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## **Hidden morals, explicit scandals : public values and political corruption in the Netherlands (1748-1813)**

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## 4 Political History and Political Culture (1748 – 1813)

### 4.1 Introduction

It is necessary to understand the wider social and political context of early-modern Dutch administrators (in the province of Holland) in order to understand how their actions were perceived, what was considered corrupt, which public values we can distinguish and how and why they changed. In this chapter I therefore first provide an elementary (due to limited space) historical overview of the main political and administrative actors, organizations and levels of administration. This is followed by an equally brief overview of events in Dutch political history between 1748 and 1813. Third, I provide a short discussion of some of the main characteristic elements of Dutch political culture in the period under investigation.

### 4.2 Administrative levels

#### *The Dutch Republic as an anomaly?*

The year 1648 marked a fundamental shift in Dutch political history. With the end of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish empire an independent Republic of Seven United Provinces emerged. After nearly a hundred years of revolt and uprising, the Spanish crown – weakened by the size of its empire and crippled by war debts – finally recognized the independence of the Northern Low Countries with the Peace of Münster in 1648. Coincidence, luck and the fact that its main enemies were often too busy fighting each other, were the main reasons why this Dutch Republic was able to exist against all odds until 1795. Some have called this Dutch Republic an anomaly in early modern Europe (Davids & Lucassen, 1995; Davids, et al., 1988; Dekker, 1982; Schöffner, 1978: 184; 't Hart, 1993; Velema, 1999b: xvi). Even though others dispute this (De Bruin, 1999) it did indeed have some exceptional institutional characteristics, especially when compared to other neighbouring European states at the time. It lacked, for instance, a monarch and corresponding court life, a powerful nobility or strong central or 'top-down' state administration (De Jong, 1987: 32-33). In 1673, Sir William Temple, the English ambassador to the Dutch Republic, noticed how it: “cannot properly be styled a commonwealth, but is rather a confederacy of seven sovereign provinces united together for their common and mutual defence, without any dependence one upon the other. But to discover the nature of their government from the first springs and motions, it must be taken into yet smaller pieces, by which it will appear, that each of these provinces is likewise composed of many little states or cities, which have several marks of sovereign power within themselves, and are not subject to the sovereignty of their province” (1687/1972: 52). The Dutch

Republic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resembled a federation of sovereign provinces more than anything else (Boogman, 1979: 390-391; Van Deursen, 2004a: 138; Fruin & Colenbrander, 1922: 179). As a kind of federal Republic it was small and free on the inside and able to fight off any internal 'tyrant' (such as – according to some at the time – a strong Stadholder). At the same time it would be large and united enough to fight off any external threat (such as Spain, France or England) (Klein, 1995: 25).

### *Unity, centralization and local autonomy*

At the most central level of the Republic there was the Estates General. Initially this had been an advisory council rooted in medieval feudal structures since the fourteenth century. It had served as a means for the Burgundian and Habsburg rulers to summon their local nobles for advice and money. Since the Union of Utrecht (1579) in which seven Dutch provinces (Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Groningen, Gelderland, Overijssel and Drente) united against the Spanish-Habsburg ruler, the Estates General consisted of delegates from these seven. It dealt mainly with war, taxation and foreign affairs (Fockema Andreae, 1961; Israel, 1998: 276). Apart from the Estates General the Dutch Republic had several supplementary 'central' or Generality institutions such as the Council of State, the Generality Accounting Office, the Generality Mint Chamber, and five Admiralty colleges. The Generality essentially existed by the grace of the individual provinces. The only real basis for unity among the provinces had been and would continue to be an ad-hoc alliance. Even the charter of the Union of Utrecht stated that it was the goal of the union to protect and maintain the rights and privileges of each province (Van Deursen, 2004a: 139). Unity was, at first, a necessary evil to improve cooperation in the revolt against the Spanish (Price, 1994: 221). After the Revolt, when the common threat was gone, tendencies to disintegration grew (Tamse, 1980: 91) but pragmatism still had the upper hand. The provinces realized that only together did they stand a chance in a hostile geo-political environment of potential enemies.

The practical reality of the Republic's political institutional design was that arrangements of power and sovereignty were based on local or provincial autonomy. Various authors have emphasized how only a small group of people truly believed in the union (cf. Blockmans, 1985: 242; De Jong, 1987: 31; Wagenaar, 2003: 126). The population at large and certainly the all important city administrators or regents (see below) were usually loyal to their city first, their province next and hardly ever to the generality at large. Despite the institution of the Estates General the Dutch Republic would therefore retain its federal and fragmented character throughout the eighteenth century. In principle all provinces had an equal share in power by means of veto in the Estates General and decisions could only be made unanimously. However, in practice some provinces were more powerful than others, mainly caused by differences in payment to the union. Because Holland contributed more than half of the entire budget it dominated the Estates General (Israel, 1998: 286; De Jong, 1987: 19; De Vries & Van der Woude, 1995: 126).

