

Architecture on the Way

Dutch Influences in 17th Century Brandenburg

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Due to international relationships and trade, in the 17th century the Northern Netherlands were a centre for architecture and an influence on large parts of the North Sea and Baltic regions.¹ Dutch Classicism in Sweden, however, is completely different from Dutch Classicism in Brandenburg, although they are both examples of the same architectural developments. Focusing on Brandenburg, it is the networks of building commissioners that show the way in which the Dutch influence came to Brandenburg. The central policy of the Electors' Court stressed upon the immigration of craftsmen and new people to the Berlin region, shortly after the devastating Thirty Years War. Most of them stayed anonymous. Only a small group of architects, engineers and entrepreneurs succeeded in playing a crucial role in Brandenburg's building organisation.²



Fig. 1: House ter Nieuburg near Den Haag (Collection J.Q. van Regteren Altena).



Fig. 2: Title page of Philips Vingboons' *Afbeeldsels der voornaemste gebouwen*, Amsterdam 1648.

Fig. 3: The territory of Brandenburg in 1688 (drawing author).

Fig. 4: Friedrich Wilhelm (1620-1688), Elector of Brandenburg (Schloss Charlottenburg Berlin).

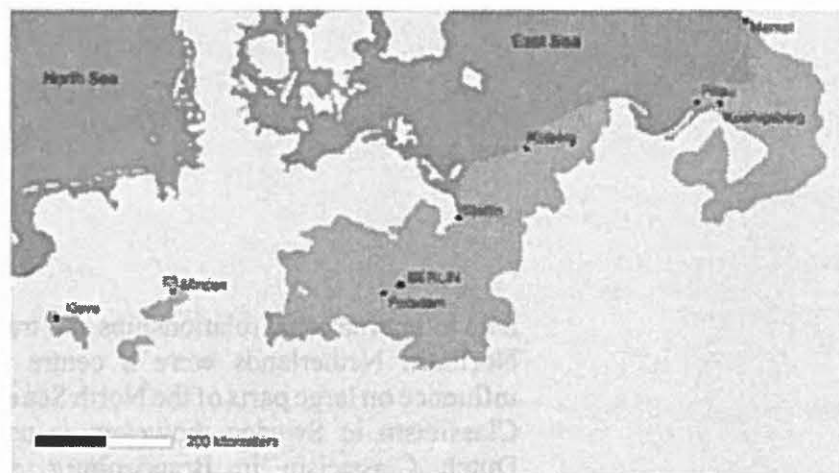


THE DUTCH REPUBLIC AND BRANDENBURG

Why was it that Holland in particular was so important for Brandenburg? In order to understand why the Dutch Republic was such an important centre for the export of architectural styles and building techniques, we will shortly look at the state of the Republic in the 17th century. After 1585 Holland had taken over the leading trading position from Flanders. The Amsterdam trade market and stock exchange was one of the most important in the world. Travellers and tradesmen from all over the world came to the city. Other Dutch cities boomed like never before and many of the inhabitants amassed great riches and fortune, which made it possible for them to buy all kinds of exotic products, to build magnificent houses and to lead almost nobleman-like lives.³

This self-indulgent lifestyle was exemplified in the Amsterdam town hall by the architect Jacob van Campen. The realisation of the building was extremely expensive. Private civilians also spent enormous sums on building their private houses. Not only civilians, however: Prince Frederik Hendrik van Oranje was to build two huge palaces in the surroundings of Den Haag: Honselaarsdijk and Ter Nieuburg (Fig. 1). Their architectural style, influenced by the writings of Palladio and Scamozzi, rapidly became fashionable. The wealth of the nation made it possible for many to adopt a new lifestyle. Country houses in the classical style were built outside the cities, such as the Huis ten Bosch in Maarssen; areas of wasteland were cultivated, as in Maarsseveen, by the Amsterdam mayor Joan Huydecoper. Leading architects like Philips Vingboons, Jacob van Campen and Pieter Post published their designs (Fig. 2), so that fashionable designs spread rapidly over a large area; Dutch Classicism was not only to be found in provincial towns but in the second half of the 17th century also in Sweden, Poland and Scotland.⁴

