Eenvandaag in de klas Michiel de Ruyter," Video File 6:31, May 13, 2016.

<https://schooltv.nl/video/eenvandaag-in-de-klas-michiel-de-ruyter/#q=%22Michiel%20de%20Ruyter%22> Translated by the author, original statement: "De Ruyter was een held, zeker de grootste held, hij zorgde er eigenhandig voor dat Nederland nog bestaat. Zonder Michiel zouden we nu Spaans of Frans spreken".

The video analysis suggests that the legacy of De Ruyter is seen as important and that his heroism is part of Dutch collective memory.

Second, the conclusion could be drawn from the analysis is that only three clips showed some evidence that could decrease the heroic status of De Ruyter. In two of the sixteen clips depicted a certain level of hesitation De Ruyter might have felt prior to the battle of Chatham. However surprisingly only in one video the influence of post colonialism is visible. In this video a fragment of a sketch discusses in an informal way the wealth of De Ruyter. De Ruyter is addressed as greedy.¹³³ “It is easy to get rich, when you steal things from others. If I rob a bank I go to jail, and they robbed everybody and were perceived as heroes. That De Ruyter, what a greedy guy it must be.”¹³⁴ Although this fragment only mentioned the way De Ruyter has gained his money once, it does show a discussion about De Ruyter and about the truthfulness of the multiculturalist framing that is the main sentiment since 1980.

But overall, in the majority of video’s the heroic status of De Ruyter is preserved. Besides, post-colonial critique seems to have a positive effect on the heroic status, although one might expect detrimental effects. Although there is enough information that supports the cause of action groups of *Michiel de Rover*, it seems that the multiculturalist framing of De Ruyter is strong enough to outweighs the critique, for now at least.¹³⁵ This framing is reserved mostly because of comparative arguments to other figures of the time, that were directly involved in slavery,¹³⁶ but also by politicians who dismiss the constant negativity on heroes or the Golden Age in its entirety.¹³⁷

It seems that a certain ‘get over it’ mentality appears in Dutch society, which claims that the memory activist are too critical and too sensitive, on the other hand the protest are seen as part of Dutch society and the reaction such as “of course there is always something to complain about” are made to the memory activist protesters at the premier of the De Ruyter movie.¹³⁸ This is in line with the anti-nationalist nationalism concept Kesip and Duyvendak describe.

¹³³ Schooltv. “Het klokhuis canon Michiel de Ruyter” Video File 14:37, March 14 2013. Accessed: May 4 2020. <https://schooltv.nl/video/het-klokhuis-canon-michiel-de-ruyter/#q=%22michiel%20de%20ruyter%22>

¹³⁴ Ibid. Translated from Dutch by the author. Original quote: “*Het is wel makkelijk rijk worden hea, als je dingen van anderen steelt. Als ik een bank beroof moet ik naar cel en hij wordt een held. Wat een hebbigerie man moet dat zijn die Michiel de Ruyter.*”

¹³⁵ The scope and timing of my thesis did not allow for the analysis of the influences of the Black Lives Matter movement, which has increased the critique on the glorification of the colonial history. It could be that because of this renewed interesse and critique the multiculturalist framing of Michiel de Ruyter will be overthrown in the near future.

¹³⁶ Gijsbert van Es, “Kritiek op De Ruyter is zwaar overdreven, zegt de kenner,” *NRC* (January 26, 2015). <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/01/26/maar-hun-kritiek-is-zwaar-overdreven-zegt-de-kenn-1460490-a550128>

¹³⁷ Thierry Baudet, “Michiel de Ruyter | De Gouden Eeuwen van Nederland,” Youtube video 3.34, posted by “Forum voor Democratie,” October 6, 2019. Accessed May 20, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vdEufua5tU>

¹³⁸ Tom Staal “Studio Powned: Michiel de Ruyter.” Youtube video: 4:00, posted by “Omroep PowNed.” February 2, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-1QaSezryk>

Conclusion

In this chapter the changes in heroic status of Michiel de Ruyter have been investigated. First the influences of newly found evidence and his states during his lifetime were investigated. His heroic status seems solid, acquired during his lifetime and still present in contemporary society.

Section two showed how contemporary political parties framed De Ruyter and used him as an example of Dutch nationalism. We saw that his legacy was used to underline different political causes and that although this brought discussion his legacy and his heroic status survived almost every claim. Only during the 1960s and 1970s his heroic status was tarnished, but afterwards the legacy of De Ruyter was endorsed with a multiculturalist framing.

In the last section, it became clear that this multiculturalist framing still seems to be the overall consensus. By analyzing the influence of action groups on the public debate and school videos about De Ruyter, it became clear that although critique is embraced and heard, the heroic status of De Ruyter seems to not be that affected by it. His memory is still reserved in the Canon and in schoolbooks.

In short, this chapter expressed that the heroic status of De Ruyter is still preserved very well. His heroic status is not directly altered by political use, new facts and memory activist influenced by post-colonialism. However, his memory is claimed by different ideologies from right wing politics, for nationalistic sentiments but also as a multiculturalist hero.

That the heroic status of De Ruyter is preserved can be due to different reasons. One reason for this is that De Ruyter was a very influential figure that was not directly involved in slavery, which is currently the dominant reason for criticism on Golden Age heroes. De Ruyter was embraced as a more multiculturalist framing of the Golden Ages. Mostly because in comparison to other figures of his time, his reputation was better during his life and information suggests that he was in favor of a multiculturalist society. An anti-nationalist nationalism sentiment appeared that rejected the memory activist on the basis of over reacting. Another reason for this is that his legacy, as the man who preserved and secured the future of the Netherlands as a country, is worth giving so much heroic status to. So for now it appears that De Ruyter is positively framed in public representation.