Essentially, there was no obvious or natural unity among the provinces. In the few common areas such as war, taxation and foreign policy, the other six provinces tried to influence the one (i.e., Holland) as much as possible. In all other matters the provinces tried to keep control over their own affairs as best they could. They only discussed matters in the Estates General that were important to them all while at the same time holding on to as much

autonomy as possible (Gabriëls, 1989: 40). Provinces often merely referred to each other as ‘allies’ in official documents, cities and provinces were often involved in bitter disputes over territory or jurisdiction (Dekker, 1982; Wagenaar, 2003: 111) and rules and regulations on various ‘policy areas’ often differed much from place to place. Provincial autonomy was therefore deeply engrained. Provinces each had their own Provincial Estates made up of representatives of cities and the nobility. The Provincial Estates also had daily standing committees called *Gecommitteerde Raden* that consisted of local city administrator delegates (Kooijmans 1985: 32). *Gecommitteerde Raden* were responsible for the day to day administration of their province and also chose the provincial delegate to the Estates General (Israel, 1998: 279). As a separate institution every province (at least in theory) also had a so-called Stadholder (see below) although multiple provinces would usually share one.

In the political-institutional constellation of the Dutch Republic before 1795 the local level of the cities was the most important. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Dutch cities got bigger and more complex. The Republic ranked among the most urbanized regions of early modern Europe. An increase in wealth led to explosive urban growth especially in the maritime province of Holland (Israel, 1998: 328). As a result, local government became more responsible for the welfare of larger numbers of citizens and ‘public policy’ was increasingly executed by public bodies instead of church and/or ‘private’ organizations (cf. Van der Heijden, 2009). This had a significant effect on bureaucratization and professionalization and in turn on morality underlying public administration because more elaborate rules needed to be established (see chapter six). The local level was essentially the only government most ordinary citizens ever had to deal with and the city was the most important physical, political and legal entity in the Republic (Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 149). Both Provincial and Generality power were derived from the local city level, which shows how the highly decentralized Republic essentially worked ‘bottom-up’ (Schöffner, 1978: 184). As mentioned, Provincial Estates mainly consisted of city delegates or representatives and city interests (although not every city was represented equally) thus largely determined a province’s stance in the Estates General. With the growing importance of the *Gecommitteerde Raden* and the large role of city administrators in them, the cities got ever more direct power over policy on all levels of government (Israel, 1998: 278). Large and wealthy cities could be very powerful. Especially Amsterdam was often able to ignore or resist the wishes of the Stadholder (Fruin, 1929: 71-72) or the other provinces and at times determined the course of their Provincial Estates (De Jong, 1987: 31) and thereby of the generality as a whole. Much like the provinces, the individual cities also viewed cooperation useful for common issues of war and foreign affairs. In most other matters they wanted to remain as independent as possible, for instance in issuing local statutes and ordinances and administering law and order (Raadschelders, 1992: 11-12).

Local sovereignty therefore extended to cities as well. Furthermore, city governments across the Dutch Republic displayed much of the fragmentation that was also inherent in the other levels. In the Western provinces, the geographical focus of this study, city governments usually consisted of two main bodies. First there was the town council: a group of ‘wise men’ who advised and selected city officials (Groenveld & Wagenaar, 2011: 49, 98-100, 164). The size of the town council differed from city to city but the maximum number of members of a town council seems to have been forty. From the seventeenth century onwards the town council would not only discuss city politics but would also determine their representatives’ stance or position in the Provincial Estates (De Jong, 1987: 37-38). Increasingly they formulated and executed policy too. Membership of the town council was for life but every year the city government was changed.

The town council would nominate two people for every office to be filled, usually – and later exclusively (see below for a discussion on the formation of oligarchies) – from among its own ranks. From the nominees the Provincial Estates of Holland or the Stadholder would appoint members for the Magistrate, the second main body of city governments in the cities of the province of Holland (see also chapter seven). The Magistrate was responsible for the daily administration of the city and consisted of a provincial representative called bailiff or sheriff, a few mayors and several aldermen (De Jong, 1987: 38-39). Usually members of the town council had to wait a long time for positions as these could only be acquired after a long and successful career in public office. Also, they usually had to wait for others to pass away and they had to be at least forty years of age. In cities with a big town council some would have to wait as long as fifteen years but offices were usually worth waiting for (De Jong, 1987: 49). Furthermore, administrative bodies were always made up of uneven numbers. This was a fundamental characteristic of collegial administration (see below) and served to prevent a deadlock in voting or decision-making. The regents in the town council also had numerous offices to hand out and this (see below) would have a profound effect on debates on political corruption in the form of nepotism and patronage. In turn, changing ways of dealing with political offices would have an effect on what was considered politically corrupt.