Before we take a look at the actual activities of Dutchmen in Brandenburg, we will look at the way in which architectural designs and ideas found their way through Europe from the Republic. First of all, architects left their country and worked elsewhere. Secondly, architects wrote books, or published their designs, which were exported to other countries. Thirdly, building commissioners had cultural agents in the main political and cultural centres, such as Amsterdam and Den Haag, in order to keep themselves informed about political and artistic developments. Fourthly, "colonists" went to other countries and introduced Dutch culture, organisation and architecture on a broad scale. Finally young people were sent to the Republic to study architecture, mathematics and fortress building and then went back to their home countries.



We will concentrate now on Brandenburg, which in the 17th century was quite different from the present territory (Fig. 3). In the years 1618 – 1648 the Thirty Years War had devastated a major part of Brandenburg. Towns were looted, burned down and the population was severely diminished. The infrastructure was demolished and at the end of the war the conditions for a rapid recovery were not available. Dutch influences and activities in Brandenburg were therefore primarily not a matter of fashion, but of mere necessity. The country was empty and penniless; the young Elector of Brandenburg, Friedrich Wilhelm (Fig. 4), who had succeeded his father at the age of twenty, was to lead the redevelopment of the country. He turned to the Dutch Republic to find people who were willing to go to Brandenburg and work there. The Elector (1620-1688) had studied in the Dutch town of Leiden, visited Arnhem, Den

Haag and Rhenen and inspected certain sieges. In 1646 he married the Dutch princess, Louise Henriette. The territory of Brandenburg had already in 1614 been extended by the Duchy of Kleve, on the Netherlandisch border, so that the contacts with the Republic were fairly close.⁵

Cultural agents and diplomats represented the Elector's policies in the Republic and tried to find people to repopulate Brandenburg. From Brandenburg itself, young people were sent to Holland to be educated and so a network of Brandenburgian agents was developed. An example of such an agent was Mathias Dögen (1605-1672). This Brandenburgian studied in Leiden, became an engineer and in 1647 he published in Amsterdam his *Architectura Militaris Moderna*, a theoretical treatise on fortress building which would become internationally known. As an electoral resident he spent more than twenty-five years in Holland.⁶

DUTCH NEWCOMERS IN BRANDENBURG

Immediately after the peace, in October 1648, many immigrants came from the Republic to Brandenburg. Immigration politics focused on getting new craftsmen and farmers to Brandenburg. The newcomers were granted religious freedom, free timber and tax advantages.