In the next chapter a different figure of the Golden Age. Jan Pieterszoon Coen and his changes in heroic status are described, to find differences in the way their legacies are preserved and/or altered and to find underlying causes that influence the heroic status of heroes.

Chapter 4 Jan Pieterszoon Coen – the fine line between the hero and the culprit

In the previous the heroic status of Michiel de Ruyter was described, in short it became clear that De Ruyter retained his heroic status over the years. He was embraced by a multiculturalist view that countered the heroic decline often generated by post colonialist critique. In this chapter another significant figure of the Golden Age is described: Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629). In 1617 Coen became the general admiral of the Dutch *Vereenigde Oostindische compagnie* (VOC). Coen is often seen as a controversial hero; however, he is also been honoured by a statue in his birthplace Hoorn, street names, various paintings and other references to his actions that are visible in modern society.¹³⁹

In this chapter the changes in the heroic status and public representation of Coen are analysed using biographies, documentaries and controversy seen in the discussion about the removal of his statue in Hoorn.

In order to determinate the changes in heroic status of Coen this chapter is divided into three sections. First biographical information about Coen was used to describe his life and his status during his life. In the following two sections two different cases are used that Van Goor describes as the two events that influenced his heroic status the most.¹⁴⁰

4.1 The life of Jan Pieterszoon Coen

JP Coen was born in 1587 in Hoorn in a relatively rich family.¹⁴¹ By the age of thirteen he was send to Rome to study the art of merchantry as an apprentice of Justus Percore.¹⁴² Jur van Goor states that these years (1600-1607) formed the basis of the knowledge Coen had on the subject of merchantry, and that most important, in these years he most likely developed values and traits he administrated throughout his life.

“His formative years in Rome involved much more than teaching the most modern management techniques of the time, such as double bookkeeping and maintaining extensive correspondence with other offices. At least as strong was the influence of the lifestyle and value pattern of a distinguished merchant house in which honour, fame and reputation formed the ceremonial tankers.”¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Ad Geerdink, “Het Westfries museum en Coen,” *Coen! Geroemd en verguisd*, April 14, 2012, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Jur van Goor, “Jan Pieterszoon Coen Koopman-Koning” (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020), 520-521.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 11.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁴³ Van Goor, “Jan Pieterszoon Coen”, 68. Translated by author original quote: “*Zijn vorming in Rome hield veel meer in dan het aanleren van de modernste managementtechnieken van die tijd, zoals het dubbele boekhouden en het onderhouden van een uitgebreide correspondentie met andere kantoren. Minstens zo sterk was de invloed van de*

Educated with the latest management techniques and other newly acquired skills Coen travelled back to the Netherlands in 1607. He gained his first overseas experience later that year when he went into service as sub-merchant for the VOC, sailing towards the Banda islands under the command of Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff. He must have picked up much of his knowledge later shown of politics and merchantry during this first mission towards the Indies,¹⁴⁴ now called Indonesia.¹⁴⁵ He gained his second overseas experience in 1612, in the role of commander.¹⁴⁶ Jur van Goor sees this promotion as an example of the way that Coen lived in a favourable period for an overseas career. Although the Eighty-year War with Spain was still ongoing, the overseas opportunities were increasing quite rapidly.¹⁴⁷ Because he was able to secure the position of the VOC in the east, by founding Batavia as a centre for Dutch trade operations, Coen was promoted to Gouverneur-General of the VOC in 1617.

During his first appointment as Gouverneur-General, Coen had the mission to secure the monopoly on nutmeg on the Banda Islands. To secure this monopoly Coen ordered in 1621, after a long negotiation and skirmishes initiated by both parties, the depopulation of Banda.¹⁴⁸ Almost all inhabitants of Banda were captured and sold as slaves or murdered in the uprising. During the depopulation 44 spiritual leaders, *orang-kaja*'s, were convicted to death by decapitation after a short and unfair process.¹⁴⁹ With this violent raid, Coen conquered the Banda islands and therefore strengthened the position of the VOC.

In 1623 he travelled back to Amsterdam, where he reported on his findings and accomplishments to the Heren XVII¹⁵⁰ and proposed his plans to further expand the Dutch overseas archipelago. He married Eva Ment in 1626 and they travelled back together in 1627, where he resumed his role as Governor General from his post in Batavia, until his death in 1629.

Van Goor described Coen as a fierce highly intellectual and philosophical man, who was driven by honour and the force of natural law.¹⁵¹ He was known for his rhetorical writing skills and

levensstijl en het waardepatroon van een voornaam koopmanshuis waarbinnen eer, faam en reputatie de plechtbankers vormden."

¹⁴⁴ Van Goor "Jan Pieterszoon Coen", 111

¹⁴⁵ In this article the term Indies or Dutch Indies is used because Indonesia is larger than the area referred to as Dutch Indies and because of the fact that during Coen's life the term Dutch Indies is used.

¹⁴⁶ Van Goor, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen", 115.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 435.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 462.

¹⁵⁰ The Heren XVII were seventeenth trade merchants who together formed the board of directions of the VOC. They decided the missions, the way money was divided and arranged crew and leaders for missions.