### 4.3 Groups and actors

#### *The Stadholder*

The Stadholder had traditionally been the most important link between central rule (the Burgundian-Habsburg ruler) on the one hand and regional (provincial) and local (city) nobles on the other (Damen & Stein, 2011: 53-54). After the revolt against the Spanish Habsburg King Philip II (1555 – 1598), the office of Stadholder remained intact but its function changed. His powers grew extensively as he became the commanding officer of the Generality army and, more importantly in the context of political corruption (compare chapter seven), he had the power to appoint high officials, such as Bailiffs or Sheriffs and certain members of town councils which would link him to accusations of patronage and nepotism. In a very general sense he was also responsible for provincial justice and the keeping of the peace. Although he was formally not a member of the Provincial Estates or Gecommitteerde Raden the Stadholder could claim the right to speak there and was often called in to resolve conflicts (Israel, 1998: 300-306; Schöffner, 1978: 190). By the nature of his office the Stadholder thus remained linked to the central level (generality), the regional level (provinces) and the local level (cities). Apart from any formal powers his prestige and dynastic pretensions further increased his authority and political power. The Stadholder was one of the most crucial political figures during the entire period of the Republic's existence. While obviously different from the absolutist rulers or Kings in some neighbouring states he would at times be or certainly strive to be the closest thing resembling a central authority or ruler in the Dutch Republic. Because of this he was loved and loathed by different groups at different times, depending on specific circumstances, events and interests. As such, his actions (and that of his circle) could be called corrupt or not depending on who was asked (as we shall see in the case studies).

*The regents*

The vast majority of people occupying public office – and therefore the single most powerful political group in the Republic – were the regents (De Jong, 1987: 31; Kooijmans, 1987), a name used for all those who participated in higher level civic government. The economic boom of the seventeenth century had caused the emergence of a new group of people, a ‘social middle group’ consisting of members of merchant families with the means to devote their time to running their cities and protecting their commercial interests. The regents were initially rich merchant burghers (cf. Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 147-163) who replaced members of older aristocratic and noble oligarchies. There is much debate about what this social mobility (the opening up of the patrician regent class to outsiders) looked like, what its consequences were and whether or not it ended during the eighteenth century (cf. Van Deursen, 2004a: 145-146; Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 147-149; Kooijmans, 1987: 93-94; Schöffner, 1978: 180-182). There is no doubt, however, that the regents of the eighteenth century formed new oligarchies themselves. In either case it was a very small group of regents that held office in the Dutch Republic. Schöffner (1978: 181) tells us there were approximately two thousand administrative offices for regents in the seventeenth century. Apart from city offices, regents would also occupy so-called *buitenambten*, highly lucrative offices in administrative bodies outside the city. These included being city delegate to the Provincial Estates, being member of the Gecommitteerde Raden or of the provincial treasuries and courts, being the provincial delegate to the Estates General, being a member of an Admiralty or of one of the chambers of the Dutch East Indian or West Indian Company. As such regents could essentially be found on all institutional levels of the Republic.

The regents became gradually more influential in seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch politics and administration because they were from good – i.e., old – families and because they had money. The first signalled natural authority and the second signalled independence or, interestingly, *incorruptibility* (Van Deursen, 2004a: 144). The original priority of the regent was protecting his (they, as all public officials at the time, could not be women) family interests. Although this ‘individualism’ remained, the regents also considered themselves part of a distinct social group as the eighteenth century progressed. To be sure they were part of a specific culture. They had mostly gone to the same Latin schools, had spent some time in university and all spoke some French (Van Deursen, 2004a: 279). In some ways the interest of the group (compare early modern notions of publicness and common good, see chapter one) therefore became as important as the interest of the individual regent and his family because cooperation at least preserved power within the group (Van Deursen, 2004a: 145-146). This is not to say, of course, that faction strife between families, individual regents and groups of regents did not occur (De Jong, 1987; Roorda, 1979). For the regent everything was tied to the city and the obtaining of lucrative offices. This was especially the case during and after the economic decline in the later eighteenth century. While the regents had initially been merchants who were also politically active, their main business increasingly came to be politics and administration and acquiring public office became ever more necessary as a means of existence. With the absence of fixed salaries they also had to find ways to supplement their income by using that public office to the fullest. Naturally this caused much political corruption and further ‘faction strife’ among them (see chapters five and seven).

### *The nobility*

The nobility was another actor in the largely bottom-up administration of the Dutch Republic. They formally represented the local level of the countryside with one seat in their Provincial Estates. As such the nobility did not lose its political status and privileges altogether after the Revolt against the Spanish and could be quite powerful especially in the countryside. In fact, the elimination of the (Spanish) court and royal bureaucracy meant less rivalry for local Dutch nobles (Israel, 1998: 337). In the maritime provinces and its cities the nobility had less influence because here they were eclipsed by a wealthy and powerful regent elite. Still even in Holland the nobility was not entirely powerless. They owned much land and were influential due to their investment in land reclamation. They also held high offices in the army and navy. In addition, being of noble descent still meant a lot despite of the ongoing ‘social struggle’ with non-noble burghers who gained wealth and status through commerce, trade and offices. The Stadholder (himself of course the highest nobleman in the Dutch Republic) would also make use of the nobility in his attempts to increase his power. This would eventually lead to ever bigger networks of patronage and (critique of) political corruption by the nobility, especially (see chapter seven) during the second half of the eighteenth century (cf. Gabriëls, 1989).