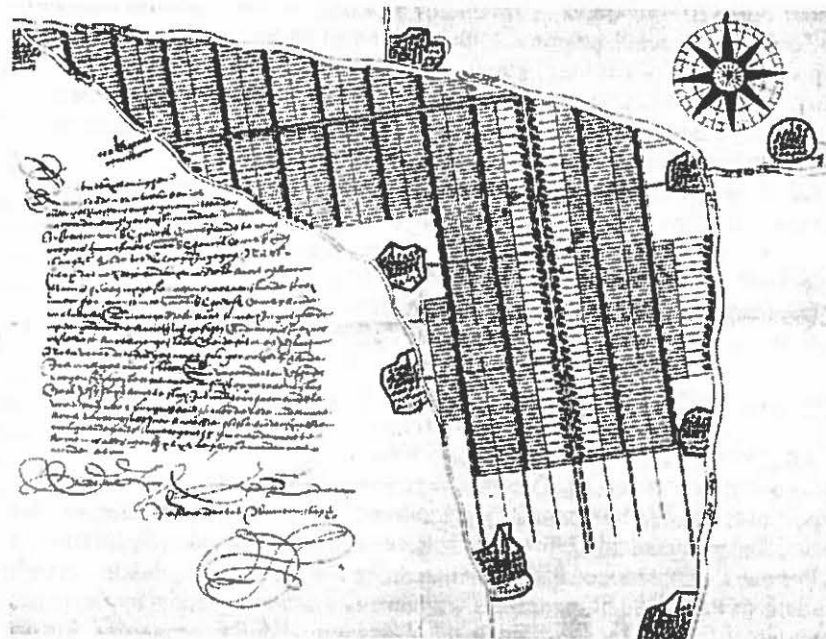


Fig. 5: Survey by Gerredt Dirckz of the Altmark, west of Berlin (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Berlin).

Dutch engineers had prepared for the immigration by mapping the land and proposing improvements in the soil hydrology. Gerredt Dirckz. Loos mapped the area round Tangermünde, Wittenberge and Stendal in January 1649 (Fig. 5). Another of his maps shows a plan for the soil hydrology of the Lenzer Wische along the river Elbe. Here colonists were to build new villages. The land should be drained and every family was to become a parcel of two acres, timber, reformed churches with a vicar and their own administration.

Another Dutchman, Aernout Gijsels van Lier (1593-1676), who formerly worked in Indonesia as a high-placed administrator, went to Brandenburg in 1647, in order to build up a large and mighty fleet of ships.⁸ Working on this programme, which appeared to be too ambitious, Gijsels leased the city and district of Lenzen and tried to build up the almost completely devastated town. He gave orders for the houses to be rebuilt, cared for the repair of dykes, improved the soil hydrology, created polders and had the fields replanted.⁹ He forced the inhabitants to send their children to school and tried to improve the quality of living and the morals in the town.

Other villages were newly founded with Dutch support, for example in the districts of Lenzen, Chorin, Gramzow, Liebenwalde and Zehdenick. *Oberjägermeister* Jobst von Hertefeld, who originated from the Rhine Valley, organised the building up of the area between Liebenwalde and Grüneberg at his own risk. The small village of Neuholland was created, for which immigrants from the Netherlands were recruited, such as Peter Salandt, from Brabant.¹⁰

MICHIEL MATTHIJZ SMIDS (1626-1692)

As a building entrepreneur Michiel Matthijz Smids (Fig. 6) was extraordinarily



Fig. 6: Michiel Matthijsz Smids, 1626-1692 (Staatliche Museen Berlin).



Fig. 7: The Oder-Spree or Friedrich-Wilhelm Canal near Müllrose (photo by author, April 2003).

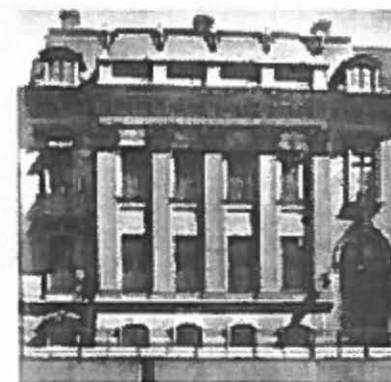


Fig. 8: House Friedrichsgracht 58 around 1910.

successful. This Dutch ship builder, engineer and tradesman was crucial for the development of Brandenburg's infrastructure and building organisation. Although he was not active as an architect, his organisational talents made him indispensable for the rebuilding of Brandenburg. He was the central figure in the network of engineers, architects, craftsmen and court commissioners. After he moved to Berlin, in 1652, he was responsible for the building of locks and soon he was to lead the works on the palace of Oranienburg, designed by Johann Gregor Memhardt for the Elector's wife Louise Henriette.¹¹ About Smids's Dutch years hardly anything is known, except that he was born on July 11th 1626 in Rotterdam and that he married Adriana von Heussen from the city of Breda on March 24th 1658, by which time he was already living in Berlin. In Oranienburg he worked on the Palace, the orphanage and the enlargement of the church. The tower of the Marienkirche in Berlin, struck by lightning, was repaired by Smids in the years 1663-1669. In 1665 he started working on the royal stables, which had been destroyed in a fire shortly before.¹²