¹⁵¹ Van Goor, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen", 46 & 371.

his ability to substantiate his argumentations for his decisions. Van Goor describes the main values of Coen coming from his protestant belief.¹⁵²¹⁵³

4.2 Coen and the case of Sarah Specx

The heroic status of Coen was not immaculate, both during his life and in his legacy. In this section this is shown by explaining rivalry and by explaining the case of Sarah Specx, a girl in his care he convicted to public flogging.

Coen had many rivals, Van Goor explains that because of his rank, he was often in dispute with other captains, both foreign and Dutch, which sometimes resulted in violent acts. For instance, he had a fierce rivalry with the English Captain John Jourdain,¹⁵⁴ who was sent to secure the English archipelago in the Indies. Jourdain was killed in an English-Dutch battle for the coast of Pantami in 1619.¹⁵⁵ This event led to an investigation by the counsel of Indie, because crew members of Jourdain said that he was killed after the white flag of peace was uplifted and Coen was accused of ordering his killing. However, the findings of this investigation did not provide any conclusive evidence of Coen's involvement in the death of Jourdain. Nonetheless, that an investigation was launched does provide substantiation that many believed Coen was capable of murdering a rival after peace was acknowledged.

This was certainly not the only rivalry Coen experienced in his time as Gouverneur Generaal or the only time he got accused for outrageous actions. However, many believed in the power and ability of Coen. Pieter Both, the first governor general of the VOC¹⁵⁶ described Coen in 1613 when he promoted him, over more experienced and older other candidates, to accountant general of all offices in India as: "a person with a very modest life, good in character, not a drunk, not stubborn, very skilled in meetings, very well versed in trade and accounting and a person I know well."¹⁵⁷ Due to his work for the Dutch VOC Coen was acknowledged and well known throughout the Netherlands. His reputation did seem to be mostly based on his skills as a merchant and leader, and not on his personality.

¹⁵² Pieter Arend Leupe "Jan Pietersz Coen 1623-1627", *bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indie*, (6), 1885, 3.

¹⁵³ A lot of the correspondence between JP Coen and the Heren XVII as well as others, have been preserved. In comparison to correspondence written by other seventeenth century individuals, the letters written by JP Coen are quite easily written.

¹⁵⁴ Goor, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen," 388.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 388.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ Van Goor, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen", 150. Translated by author. Original in Dutch: "*Een persoon zeer bescheiden leven, zedig, goed van karakter, geen dronkaard, niet eigenwijs, zeer bekwaam in het vergaderen, zeer goed thuis in de handel en het boekhouden en een persoon die ik goed ken.*"

Another event that gets attention if the public representation of Coen is questioned in the case of 12-year-old Sarah Specx. She was the daughter of Jacques Specks, a friend of Coen and his successor as Gouverneur- general. Specx had left his daughter in the care of Eva Ment and Coen, when he went back to the Netherlands in 1628. Coen caught Sarah Specx having intimate relations with a boy in his house in 1629.¹⁵⁸ According to Coen this was an attack on his reputation and honour as merchant-king of the Dutch colonies. He ordered with support of the counsel of Indie the boy to death by decapitation and Sarah to public flogging.¹⁵⁹ In the *WestFries Museum* in Hoorn attention is paid to this event, they describe this incident as “a harsh verdict.”¹⁶⁰ Although many contemporaries thought the judgement was too strict, Van Goor shows that the punishment was according to 1629 standards.¹⁶¹ Although the aversion the incident provoked by bystanders, Coen’s reputation was not immediately compromised, by his death later the same year he was considered a hero.¹⁶²

Nevertheless, the case of Sarah Specx did change his public representation over time, in several plays, novels and documentaries the incident is critically displayed. This is visible in the screenplay written by Jan Jacob Slauerhoff in 1930. Slauerhoff portrays Coen as a violent and unreasonable man who misused his power when he convicted the 12-year-old girl to public flogging. Slauerhoffs play was banned from theatre until 1961, under the condition that it would be a closed performance.¹⁶³ The performance was banned because of the still ongoing conflicts in Indonesia and Papua – New Guinea, a colony of the Netherlands, and the negative effect the play would have on the conflict.

The incident is also portrayed in some contemporary historical romance novels. The romance novel by Anneloes Timmerije in 2019 “*De mannen van Maria*” portrays the events and the indignation and disbelief the situation evoked by bystanders.¹⁶⁴ This incident is also portrayed in other novels for instance by Jacob Cats in 1637, by Willem Leonard Ritter in 1845 and by Simone van der Vlucht in 2018. They all explain the verdict in a way of “outraging cruel” or “unnecessarily strict.”¹⁶⁵ However, the punishment of Sarah Specx was not uncustomary for the period of time, the verdict was in line with jurisdictional standards of that time.¹⁶⁶ By stating that the punishment was unnecessary harsh, only Coen’s reputation decreases, but it does not seem to affect the reputation of the entire Golden Age.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 498.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 500 – 510.

¹⁶⁰ “Het leven van JP Coen,” Westfries Museum, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.jpcoen.com/het-leven-van-coen/>. Translated by author, original in Dutch: “een hard oordeel.”

¹⁶¹ Celine Koenjer, “In voor en tegenspoed”, *Coen! Geroemd en verguisd*, April 14, 2012, 31.

¹⁶² Van Goor, “Jan Pieterszoon Coen,” 511.

¹⁶³ Kester Freriks “Jan Pieterszoon Coen, een verboden toneelstuk van Slauerhoff.” *Theaterkrant*. March 26, 2017. <https://www.theaterkrant.nl/nieuws/jan-pietersz-coen-verboden-toneelstuk-slauerhoff/>

¹⁶⁴ Anneloes Timmerije, *De mannen van Maria*, (Amsterdam: Quirido: 2019): Chapter 3, Kobo Reader.