### *The church*

A fourth important actor in the institutional set-up of the Dutch Republic was the church. In the Union of Utrecht the provinces had officially become protestant but the protestant church co-existed with other religious groups (Van Deursen, 2004a: 148-150, 153, 303-308; Randeraad & Wolffram, 1998: 37). This was mainly because a certain level of religious tolerance was, at least until the final quarter of the eighteenth century, a political and economic necessity (Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 189). The regents wanted to maintain some sort of economic and political-religious balance in society and realized that unity (whether inside the cities, in the provinces or in the union as a whole) could quickly succumb to religious strife and fanaticism (Randeraad & Wolffram, 1998: 37). Still, tolerance (of Catholics for instance) was limited and people of reformed faith received all kinds of preferential treatment and were in theory the only ones eligible for public office (Van Deursen, 2004a: 181; De Jong, 1987: 123; Schöffner, 1978: 209-211). While the protestant regents were usually active and supporting members of the reformed church and its local councils they did not always have much sympathy for the way the church conducted its affairs. According to Van Deursen (2004a: 150) the administrative elite “preferred a broad church for the people that didn’t ask too many critical questions on teachings and life”. The regents seemed to want a separation of church and state insofar as it concerned church influence on politics and administration.

At the very least, regents – and not preachers – should control the church (Schöffner, 1978: 245; Zijlstra, 1989: 57-59) and regents rarely tolerated church domination over worldly affairs. At the same time the regents exercised much influence on church affairs. Town councils, for instance, often demanded the right to appoint preachers and paid their salaries (De Jong, 1987: 41). Echoing the political theorist Pieter de la Court (1618 – 1685), religion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was clearly a public affair (De Jong, 1987: 122-123; Price, 1974: 34-35). The final result was that regents were suspicious of church influence over

public administration while the church was often disappointed in the lack of political influence and cooperation of the authorities. As a consequence, according to Van Deursen (2004a: 299), most preachers backed the House of Orange and the Stadholder in the everlasting strife with the (Holland) regents (see also below). Where the regents did not need or consider church criticism on their morals, the church would usually take the side of the Stadholder in condemning the regent's acts anyway. However, as far as I have been able to tell from the case studies below they did so only in a limited way. Only very occasionally (see chapter seven) can we find preachers who publicly and explicitly criticized abuse of office. Limited church and/or preacher involvement or relevance in public debates on administrative morality and political corruption might have been caused by the paradoxical relation between church and state in the Dutch Republic.

#### 4.4 Political history

The period in Dutch political history between 1748 and 1813 has been one of tremendous change and major political and administrative developments. In the following a basic chronological division of the period (see chapter three) is made to provide a rough overview and account of these developments in which the later case studies are situated. I draw general lines and focus on important watersheds in Dutch political history. This provides essential context for the following case studies and serves to help explain changing public values and perceptions of political corruption.

##### *Stadholder and regent oligarchy (1748 – 1770)*

The year 1747 presented a watershed in Dutch political history when an economic crisis coincided with foreign military threat (Israel, 1998: 1067-1069; Randeraad & Wolffram, 1998: 37). In April 1747 a small French army entered the Generality province of State Flanders. While apparently only intended as a warning to the Estates General, the act was perceived as a full-scale invasion just like the one in 1672 and caused widespread unrest and fear (Israel, 1998: 796-806). To many the 'invasion' proved the failure of the ruling elite (the regents in the Estates General and the Holland cities) to govern and protect the Republic. Adding to the grievances was the old and corrupted system of private tax farming in the Republic. Large-scale protest against tax farming became intertwined with calls for administrative (Dekker, 1996; Israel, 1998: 1072-1075) and moral reform (see chapter six). The problems led to calls for the return to power of a strong leader, meaning the restoration of the Stadholder. The latter had been deposed of by the provinces and the Estates General during the so-called second Stadholderless period from 1702 to 1747 in which the Holland regents decided not to appoint a Stadholder. In 1747, however, strife between the Estates General, Holland and its regents on one side and the Stadholder and populace on the other erupted once again. This time the latter 'faction' won and William IV (1747 – 1751) became the hereditary Stadholder for all the provinces.

William immediately tightened his grip on administration. Formally he was now allowed to recommend even more people for offices (see chapter seven). This meant he had more power than his predecessors ever had. Informally, his now hereditary title also increased his standing and power. The advent of William IV and his Orangist followers also went hand in

hand with popular calls by the so-called Doelisten for administrative reform of the regent system, such as ending corrupt practices of office rotation and allowing wider participation in politics. In chapters five and six I will discuss this reform movement more elaborately. For now, however, it remains to be said that in reality none of the demands for reform of 1747 – 1751 were realized. It quickly became obvious to most contemporary observers that the promised reforms would not be pushed through (Israel, 1998: 1076-1078; Rogier, 1980: 203-205; De Voogd, 1914: 79-80). Instead, the ‘Revolution’ of 1747 proved to be a ‘conservative’ victory for the Stadholder and his moderate Orangist followers (Schutte, 1978: 300) since it succeeded in concentrating power at the centre in the hands of the Stadholder. Some, like Willem Bentinck van Rhoon (1704 – 1774), the trusted advisor of the Prince (cf. Gabriëls, 1989: 137-145), had wanted reform but this did not include actually transferring power to citizens, ‘the people’ or regents outside the oligarchies, contracts of correspondence or existing patronage networks (see chapters five and eight). Bentinck could see that all the necessary ingredients for ‘unity of command’ under a single leader were now present. For one, the city regents were intimidated by the populace and the Stadholder got more powers to appoint people and was as close to becoming a monarch as he would ever be. Bentinck’s attempts to create ‘ministries’ (defence, navy, trade, finances, internal and foreign affairs) led by a few capable and reliable persons and headed by the Prince, however, failed (Israel, 1998: 1077-1080; Schama, 1977: 55; Schutte, 1978: 301-302). William IV thought the proposal was too revolutionary and his influential wife, Princess Anna of Hanover, did not trust Bentinck. As a result, only a limited number of regents were indeed deposed since William urged the Estates General only to get rid of regents when it was absolutely necessary to restore order in the cities.