In building matters Smids was an all-embracing entrepreneur. In 1669 he built a new bridge in Köpenick near Berlin. He was paid in wood, for further profitable trading. An important project was the digging of the Oder-Spree Canal (Fig. 7). This canal connected the Oder river with the Spree river, which allowed Berlin to improve its trading position in comparison to other cities. Goods which were shipped on the Spree had to be traded in Berlin, which provided the city with tax income. Smids was responsible for the realisation of ten locks and six bridges, for which he was paid the enormous sum of 30,000 Taler in August 1671. Smids's ability to pre-finance this kind of major project proves his leading position as an entrepreneur. In the meantime, he worked on stables and houses in Potsdam, founded a cannonball factory in Zehdenick and built houses in Berlin.¹³

Smids started to enlarge the palace of Potsdam with two wings in 1677. In 1680 he founded the electoral wharf in Berlin, in 1682 he built houses in Potsdam and in the years 1684-86 he worked together with Johan Arnold Nering on the alabaster hall of the Berlin Town Palace and the greenhouse. He was also responsible for the extension of the town at the Friedrichswerder, where he also built houses (Fig. 8).¹⁴ He died at the age of 66 in Berlin, in 1692.

ARCHITECTURE AND GARDENING

As previously stated, the Dutch influence on the architecture of Brandenburg is part of a broader Northern European development. In the 16th century, Dutch building masters and architects had already sent their designs to North Germany, Denmark or Poland, or had gone there in person. In the Netherlands, where the ideas of Palladio and Scamozzi were adapted relatively early by the painter-architects Van Campen, De Bray, Vingboons and Post, many books were printed, such as Philips Vingboons's *Afbeeldsels der voornaamste gebouwen uyt alle die Philips Vingboons geordineert heeft* (Amsterdam 1648), which played an important role in spreading Dutch Classicism. Amid the flood of publications the court gardener, Jan van der Groen, published his work *De nederlandse Hovenier* (1669). This book, which was reprinted fourteen times within fifty years, was a major influence on garden design. Gardens that were not only pretty to look at but also fruitful were laid out in Kleve by Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, who was later to become *Herrenmeister* in Sonnenburg. Gardens were laid out in which status, fun and profit went hand in hand. Vegetables, fruit and flowers were planted, firstly in the *Lustgarten* of the Berlin Town Palace, after which the Elector encouraged his high court servants to do the same on their own estates.¹⁵ Court gardener Michael Hanff spent three years in the Netherlands, Johann Gregor Memhardt made the design for the Berlin *Lustgarten* and the already mentioned Matthias Dögen from Amsterdam delivered five hundred lime trees, which the Elector had ordered. Garden elements such as central pavilions went back directly to Dutch examples, as in the Huis ten Bosch in Den Haag.

Not only Dutchmen and Dutch products were imported. The institute of *De Duytsche Mathematicque*, founded in the year 1600 by Prince Maurits, was one of the most important schools for mathematicians, fortress builders and land surveyors. Nicolaus Goldmann (1611-1665), who came from Silesia and who probably started to teach in 1640 in Leiden, published books from 1643 onwards on different themes, such as military architecture, proportions and classical column applications. This last book, *Tractatus de stylogometris* (1661), was dedicated to the Elector of Brandenburg and to Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen.¹⁶ His work was of great influence up to the 18th century.