¹⁶⁵ Simone van der Vlucht, *Het schaduwspel*, (Amsterdam: AndoAnthos, 2018): 224-229.

¹⁶⁶ Van Goor, “Jan Pieterszoon Coen”, 462-464.

4.3 The depopulation of the Banda Islands

The reputation of Coen largely revolves around the creation of Batavia and therefore securing the overseas empire of the Netherlands. One of the main events that Coen is criticised about is the depopulation of Banda. The case of Banda will therefore be central in this section.

Commissioned by the HerenXVII, Coen sailed towards the Banda Islands in 1621 in order to secure the monopoly on nutmeg. The negotiations stalled and Coen ordered the depopulation of Banda in order to secure the monopoly. This event is seen as mass murder by supporters of the citizens' initiative to remove the statue in Hoorn in 2011. This critique is not new, in the documentary "De Gouden Eeuw" it is claimed that the HerenXVII called him back to report the incident and that they were not pleased by his choice of action.¹⁶⁷ The critique of the Heren XVII is based on a letter to Coen stating that they wished there would have been less violence. Van Goor shows, however, that this letter was sent before news reached them that the monopoly was secured. When they received the confirmation, they retrieved their earlier statements and rewarded Coen with 3000 gulden.¹⁶⁸

The WestFries Museum opened an exhibition in 2011 on the controversy about Coen. It showed that in 1937 the first visible protest about the statue of Coen was revealed by the socialistic party at the 350th anniversary of the birthday of Coen.¹⁶⁹ The base of this protest was the exploitation of the Banda islands by Coen. The cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s ensured that Coen, as a symbol of colonialism, became so controversial, that Coen disappeared from the public agenda.

In 1987 however, another, fiercer, protest led to vandalism on the statue of Coen. The city council even voted against a commemoration of the 400th birthday of Coen.¹⁷⁰ "A sign that appreciation for Coen had reached an all-time low after the cultural upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s. The commemoration nevertheless came, albeit on a small scale and with a tendency more critical than laudatory used to be."¹⁷¹ The protest was influenced by post – colonial critique, this caused that the way that the Banda island depopulation is seen has shifted from the focus laying on the achievement of his goal of the monopoly on nutmeg, towards the focus of a violent act of genocide.

¹⁶⁷ VPRO.NTR, "De Gouden Eeuw: De VOC een wereldonderneming" directed by Gerda Jansen Hendriks, *NPO Start*. Video File 40:33, January 8 2013. Accessed May 15, 2020. https://www.npostart.nl/de-gouden-eeuw/08-01-2013/NPS_1210654.

¹⁶⁸ Van Goor, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen", 462-464.

¹⁶⁹ Westfries Museum Hoorn, *Kritiek JP Coen*, streaming audio 1:34. www.jpcoen.com

¹⁷⁰ Jasper Rijpma, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen op school *Historisch besef en geschiedenisonderwijs in Nederland, 1857-2011*" (Master-thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2020): 40-41.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 43.

In 2011 the discussion about the legacy of Coen flared up again, when a citizens' initiative for the removal of the statue was submitted.¹⁷² This led to a change in the description on the pedestal of his statue: "They [the city counsel of Hoorn] moved swiftly, recognizing the 'dark side' of Coen but without going into any further details, and quickly proposed a new text, thus effectively pre-empting further discussion on the merits or the faults of Coen", Lisa Johnson explained.¹⁷³ The city council thus reframed the statue of Coen, so that post colonialist critique could be included in the framing of Coen. In the *WestFries Museum* citizens also got the opportunity to vote if the statue should be replaced or not, a similar outcome resulted from this opportunity. Although the statue itself remains a celebration of the Dutch supremacy during the Golden Age, director of the *WestFries Museum*, Ad Geerdink claimed that the statue of Coen got another meaning over the years from a statue of celebration towards a statue that endorses a different meaning.¹⁷⁴ Or as *lieu de memoire*, a statue that over time endorses meaning in itself.¹⁷⁵

Johnson also states that the new negative information on his statue is ascribed to Coen as a man who made *extraordinary* violent orders. It shows that the Banda attack is solidly ascribed to Coen and not to the zeitgeist of the Golden Age.¹⁷⁶ This is also visible in the citizens' initiative itself, that strived towards replacing the statue with another Golden Age hero, who has caused less violence.

Johnson further described that Coen has disappeared from schoolbooks because of the post colonialist critique that framed Coen as a war criminal who commit genocide on the Banda Islands.¹⁷⁷ However, this is not entirely true, in recent years Coen is a figure used in history classes and the negative sides are part of the school material. Visible in for instance video reportages, *Schooltv*, that are part of the primary and secondary school curriculum.¹⁷⁸ There are four videos about his role in the Golden Ages. In all three the events on Banda are taken into account, however, in all three the discussion itself remains unsolved. Both recognition for the slaughtering and recognition for his effort to secure the overseas empire, were visible. The creation of Batavia is seen as a big victory in the Dutch history. In the longest clip of 25 minutes Coen supposedly is back from the dead to give an

¹⁷² Lisa Johnson, "Renegotiating dissonant heritage: the statue of J.P. Coen," *International Journal of heritage Studies* (August 2013): 584. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2013.818571>

¹⁷³ Johnson, "Renegotiating statue of JP Coen", 595.

¹⁷⁴ Ad Geerdink, "Woord vooraf," *Coen! Geroemd en verguisd*, April 14, 2012, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Ad Geerdink, "Het Westfries museum en Coen," 31.