Any chance of alternative actions by William IV disappeared when he died unexpectedly in October 1751. Furthermore, opposition from a still powerful regent elite continued to frustrate any attempts at reform (Rogier, 1980: 203-205; De Voogd, 1914: 79-80; Wagenaar, 2004: 551-553). The Doelist Ockers, for instance, already lamented: “how are we better off now that the Prince is Stadholder? [...] He has changed the government to his liking and everything else is wrong; his highness has not reinstated the burgher in his right” (De Voogd, 1914: 209). Such popular disillusionment and frustration – aggravated by economic decay – did not make much difference, at least in the short term. The death of William IV led to yet another shift in power relations in the Dutch Republic. On the one hand, the lack of a strong Stadholder led to the partial restoration of anti-Orangist regent dominance in the Republic’s cities and provinces. On the other hand Anna of Hanover, who had assumed much of the responsibility of the Stadholderate after her husband’s death, attempted to hold on to as much power as possible until her son, the heir to the Stadholderate, was old enough to assume power. Anna received help from Bentinck and, above all, from the infamous Duke of Brunswick (1718 – 1788). These men relied heavily on a culture of patronage and brokerage (see below and chapter seven) to keep as much control over offices, and thus power, as possible (Gabriëls, 1989: 68-69). This continued in the period between 1759 (the death of Anna) and 1766 (the coming of age of Stadholder William V). Still, the period following the death of William IV was a temporary return to the way things were before 1747 (Gabriëls, 1989: 71-72). As Orangists were still holding on to as much power as they could, the regents again rose to power. The period after the death of Anna can even be considered another Stadholderless period (Schutte, 1978: 313), or as a contemporary observer noted: “then we

could see the resurrection of the old regents. Once again they handed out offices and commissions among themselves, just like before” (Te Lintum, 1910: 118).

*The Patriot revolt and its aftermath (1770 – 1795)*

When William V (1766 – 1795) came of age he assumed full responsibilities as Stadholder over all the provinces. This considerably strengthened his position and that of his court. Still, economic and military decay and the inability and/or reluctance of the Stadholder and his ‘clique’ to do anything about it, combined with growing concerns and protests against abuse of office such as patronage and nepotism put rival factions in the Republic in a deadlock towards the late 1770s. Tensions were especially rising as the inactive Orangist regime continued to alienate large parts of the population. Furthermore, patrons and clients still managed to divide up large parts of the Dutch political pie and many city regents simply reclaimed the power of ‘true liberty’ (see below on political culture and also Rogier, 1954; Schama, 1977: 46) to continue their ‘corrupt’ practices of office rotation, sale of offices and other forms of abuse of power. The Republic was, as Israel (1998: 1095) put it, “in a malaise which extended into every dimension of national life. The sense of the Republic being in steep decline became pervasive [...]. The combination of economic, political and imperial crisis facing the Republic created the necessary conditions for a revolution”.

A revolution was exactly what happened, spurred on in part by events in North America (Palmer, 1974, part I: 325-326; Schutte, 1978: 314-315). Dutch historian Rogier (1980: 208) once wrote how the 1780s witnessed the formation of a “monster-coalition” mainly consisting of bourgeoisie, common populace, purged anti-Orangist regents and disillusioned Doelists from the 1740s who were all fighting for reforms in (civic) government. Together the groups making up this particular ad-hoc coalition were labelled Patriots who, according to Palmer (1974: 326) were “for the most part well-to-do burghers, many of them bankers, merchants, owners of manufacturing establishments, printers and publishers, or professors at Utrecht or Leiden. They were upper middle-class, but so were most people of any consequence in the country”. As eclectic as their background and motives sometimes were, on international affairs the Patriots (in line with many of the ideas of the earlier Doelists) were against England and pro-France. In domestic politics this meant they were against the Stadholder’s pro-French politics (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 221). They were not, as is often supposed, against the Stadholder as such. They did not want to abolish the Stadholderate but ‘merely’ wanted to reduce him to being the ‘first servant’ of the state (Lok, 2009: 30-31). The Patriot’s class standing, according to Palmer (1974: 326), “could not be defined economically. It was more readily defined by the permanent exclusion from state affairs of persons like themselves, including their fathers and presumably their children”. They did not, in other words, belong to the right families nor were they always members of the Dutch reformed church and could therefore not become part of the regent elite. Their aim was to end the closed-off regent practices and the networks and structures of patronage (see below and chapter seven) set-up by the Stadholders William III (1672 – 1702), William IV (1747 – 1751), William V (1751 – 1795), their ‘advisors’ such as Bentinck or the Duke of Brunswick and many other local officials (Van Eijnatten & Wagenaar, 2007: 13; Gabriëls, 1989: 146-163; Israel, 1998: 1092-1093).