A practical example of the Dutch influence in Brandenburg can be seen in the palace of Oranienburg (Fig. 9). The Elector gave Oranienburg, the former Bötzw, to his wife Louise Henriette on 22nd September 1650, shortly after the court had moved from Kleve to Berlin. Construction work started in 1651. Design and supervision came from Johann Gregor Memhardt, who was most probably educated in the Netherlands. From 1650 he worked on the renewal of the palace in Berlin. In Oranienburg the palace was to be renewed and a garden was planned. When Louise Henriette took up residence in the palace in 1655 the works were not completed. In order to produce building materials Louise Henriette had ordered a brick factory to be opened in Velten, which was taken over by the Dutch brick maker Julius Arendsen for four years on 30th November 1652. Other Dutchmen emigrated to Oranienburg, as in Zehlendorf and Zülsdorf. The orphanage mentioned earlier was founded by Louise Henriette, in order to raise young children according to the Calvinist religion.¹⁷

CORNELIS RYCKWAERT

Cornelis Ryckwaert (†1693) was a major influence on the building projects of the nobility and the spreading of Dutch architectural ideas (Fig. 10). His activities are nonetheless a strange combination of architectural designs, military and civil-technical works, in which he appears as a combination of the painter-architect and the engineer, as in the same way those two professions existed in the Netherlands. His building projects are mainly lost.¹⁸ About his background in the Netherlands nothing is known. His first project in Brandenburg was the renewal of the Sonnenburg, in the years 1660-1667 (Fig. 11). The palace was looted by the Swedes and all the belonging villages were depopulated.¹⁹ From the year 1665 on he was the leader of the construction works.

After the works were finished, Ryckwaert went to the town of Küstrin, where he was appointed as an electoral fortress builder in 1667. Küstrin was a main link in the trading route from Magdeburg to Danzig and from Frankfurt to Stettin. Ryckwaert was to be a fortress builder up till his death in November 1693.

Ryckwaert also continued to work outside Küstrin. He was a wood trader, a surveyor and responsible for taxation. He is also supposed to have made architectural designs, as is the case with the church of Lindenberg. The construction of the destroyed palace of Schwedt was also led by Ryckwaert (Fig. 12). The Elector's second wife Dorothea bought the palace in 1670 for her son, Prince Philip Wilhelm, after which the restoration of the building began.²⁰

Other projects, such as the Junkerhaus in Frankfurt/Oder²¹, were also commissioned by the Elector or his court. In the years 1680-1685 Ryckwaert built the small palace of Hohenfinow. This involved the renewal of an older building, which was commissioned by Ernst Gottlieb von Börstel, who knew all of the Dutch building masters present in Brandenburg personally. Not only was he a member of court in Berlin, but also a Knight of the Johannites under Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen and up till 1678 *Schlosshauptmann* (palace governor) in Berlin, in which position he was to supervise the building activities on the Berlin City Palace.²² In Hohenfinow, Frankfurt and Schwedt, Ryckwaert co-operated with the Italian stucco workers Giovanni Simonetti, Giovanni Belloni and Giovanni Tornelli.

Cornelis Ryckwaert died on 9th November 1693, leaving projects in Zerbst, Dessau and the enlargement of the harbour in Pommerns Rügenwalde unfinished.²³ His civil-technical works were taken over by his second son Adriaan Daniel. The military works were led further by the French engineer Cajart, under supervision of Johan Arnold Nering.

JOHAN MAURITS VAN NASSAU-SIEGEN

Finally, we will take a look at the role of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen in the rebuilding and restoration of Brandenburg. Johan Maurits, a Prince of Nassau and a high officer in the Republic's army, was sent to Brazil in 1636 to help in its colonisation. During his eight years' stay there, he managed to build up settlements and infrastructure. Meanwhile in Den Haag his famous Mauritshuis was being built, after the latest fashion by Jacob van Campen and Pieter Post.²⁴ When he returned to Holland, the Elector of Brandenburg, who was a personal friend of his, made him "stadholder" (a type of governor) of Kleve in 1647 and Master of the German Knights in Sonnenburg (nowadays Slonsk in Poland) in 1652. Sonnenburg along with its belonging villages was destroyed during the Thirty Years War. In Kleve Johan Maurits already developed building activities,



Fig. 9: The palace of Oranienburg (photo by author, February 2001).