¹⁷⁶ Johnson, "Renegotiating statue of JP Coen," 596.

¹⁷⁷ Johnson, "Renegotiating statue of JP Coen," 595.

¹⁷⁸ Schooltv, "Jan Pieterszoon Coen" Video file 5:23, January 13, 2013. Accessed May 14, 2020. <https://schooltv.nl/zoekresultaten/?q=%22jan+pieterszoon+Coen%22>

interview. He is portrayed as a smart and complacent person that believed in his course and in the VOC mentality.¹⁷⁹¹⁸⁰

The heroic status of Coen thus suffered a lot of criticism over the years. The public debate about his actions on the Banda Islands is disapproved by many. His actions are often seen as unnecessarily harsh, but still his statue is not removed, and his name appears in schoolbooks and other forms of public representation. So, although his public representation is not positive, his legacy is still upheld. Because the public representation of his legacy still continuous. I therefore agree with Stephanie Koenen in her argument that Coen still is a part of our national consciousness, even if it is not a heroic one: “No, Coen is not a hero, but one of the most important persons in the history of the VOC who has left a heavy mark on our past and on the world.”¹⁸¹

Conclusion

This chapter focussed on the heroic status of Jan Pieterszoon Coen over time.¹⁸² It became visible that over the years often the heroic status of Coen is attacked and that even during his life his status was not spotless. Not surprisingly Coen’s reputation was altered by post colonialist critique more than Michiel de Ruyter, Coen is often even seen as the symbol of colonialism.

The controversy about Coen altered his heroic status, however, he is still represented in public, although not always positively, he is still part of the national consciousness. It is concluded that although the heroic status of Coen is decreased, his life and his influence on the history of the Netherlands is not forgotten. Simultaneously however, it seems that his legacy is dissolved from the legacy of the Golden Age – the citizens’ initiative in Hoorn asked for a different representative of the Golden Age and his controversial actions on Banda are often solidly ascribed to him as a man and were disconnected to the zeitgeist of the Golden Age itself. The discussion about Coen naturally consist of many more voices; Coen is still remembered and even celebrated, despite the irrefutable facts that Coen was responsible for the depopulation on the Banda Islands, in order to secure the Dutch overseas imperium.

¹⁷⁹ Schooltv, “Welkom in de Gouden Eeuw”, Video File 25:00, December 9, 2012. Accessed May 14, 2020.

<https://schooltv.nl/video/welkom-in-de-gouden-eeuw-de-voc/#q=%22jan%20pieterszoon%20Coen%22>

¹⁸⁰ In this clip, Coen is given critique on his actions, the reaction of Coen that is portrayed, is that of a man who can’t handle the critique, something that would be out of character according the biography by Jur van Goor. As every hero, JP Coen also has a saying attached to his legacy, the words; “*dispereert niet*” (do not despair). It shows the decisiveness, devotion, belief and confidence JP Coen had in his cause.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸¹ Stephanie Koenen, “Geen held maar kopstuk, “*Coen! Geroemd en verguisd*”, April 14, 2012, 44. Quote by Jur van Goor, Originally in Dutch: “*nee, Coen is geen held, maar één van de belangrijkste personen uit de geschiedenis van de VOC die een zware stempel heeft gedrukt op ons verleden en op de wereld.*”

¹⁸² Because Coen is used in this thesis as an example of changes in heroic status, not every controversy or public debate about his life and legacy is taken into account. For instance, in contemporary society, a primary school named after JP Coen has changed its name because of the growing controversy.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis I asked the question how the public representation of the Dutch Golden Age and its heroes changed over time. With this thesis I provided insight in the role the Golden Age plays in shared memory and the shared historical consciousness. I emphasized using Anthony Smith's argument that the memory of a Golden Age, as a period "distinguished for its collective dignity and external prestige,"¹⁸³ has a significant role in the creation of a shared normative framework, a shared goal and uniqueness, which are all needed for the creation of a nation.

The research showed that the legacy of the Golden Age has been under pressure because of post colonialist critique, multiculturalism and anti-nationalist nationalism. This altered the nationalism in the Netherlands to a nuanced and tolerant self-image. This self-image appeared to be not easily compatible to the shared memory and glorification of the Golden Age, that involved slavery and imperialism. This recently provoked the disappearance of the Golden Age term from the exhibition in the *Amsterdam's Museum*.

Alongside, the heroic status of both figures, De Ruyter and Coen, has been challenged over time, but the outcome has differed between the two. De Ruyter's heroic status was high during his life, not only in the Netherlands but also beyond. In the case of Coen, however, his reputation had been controversial already during his lifetime, mainly because of the way he had conquered the Banda islands in 1621. But he was also acknowledged by the leaders of the VOC as a great merchant. Coen's good reputation was never based on personal qualities such as humbleness and courage, attributes De Ruyter had enjoyed. But it was based on the achievements as ruler of the Dutch East Indies. At the end of the nineteenth century, both were celebrated for their heroic actions during the Golden Age. After the Second World War, however De Ruyter's heroic status would be tarnished for two decades, because of the way his legacy was used in German War publicity. The greatest changes in both their heroic status and public representation of both De Ruyter and Coen, however, occurred in relation to the post-colonial critique around the 1980s. It is not surprising that this critique hit Coen harder than De Ruyter, because Coen was directly involved in overseas trade opposed to De Ruyter who was mostly involved in wars closer to home. Coen's heroic status decreased, because his most influential contribution in the Golden Age, the securing of the monopoly Nutmeg in Banda, became an image of mass murder instead of victory. However, the tarnished reputation of De Ruyter was rebuilt on a newly formed multiculturalist framing of his legacy. In other words, with the influence of post-colonial critique the public representation of De Ruyter and Coen took opposite directions. De Ruyter was just recently romanticized with a new heroic movie about his life in 2015, while Coen's statue

¹⁸³ Anthony Smith, "The resurgence of nationalism? Myth and Memory in the renewal of Nations", 583.

almost disappeared after a citizen's initiative appealed to replace his statue with someone else in 2011.

