New Documents on Vermeer and his Family*

The documents described below span the dates 1597 to 1653, the year when Johannes Vermeer entered the guild of St. Lucas. Most of the new documents in this article concern the artist’s family: his maternal grandfather, Balthasar Claesz. Gerritsz.; his paternal grandmother, Neeltgen Goris; his father, Reynier Jansz. Vermeer; his maternal uncle, Reynier Baltensz.; and his maternal grandfather, Balthasar Claesz. Gerritsz., their father, Jan Reyersz. van der Minne was a witness at the birth of a child of Neeltgen Goris (cf. document number 11). 46. I am indebted to Mevrouw van Eeghen for providing me with the three unpublished documents found by H. W. van Leeuwen of the Gemeente Archief in Delft. where I found this earliest mention of Balthasar Claesz. Gerritsz. as the father of Vermeer’s maternal grandfather. Balthasar Claesz. Gerritsz., was a broker in Amsterdam handling shares of the newly founded East India Company. This identification is confirmed by documents 3, 4, and 22. 3) 13 September 1611 (Prot. not. Jacob Gijbersz., Amsterdam, notarial archive no. 38): Comparende etc. . . . Balthasar Gortsz., oudt onterm 38 jaaren cognynus dieniter hier ter stede ende heeft bij zijne manne waer- heids in plaatse ende onder presentatie van ede ten versouck van Hans Bouwer geastreeed ende verdragen . . . hoe waer is dat hij getuige op den eersten April in den jare anno 1610 heeft gesloten zekere wissel tusschen Peter Loos ende die voorn. Hans Bouwer ter somme van fijf honderd ponden Vlaens te betalen in Antwavern door Engelbert Boorckens de factor van den selve Bouwer aan Anthony van Swink, welcker betalinge aan den voorn. Swink is gedaan sonder dat de waerder van dien bij den voorn. Loos aen Bouwer voorn. ahier is betaelt geweest . . . [signed: Balthasar Gortsz.].

* I am grateful to Mr. H. W. van Leeuwen and Miss F. de Wijs of the Gemeente Archief in Delft, Mervrouw L. H. van Eeghen of the Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst in Gorinchem, Mr. J. Fox of the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague, and Mr. A. J. Busch, archivist of the Gemeentelijk Archief in Gorinchem for their invaluable assistance in locating, transcribing, or interpreting a number of new documents.

I am also beholden to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann and Albert Blankert for their helpfyl comments on earlier drafts. The research for his article was partly financed by a grant from the American Council for Learned Societies.

1 I plan to publish a few documents bearing on the artist’s mature period and the settlement of his affairs after his death when my research in the Delft archives has been completed.
2 The spelling of the patronymics Baltens and Baltensz. is commonly (but not always) used to denote Dingnum (alternatively Digna or Dynphma) and her brother Reynier respectively. I shall retain the spellings Baltens for Dingnum and Baltensz. for Reynier throughout the paper, except when directly quoting a document, but no significance should be attached to this difference. Variants of the name of Balthasar Claesz. Gerritsz., their father, include Baltens Gerardsz., Geersz., and Geertsz.
3 This document was kindly supplied by Mr. H. W. van Leeuwen upon my request for information concerning the second marriage of Neeltgen Goris (cf. document number 11). Unless otherwise indicated, all documents cited are from the Gemeente Archief in Delft.
4 For the year of his birth see documents 4 and 32. The last name of Claes Gortscz. is inferred from an entry in the Doopboek for 7 October 1618 where Dirck Claez. van der Minne appears as father and Jan Thonisz. and Neeltgen Goris as registered as witnesses. Dirck Claez. is presumed to have been the son of Claes Gortscz. and hence the brother-in-law of Jan Thonisz. The same Dirck Claez. van der Minne was a witness at the birth of a child of Jan Thonisz. and Anantje Claez (17 May 1619).
5 On Claes Gortscz.’s last occupation, see document number 8.
6 Document number 25.
7 J. G. van Dillen, ‘Isaac Le Maire en de handel in actien der Oost-Indische Compagnie’, In- nownisch-Historisch Jaarboek, vol. 16 (1930), p. 46. I am indebted to Mervrouw van Eeghen for drawing my attention to van Dillen’s article where I found this earliest mention of Balthasar Gerritzs.
8 This document was discovered by Mervrouw L. H. van Eeghen upon my request for material dealing with Balthasar Claesz. Gerritzs. The signature of the latter on this document is clearly by the same hand as the signature on document 22, which is demonstrably that of the father of Vermeer’s mother.
In this document Balthasar Claes Gerritsz. appears as Koopman diknrrt or merchant's clerk, roughly equivalent to an unregistered broker. The age given implies that he was born in or about 1573. In the document Balthasar Gerritsz. testifies unregistered brokcr. The age given implies that he was born in or about 1573.

4) 27 June 1615 (document of the 'Amsterdamse Gemeente- gelijke Archiefdienst', cited in part by A. J. J. M. van Peer): 'Reynier Jansz. van Delft kaffawercker oud 24 jaeren wonende 4 ann. [4 ann.] written above 'woneinde' on the breed street' is betrothed to 'Digna Balthazars oud 20 jaeren van Antwerpen wonende in de verweryen', assisted by Balthazar Gerrardz. Iaer vader. The clerk noted that Reynier Jansz. was supposed to submit his father's consent for the second proclamation of the marriage. A marginal note showed that he later submitted an attestation signed by Johannes Taurinius, a predikant of the Reformed Church in Delft (perhaps an affidavit of his father's death). He signed in a neat hand 'Reynier Jansz..', Digna, who was apparently illiterate at the time, set a cross next to the name of her fiancé. The marriage was performed on 19 July before Jacobus Triglandius, a highly orthodox minister of the Reformed Church. The betrothal document implies that Reynier Jansz., who had been living in Amsterdam four years (since 1611), was born in Delft in or about 1591 and that Digna Balthazars was born in Antwerp in or about 1595. Reynier was stated to be a caffawercker, which may be translated as 'silk-velvet' or '-satin worker'. This was a highly skilled occupation, the apprenticeship for which normally lasted four years.

In the above deposition, a straw-hat maker, a surgeon, and a smith testify, at the request of Neeltgen Goris (Vermeer's grandmother), that the brother of her daughter-in-law Reynier Balthasar (Balthenhz.), presently in prison in The Hague, was their neighbor and lived in the house of Jan Jansz., baker, the brother-in-law of Reynier Jansz., and Jeroen Fransz. schrijnwercker als getuigen...

The same day, again at the request of Neeltgen Goris, Jan Jansz., baenier, 50 years old, and Jeroen Fransz., joiner, 39 years old, testify that Reynier Balthasar, in prison in The Hague, spent about one year learning the trade of joiner (schrijnwercker) with Jeroen Fransz., sleeping in the house of Jan Jansz., and that he behaved in all respects as an honest young man. Adriaen the surgeon and Reynier Jansz., caffawercker, the father of the artist, sign as witnesses.

We learn from document 16 below that Reynier Balthenzs., had been imprisoned in lieu of his father Balthasar Gerritz,