Fig. 10: Working space of Cornelis Ryckwaert between 1660 and 1692 (drawing by author).

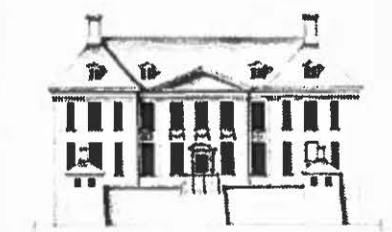


Fig. 11: Façade of the Sonnenburg, rebuild on commission of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen 1662-1667 (Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster).



Fig. 12: The palace of Schwedt around 1925, destroyed 1945/61 (Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Wünsdorf).



Fig. 13: Survey by Arnold van Geelkerken of the garden of the German Knights in Grüneberg 1656 (Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv Potsdam).

as he had done in Den Haag and in Brazil and in which among others Pieter Post, Jacob van Campen and Artus Quellinus were involved. When Johan Maurits was appointed Master in Sonnenburg, on 15th June 1652, he renewed the destroyed castle and rebuilt the districts which belonged to the order.

Johan Maurits decided to map the large area that belonged to the Johannites and to develop plans for rebuilding (Fig. 13). Although it took years, his efforts finally paid off. He was able to rebuild the Bailey's castle. Dutch craftsmen came to Sonnenburg to carry out the practical works. The Dutch surveyor Arnold van Geelkerken started to map the complete territory of the Johannites.²⁵ He designed plans for the improvement of the soil hydrology, after the Dutch pattern. In all villages that belonged to Sonnenburg Johan Maurits gave orders for new stables, barns and water and windmills to be built.²⁶

Johan Maurits was the perfect choice for the rebuilding of Brandenburg. This experienced colonialist knew all the master-builders and architects of his time and was a personal friend of the Elector. More importantly, he knew the actual needs of Brandenburg. He was interested in architecture and town planning and had personal ties with the land that had to be rebuilt.

CONCLUSION

When we look at the way in which Dutch influences were introduced in Brandenburg, we see that it differs greatly from that which is applicable to Scandinavia or Scotland. Whereas trading links normally form the most important grounds for cultural influences and exchanges, the Brandenburg example is an exception to this pattern. Here the devastations of the Thirty Years War created the demand for help from elsewhere. The court and the nobility used their contacts in the Dutch Republic to import craftsmen and entrepreneurs, at a time when trading bonds between the two regions were almost non-existent. The introduction of Dutch Classicism in Brandenburg's architecture, therefore, was not primarily a conscious choice of fashion and good taste, but a side product of what were for the country much more important contributions, such as ship building, iron industry and infrastructural works.

Beside influences imported from Holland, it was the Brandenburg network of building commissioners that formed the main basis for a successful politics of rebuilding. Members of court rebuilt their own properties after the example and with the participation of the Dutch. The atypical example of Brandenburg shows how the country imported and adapted the Dutch influence according to its needs. Brandenburg stands in an international context, together with Scandinavia, the Baltic Area, Northern Germany and Poland, but also with England, Scotland and the New World. Unlike Sweden for example, where diplomacy and trading were the main links with the Dutch Republic, in Brandenburg it was the cultural agents and the electoral court, together with a group of noblemen, who were responsible for the cultural transfer from the Netherlands to the East.

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25. Galland 1911, p. 97, K.A. Ottenheym, 'Fürsten, Architekten und Lehrbücher. Wege der holländischen Baukunst nach Brandenburg im 17. Jahrhundert'. In: H. Lademacher (ed.), *Onder den Oranje boom* (Textband) München 1999, pp. 287-298, p. 297 and Ed Taverne, *In 't land van belofte: in de nieuwe stad. Ideaal en werkelijkheid van de stadsuitleg in de Republiek 1580-1680*. Maarssen 1978, pp. 90-4.
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