Although my research emphasized this difference in heroic status, it must be made clear that both De Ruyter and Coen are still visible in society and that many different voices take part in the debate about the legacy of these Golden Age heroes. De Ruyter's heroic status is not undisputed, as some action groups reject the multiculturalist framing and are committed to decreasing De Ruyter's heroic status. And in the case of Coen, many still value him as an example figure, his statue for instance remained as do other references such as street names which refer to his legacy.

This research has led me to another distinctive conclusion: the lifted heroic status of De Ruyter was used in the states representation of the Golden Age to describe the normative character of the period positively. While Coen's decreasing status left him out of the memory of the Golden Age, he for instance got removed briefly from history books. His actions, for instance the attack on Banda, were ascribed solidly to him and Coen was explained as an extraordinary violent man and he became a symbol of colonialism. It seems that in order to honor the shared memory of the Golden Age, the increased heroic status of De Ruyter is used to describe the period positively, while Coen got dissolved from the memory in order to prevent negative framing.

To fully understand the changing public representation of the Golden Age and its heroes changed through time, more research is necessary. For example, this research consisted only of a conceptual history of the Golden Age term, but it would be useful to look into the changes of the term in schoolbooks and other forms of public representation. Also, more newspaper articles need to be analyzed to generalize the conclusion with good faith. This effected the usefulness of the results in a sense of generalization and completeness. Further, for both De Ruyter and Coen many more sources are available, which could need historical analysis. The scope of this thesis has been too limited to consider all of them.

In short, there is a new self-image of the Dutch nation that struggles to include the shared memory of the Golden Age. I have shown that the public representation of the Golden Age and its heroes has changed in order to create an inclusive shared memory that is resistant to and includes post colonialist critique. The heroic status of heroes therefore is influenced by movements and preferences that appear in society. To continue the study of heroism and memory of Golden Ages more voluminous research will be fruitful. It would be fascinating, for example, to apply my methods also to Johan De Witt or de HerenXVII. And to expand my research globally, in the last weeks different statues of colonial figures all over the globe were taken down by protesters of the Black Lives Matter Movement, for instance in Bristol the statue of Edward Colston was removed on June 8, 2020.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Tim de Wit, "Tientallen Britse standbeelden op nominatie om verwijderd te worden" *NOS*. June 10, 2020. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2336852-tientallen-britse-standbeelden-op-nominatie-om-verwijderd-te-worden.html>

There seems to be a new wave in critique on the idealization of heroes, that because of timing could not be included in this research, I am very interested to see what this new wave will do to the heroic status and public representation of Golden Age heroes. And last but not least, the relationship between post-colonialism, anti-nationalist nationalism and collective memory in the Netherlands will allow for further discussion in the humanities and social sciences over the next years. I hope my thesis will make a contribution to this debate.

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Appendix A Case selection

This appendix gives background information to the case selection of the comparison between Michiel de Ruyter and Jan Pieterszoon Coen. As suggested in chapter one, the public representation of the Golden Age entirely closely relates to the heroic status of heroes of the same period. In order to fully grasp the changes in public representation the changes in heroic status of Michiel de Ruyter and Jan Pieterszoon Coen are described. To fully understand the importance of this case study it has to be clear why a comparison between two heroic figures will show the changes in public representation of the Golden Age, and secondly it has to be clear why Michiel de Ruyter and Jan Pieterszoon Coen will prove to be a fruitful comparison.

First, according to Anthony Smith a Golden Age represents citizens with a normative character, a shared memory of a period of glory will also provide a sense of directness. This period is in the Dutch case the seventeenth century. In other words: the shared memory of a Golden Age will provide citizens with a sense of belong to a nation, a nation they want to be part of. It is therefore not surprising that states often enlist this memory in order to stimulate a nationalistic sentiment. However, the shared memory of a Golden Age itself does not bring a direct value system, but people of this period can give that. So, heroes of these certain ages are functioning as figures of ideal qualities: like courage, wealth, entrepreneurship and glory. They are portrayed as example figures by the state to promote similar qualities in its contemporary citizens. More than the Golden Age in its entirety, which is an impersonal entity, people can provide that normative value system. In other words, the shared memory of the Golden Age in its entirety is created out of the combined qualities and efforts of the people of that time. They are the example for contemporary people.

Second, why a comparison between Michiel de Ruyter and Jan Pieterszoon Coen? The choice for these specific individuals of the Golden Age is based on three main arguments. Firstly, Michiel de Ruyter and Jan Pieterszoon Coen are two of the most named persons in the last 20 years, when it comes to the legacy of the Golden Age. Only three years ago a new 'hero movie' about Michiel de Ruyter appeared and Jan Pieterszoon Coen is often part of a public debate which focusses on his statue or is involved in a larger debate on contemporary Dutch society. For instance, in the case involving '*Zwarte Piet*' – a controversial part of a Dutch annual tradition. Secondly, they are both outliers when it comes to the legacy of the Golden Age: De Ruyter is often named positively, but Coen's reputation seems to be in a downfall. With influences of postcolonialism Coen is often seen as the embodiment of colonialism, imperialism and slavery. While De Ruyter is seen as the one that was in favor of multi-culturalism, who supposedly was not involved in slavery at all. Third, they were both seen as heroes at the end of the nineteenth century, so both were or are heroes that form a part

of Dutch society. But also, they are both significant figures who are not only famous in the Netherlands, but also beyond.