The Patriot protest and calls for administrative reform were exacerbated and fuelled by the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war (1780 – 1784) that had disastrous consequences for Dutch trade and shipping and added economic misery to the pile of Patriot complaints. The war, in any case, was a tipping point in the success of the Patriot revolt (Lok, 2009: 30; Schama, 1977: 58). Once again the ruling administration – this time including the Prince of Orange and some of his close advisors – was blamed for the crisis. To the Patriots it seemed that both Orangists and their dynastic ties and regents with their commercial ties were prepared to subvert the national interest (i.e., protection from England and alliance with France) to protect their personal dividend and commercial connections (Elias, 1923: 238; Palmer, 1974, part I: 327, 329; Schama, 1977: 35-36). A pamphlet of 1782 (*Brief van Batavus*, 1782: 20-22) summed things up nicely as it remarked how many were following the Stadholders' court like machines or tools only to further their own interests, i.e., getting offices for themselves or their kin. At the same time, those among the regents who had always opposed the Stadholder and wished to break English economic and naval power, were fighting the Stadholder because of his choice to support England in the American war of independence (Palmer, 1974, part I: 326-327). Ironically, then, parts of the regent oligarchies were in this way aiding the cause of their Patriot 'enemies' who wanted to change the role of the Stadholder as well as the system of government in the Dutch towns and provinces. It is a sign of how complicated politics actually was.

Patriot agitation rapidly gained momentum mainly due to the emergence of a strong Patriot press and public opinion (cf. Broersma, 2005; Harline, 1987; Israel, 1998: 1100; Klein, 1995: 91-127; Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 81-102; Pollmann & Spicer, 2007; Van Sas, 1992: 99-104; Schama, 1977: 79-80). Events followed each other in quick succession from 1784 onwards as the Patriot movement grew into a revolutionary movement, according to Israel (1998: 1100): "welling up from below [...] to wrest control of civic and provincial life from the hands of the Stadholder's favourites, and the regent oligarchies, and transfer power to those who regarded themselves as the spokesmen and representatives of the people". Crucial in the beginning of the revolt were attempts to practically alter practices of recommendations and Stadholderly patronage (see chapter seven). In towns like Schoonhoven (May 1782), Dordrecht (August 1782), Deventer (January 1783), Utrecht (August 1783) or Groningen (1784), Stadholderly recommendations were duly banished (Klein, 1995: 152; Van Sas, 1988b: 20-22). Several Dutch towns saw the beginnings of Free Corps in the early 1780s. These were armed burger-led and occupied militia's (consider the Patriot demand for military as well as moral rearmament, see chapter five) that served to topple city administrations and protect the Republic from foreign and Stadholder troops. The first Free Corps, of Dordrecht, was set up in 1783 and soon consisted of over one thousand men (Israel, 1998: 1102). In various Holland towns (most notably The Hague, Rotterdam, Haarlem and Leiden) Patriot Free Corps clashed with Orangist crowds. The Republic became divided in pro- and anti- Patriot zones (Israel, 1998: 1107). By the time a National Assembly of Free Corps of around 13,500 men assembled in Utrecht in 1785, the Patriots were triumphant in most of Utrecht, Holland and Overijssel and had significant support in the other provinces as well. As a result, the Republic was in chaos and practical civil war loomed between Patriot militia's and regular troops (Israel, 1998: 1106-1107).

The revolt of the Patriot movement was fragmented and would only last a few years. Friedrich Wilhelm II (1786 – 1797) had ascended to the throne in Prussia. Not only was Friedrich "a disciplinarian and enemy of democratic ideas", such as those espoused by the Patriots (Israel, 1998: 1113), he was also the brother of Princess Wilhelmina, the wife of Stadholder William V. In a well-known instance of bad judgment and bad timing, Wilhelmina was arrested

by the Patriot Free Corps of Gouda. In response her brother sent an army of 26,000 men into the Republic and the result was a quickly disintegrating Patriot movement. Their demise was due to external pressure but also, writes Schama (1977: 102, 129), to their “unheeding attachment to the letter and the spirits of their ideas, which diluted the concentration of their strength and compromised the effectiveness of their organization”. Despite all the training and revolutionary zeal of the Patriot militia’s there was thus a triumphant return to The Hague of William V. Following in Williams’ wake was Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel (1787 – 1795), the new Grand Pensionary of Holland. With William back in the saddle the ‘old ways of doing things’ soon returned as Van de Spiegel led the restoration of the Orangist regime. Van de Spiegel was an able politician and a reformer and theoretician of public administration in his own right (Rutgers, 2005). His efforts to change things (within the limits set by William V) were however thwarted by still powerful vested interests. The failure or unwillingness of the restored Orangist regime to make drastic changes and reforms in their institutional and political structures meant a continuation of old practices. Orangist regent oligarchies took over and the prince tried to increase his grip on Dutch society and politics. Thousands of Patriots decided to lay low or flee their city, province or even the Republic, many going into exile in France. The initial failure of the Patriot Revolt should not obscure its monumental importance in the long run. The restoration of Orange after 1787 marked the beginning of Patriot ‘oppression’ by the Orangists. In short, it planted a vital seed of discontent and resentment that grew into a major movement in the Batavian Revolution of 1795.

