'Imperium in Imperio?' Sovereign Powers of the First Dutch West India Company

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Abstract: In this thesis, the legal dimensions of the First Dutch West India Company are discussed on the basis of three case studies. As one of the world’s first multinationals, the Company was granted public powers that are today regarded as prerogatives of the state. To what extent was the WIC a separate sovereign entity? What was its constitutional position within the Dutch Republic? And to what extent did Company practice accord with seventeenth century legal theory?

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