So, in short, both De Ruyter and Coen are famous, are still named in public debates and visible in society and were both once seen as heroes. However, they differ in their status now, it seems, at first glance, that Michiel de Ruyter is embraced and Jan Pieterszoon Coen is renounced. A comparison of the changes in heroic status of both significant heroes will therefore be fruitful, because it can give insight in why one is embraced, and one is renounced. In other words, the trajectory of their heroic status seems to be different, a systematic comparison will give insight in the cause of this. Also it can provide insight in the qualities of the two men that seem to be upheld and glorified and which parts of the Golden Age and its heroes are in need for revision.

Appendix B Selection newspaper articles

For the analysis of how often and in which context the ‘Golden Age’ is mentioned over the years, described in chapter two, I analyzed articles found in the online Dutch newspaper archive Delpher. I divided this analysis in four different steps.

First, I analyzed the amount of times the ‘Golden Age’ was mentioned by entering “Gouden Eeuw” in the database. This showed articles in newspapers from 1700 until 1995, which is the end of the database. The database doesn’t cover the period after 1995. The amount of times the Golden Age was mentioned over the years is visible in figure 1. This analysis includes advertisements, articles and illustration. A note that has to be made here is that I did not control the data, with the total amount of articles the database entailed.

Second, I analyzed the amount of times the Golden Age was mentioned in the period between 1940 and 1995 in four different national newspaper each representing a different pillar in society (*Trouw, Telegraaf, Volkskrant, Parool*). This gave insight in the way the ‘Golden Age’ term is spread in society and by which societal groups the term was used more often. The usage of the term provided crucial information in the accurate of the debate and gave direction to possible turning points.

For the selection of newspapers two possible influences were taken into account, first regional newspapers that also might represent similar or different pillars were not included, because of the two different reasons. Regional newspapers are read only in the singular region that they are covering and therefore do not illustrate the overall change in the Netherlands. And the other reason to exclude regional newspaper is that regional newspapers often cover only regional news and therefor may alter the results on regional preferences. Second, in the analysis of the period between 1940-1949 the founding days of the newspapers were taken into account. *Het Parool* was founded on July 25, 1940 and the *Trouw* only until February 18, 1943. So, for these two newspapers the period between 1940-1949 wasn’t covert in whole. The results are visible in figure 2, and below in table 2.

	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1990	1990-1995
Telegraaf	154	177	177	216	351	210
Trouw	70	141	178	175	432	413
Volkskrant	46	212	231	138	399	582
Parool	34	180	247	201	395	656
Total	304	710	833	730	1577	1861

Table 2 Mentions of the Golden Age in different newspapers. As composed by author.

Third, to explore in which contexts and in which framing the Golden Age term was used I analyzed 360 articles over the course of 1940-1995 in the four different newspapers. In each newspaper I first selected newspapers articles for every decade, focusing on the first 5 articles of every '00, '05 and '09 year. Second, I analyzed each newspaper article if they covert a positive, unclear or negative framing of the Golden Age. The results are visible in table 1.

Fourth, I combined the results found in every newspaper. This provided an overall insight in the Netherlands in every pillar visible in society. The combined results are visible in table 3. However, no significant insight was found, that no distinctive conclusion could be drawn however, does says something about way the Golden Age memory is formed. These results seem to show that there is no difference between political groups in society and the shared memory of the Golden Age.

It has to be noted though that pillarization of newspapers faded slowly after 1960, therefore the distinctive character of each newspaper slowly lost their distinctive characters. Although each newspaper still focusses on different things in society. For instance, the *Telegraaf* is still a liberal newspaper and the *Volkskrant* is mostly influenced by left wing politics. The defining characters found in pillarization, now overlaps slightly. Therefore, differencing each newspaper is less insightful after 1960.

	1940-1948	1950-1958	1960-1968	1970-1978	1980-1989	1990-1998
POSITIVE						
Trouw	73%	80%	47%	60%	73%	53%
Parool	70%	67%	73%	67%	60%	73%
Telegraaf	60%	93%	93%	73%	80%	40%
Volkscrant	67%	67%	75%	40%	60%	73%
NEGATIVE						
Trouw	0%	0%	13%	0%	7%	13%
Parool	0%	13%	13%	7%	13%	13%
Telegraaf	7%	0%	7%	13%	0%	7%
Volkscrant	0%	7%	0%	27%	27%	7%
UNCLEAR						
Trouw	27%	20%	40%	40%	20%	33%
Parool	30%	20%	13%	27%	27%	13%
Telegraaf	33%	7%	0%	13%	20%	53%
Volkscrant	33%	27%	19%	40%	13%	20%

Table 3 Results of content analysis of different newspapers: use of the Golden Age term. As composed by author.

Appendix C Video analysis of the Public representation of De Ruyter and Coen

In order to analyze the public representation of heroic figures in schoolbooks I used video material. In this section I will describe the selection of these videos for the analysis first of Michiel de Ruyter and second of Jan Pieterszoon Coen.