### *The Batavian Revolution (1795)*

In January 1795 a French army crossed the frozen rivers in the South of the Dutch Republic to free their ‘revolutionary brothers’ in the south. The French had been anxiously awaited by Dutch Patriots whose anti-Orangist and pro-republican sentiments had already been rekindled by French revolutionary zeal. It should come as no surprise that the Dutch Patriots – either in exile or in hiding – were likely to join forces with the French Revolution already in the early 1790s. The similarities and continuity of the revolutionary movements of 1787 and 1795 were striking (Israel, 1998: 1119-1121). The Orangist regime after 1787 had only been able to exist because of foreign help of England and Prussia. Internally the patriotism of the 1780s continued to live on (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 224; Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 1995: 199-201) and in 1795, the Batavians (essentially a new name for the former Patriots, in reference to a West-Germanic tribe who in 69AD successfully rebelled against the Romans) established a Batavian Republic using French military revolutionary support (for extensive discussions see Geyl & Godard, 1971; Israel, 1998: 1119-1130; Palmer, 1954; Schama, 1977).

The French ‘invasion’ was, certainly in the beginning, seen by the Dutch Patriots as a liberation from (Stadholder-) tyranny and taken as a pretext to return to ‘civic government’. Colenbrander wrote that “whether the Orangists had won in 1787 without the Prussians is doubtful; that the Patriots in 1795 would never have been there without the French is certain” (1905-1922, part II: xxii). Stadholder William V, who had according to popular opinion (see chapters seven and eight) become the symbol of the widespread nepotism and abuse of office of his time (Kossmann, 1995, 123-124; Schama, 1977, 77), was forced into exile, despite efforts of Van de Spiegel to get him to stay. Van de Spiegel’s own office of Grand Pensionary was abolished in January 1795 and together with other Orangists he was placed under arrest (Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 551). The Batavians purged many city, provincial and generality councils of

Orangists, replacing them with people from their own ranks. The government in Paris decided, in return for land and money, see chapter eight) to acknowledge the Batavian Republic as a separate and independent political entity.

The events following the Batavian Revolution have been crucial in Dutch political and administrative history. Inspired and guided in part by French ideology (and a French army) the Batavians managed to forge the basis of a unitary state out of an existing federation of provinces. They also introduced new legislative institutions, a separation of powers and a new constitution. The French-Batavian period (from 1795 to 1813) has arguably been crucial to understand wider Western-European political history as a whole or, as Palmer put it, “it was a typical revolution of the era [...], it reveals on a small and well-lit stage, a great many phenomena then common to western Europe and in some degree the Western world” (1954: 35). For Dutch history, at least, it was surely another watershed moment. Before, the Republic had been a fragmented and decentralized collection of largely sovereign provinces, cities and institutions with administration running ‘bottom-up’ from the city level and horizontally through collegial systems, rather than ‘top-down’ and vertically from the Generality level. Power was fragmented and unevenly distributed, which resulted in highly complex political and social power structures, both formally and informally. In many ways, the revolution of 1795 marked the end of this ancien regime administration and politics. The Batavian Republic (1795 – 1806) and subsequent forms of state after 1806 had a fundamentally different appearance. Developments from 1795 onwards marked the beginning of feverish political experimentation and secured a decisive shift towards the Dutch state as it exists today as old institutions were torn down because of revolutionary ideas such as popular sovereignty and the separation of powers. But all this, of course, did not happen overnight.

#### *A laboratory for constitutional experiments (1795 – 1798)*

The Revolution of 1795 caused much internal strife over how to shape the new Republic and its constitution. The main questions were whether it should remain a federation of largely autonomous provinces or a unitary state with stronger central command and how ‘democratic’ this new state should be. Various political groups consisting of federalists, unitarians and moderates – admittedly a very rough categorization (cf. Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 225-226; Schama, 1977: 249) – strongly disagreed about these issues. The result was a period in which the Netherlands was essentially a laboratory for constitutional experiments (Palmer, 1954; Van Sas, 1989; Schama, 1977). The main task of the Batavians, drafting and adopting a new constitution, proved to be difficult. After lengthy negotiations in the First National Assembly (1 March 1796 – 31 August 1797), a constitution was presented but rejected in a referendum in August 1797. Continuous political strife in the following months in the Second National Assembly (1 September 1797 – 22 January 1798) over the content of the new constitution, and the question of ‘union’ or ‘federation’, ultimately resulted in a first coup d’état led by radical unitarians (see chapter eight). Encouraged and spurred on by developments in France, radical Batavians like Wybo Fijnje (1750 – 1809), Pieter Vreede (1750 – 1837) and Stephen Jacobus van Langen (1758 – 1847) were among the leaders of the coup. The coup was furthermore supported by general Daendels and could count on the full backing of the French Directoire that was, as discussed earlier, in a hurry to sort out the Dutch political organization once and for all. This ‘Batavian Terror’ was, in comparison to the one in France, bloodless but funda-

mental all the same. To Van Sas (2005: 19) the ‘Batavian Terror’ was even the true core of the Revolution. A total of twenty eight ‘federalists’ and ‘aristocrats’ from the Second National Assembly were placed under arrest and the remainder of its members had to take an ‘oath of hatred’ declaring their “unwavering aversion to the Stadholder, federalism and the [supposed, TK] general anarchy or failed administration” of previous decades (Colenbrander, 1905-1922: lxxv-lxxvi, see document number [doc.] 527 for the full original text; Schama, 1977: 291).