Michiel de Ruyter

I analyzed seventeen different videos used in primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands. These seventeen clips were selected from three different sites. First the clips that were available on the site *schooltv.nl* were analyzed. This site is connected to the Dutch Canon presented in 2006, Michiel de Ruyter is a part of this national canon. The canon is used in over eighty percent of the primary schools in the Netherlands, according to a survey held in 2019.¹⁸⁵ Second clips were also selected from *entoen.nl*, this also contains the Dutch canon. Because Michiel de Ruyter's legacy is one of the fifty windows the canon represents, information about De Ruyter is gathered on this site. It also is an official website that provides information, documentaries and substantiation used in school classes. Third, a YouTube search on short documentaries about Michiel de Ruyter provided for two more video's that were analysed. The seventeen videos were thus selected selectively in order to expose the information given by the Dutch canon, that is claimed to portray the Dutch collective memory.¹⁸⁶

These videos were analyzed in a similar way to the newspapers from chapter two. By analyzing the text and to focus on the framing of Michiel de Ruyter in the video's dividing from negative, positive and unclear statements. However, one difference was made, in the video analysis I also used a detailed method to enclose nuances made in the video clips. An overview of the data used is visible in table 4. In chapter three the results of this analysis are shown.

¹⁸⁵ Ingrid van Engelshoven (Minister of Education, Culture and Science), 'Opdrachtbrief Herijking Canon van Nederland', 31 May 2019, 2.

¹⁸⁶ Commission Development Dutch Canon, *Canon: Deel A*, 23.

Date	Age group	Length in minutes	Titel (in dutch)
01-01-00	13 until 18	3 min	<i>Michiel de Ruyter Nederlandse zeeheld</i>
14-03-13	9 until 12	15 min	<i>Canon - Michiel de Ruyter</i>
13-02-13	16 until 18	2 min 30	<i>De toch naar chantham</i>
06-05-16	16 untill18	1 min 47	<i>De Nederlandse zeemacht in de gouden eeuw</i>
22-11-17	13 until 18	1 min 27	<i>Clipphanger wie was Michiel de Ruyter</i>
01-01-00	9 until 15	3 min 09	<i>Michiel de Ruyter de dood van Michiel de Ruyter</i>
09-02-14	9 until 12	24 min 48	<i>Oorlog en Vrede welkom in de gouden eeuw</i>
23-01-17	9 until 15	6 min 27	<i>Topstukken van het rijksmuseum. De zeevaartzaal in het rijksmuseum.</i>
13-05-16	13 until 15	6 min 31	<i>Een vandaag in de klas</i>
09-03-12	13 until 15	14 min 15	<i>Vroeger en zo Michiel de Ruyter</i>
25-03-14	Unclear	5 min 49	<i>CANON VAN ZEELAND, venster 27: Michiel de Ruyter 1607-1676</i>
15-09-11	Unclear	24 min 04	<i>Landgenoten</i>
24-09-18	Unclear	11.18	<i>Michiel de Ruyter: one of the greatest admirals in history.</i>
09-11-12	Unclear	0.59	<i>Fragment canonlied Michiel de Ruyter</i>
06-11-12	6 until 9	3.01	<i>Canonclip Michiel de Ruyter</i>
13-11-12	9 until 12	4.01	<i>Canonclip 20 Michiel de Ruyter groep 7 en 8</i>
09-11-12	13 until 18	4.19	<i>Canon clip Michiel de Ruyter (voortgezet onderwijs).</i>

Table 4 Data video analysis Michiel De Ruyter's public representation, as composed by author.

Jan Pieterszoon Coen

The video analysis shown in chapter four on the public representation of Jan Pieterszoon Coen was based on similar data. However, J.P. Coen is not officially part of the Dutch Canon, a few clips were found on *schooltv.nl* concerning his heroic status. On the second site used in the analysis of Michiel

de Ruyter: *entoen.nl* the official canon is shown. And because Coen is not projected in a ‘window’ in contrast to Michiel de Ruyter. Less information is visible. However, the ‘*Handel op de Oostzee*’ is part of the canon, and the legacy of Coen is included in this ‘window’.

Another source is used in the video content analysis into the heroic status of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, is the site of the *WestFries museum* and their ‘trial’ into the legacy of Coen: *jpcoen.com*. These videos presented on the site explore the heroic status of Coen and the public representation through time. In each video different parts of his legacy are highlighted. These clips were used in the description of the debate on the statue of Coen in Hoorn, because they are not part of the official canon, I have not used them in the description of Coen’s role in regeneration. The video analysis of Coen consisted of thirteen videos’ visible in table 5.

Date	Age group	Length in minutes	Titel (in Dutch)
13-02-13	16 until 18	5 min 23	<i>Jan Pieterszoon Coen Hollandse Held of misdadiger</i>
11-09-17	13 until 18	2 min 41	<i>Omstreden standbeelden</i>
09-12-12	9 until 12	25 min	<i>De VOC, welkom in de Gouden Eeuw</i>
unclear	9 until 12	3 min 38	<i>schooltv beeldbankclip de VOC in Batavia</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 30	<i>Nationale held</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 11	<i>Een nationale hulde</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 31	<i>Operettefiguur</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 51	<i>Onthulling</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 47	<i>Coenfeesten</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 34	<i>Kritiek</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min 03	<i>Burgerinnitatief</i>
14-03-12	unclear	1 min	<i>Van zijn sokkel</i>
12-01-13	unclear	45 min	<i>De Gouden Eeuw: een wereldonderneming</i>

Table 5 Video analysis of Jan Pieterszoon Coen's public representation. As composed by author.