Drafting and adopting a democratic constitution for a future unitary state became much easier after both National Assembly and Primary Assemblies had been purged of federalist opponents. Also, a Provisional Executive Directorate (25 January 1798 – 12 June 1798) was set up, consisting of radical democrats (most notably Vreede, Fijnje and Van Langen) to assume temporary executive power. In this way a new constitution could duly be accepted in a referendum on 23 April 1798. It was put into effect on 1 May of that year. The constitution was based on the principle of unitarism. It provided unity of law, a separation of church and state, abolished the guilds and reformed education. The radicals from the Provisional Executive Directorate would, however, only be in power for a period of roughly six months. On 12 June 1798 a second coup d’état (see chapter eight) was staged in order to safeguard the constitution, democracy and the basic unitary structure of the Republic. For the time being, a thinned out National Assembly became an Interim Legislative Assembly (12 June 1798 – 31 July 1798) and a new temporary Interim Executive Directorate (consisting of the moderate unitarians Gerrit Jan Pijman, Jacobus Spoor, Isaac Gogel, Reinier Tadema and Abraham la Pierre) took charge to pave the way for new elections. The already accepted constitution remained in place. In a matter of months the two coups had thereby ended the deadlock which had more or less “cast the Republic into a kind of Polish chaos” ever since 1795 (Schama, 1977, 271).

#### *New foundations for a Dutch nation state (1798 – 1813)*

The result, from July 1798 onwards, was a unitary state with a central government in the form of a Representative Assembly (31 July 1798 – 17 October 1801) – replacing the former Estates General – and an Executive Directorate (17 August 1798 – 17 October 1801) of five Directors, aided by eight ministers (also called agents) for various policy areas. One of the most notable changes was the dissolution of the provincialism and particularism that had so characterized the old Republic. Increased pressure from the French for further reorganization led to even more centralization. Napoleon Bonaparte was not impressed with the Batavian directorate and wished to strengthen his authority in the Republic (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 227-229; Schama, 1977: 410-411). Ultimately, in 1801, the French installed a Council of State (1801 – 1805), consisting of twelve members. The National Assembly was further reduced to thirty five members. They were only allowed to approve or disapprove legislation given to them by the Council of State. This council was less democratic but also less centralistic than previous governments, even though the new constitution clearly ranked provinces and municipalities below the central level. Authority was supposed to be developed from the centre to the periphery. In practice, however, changing the old relationships between provincial, city and central levels proved difficult. This was, as Schama writes (1977: 363), partly because the “bureaucratically contrived cartography paid little attention to social or regional topography and the new shape of the Republic was designed, and taken, to be a deliberate insult to the

facts of Dutch history”. It was also because there was still much resistance to reducing the autonomy and inherent particularism of Dutch local government. This is shown, for example, by the fact that the Council of State after 1801 abolished the new division in departments and quickly reverted to the old provincial boundaries, enabling old elites of patricians and nobles to regain control on lower provincial and city levels (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 227). It is also shown by the fact that town councils would still be largely in control of their own affairs, such as taxation, justice and citizen’s militias (Israel, 1998: 1124-1125).

Squabbling and indecisiveness among the Dutch, the apparent return to local autonomy instead of central command and the inability of the Council of State to bring about desired reforms made the French intervene again in Dutch politics. Napoleon Bonaparte simply did not feel the indecisive Council of State contributed enough to his newly created Empire (Lok, 2009: 40). The French, as a result, started to behave more as occupiers than liberators (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 227), leading in part to the emergence of a new Dutch nationalism (including new ideas on common good and common interest?) in the years between roughly 1800 and 1813 (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 227; Van Sas, 2005: 161). From 1805 to 1806, Napoleon put Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck – former ambassador to France for the Batavian Republic – in place as Grand Pensionary, or rather: as ‘president’ of a highly centralized system of government. More negatively phrased, he was nothing other than a “six-month Doge” (Schama, 1977: 466), instated by Napoleon to do the latter’s bidding. The constitution of 1805 reduced the Representative Assembly even further, to 19 members. They were only allowed to approve or disapprove legislation made by Schimmelpenninck. Political participation of citizens was curtailed, the executive was centralized under a single person, government finances were centralized by Isaac Gogel (1765 – 1821) and a system of general taxation was introduced (for more on Gogel and tax reform see Schama, 1977: 382-389, 494-524). The single year under Schimmelpenninck was therefore brief but important (Blom & Lamberts, 1993: 228; Lok, 2009: 40; Schama, 1977: 466).

Although Napoleon later admitted he should have continued Schimmelpenninck’s rule for more than just a single year (Lok, 2009: 40) the Emperor, still not satisfied with the speed of reforms and meaning to increase his influence, used Schimmelpenninck’s illness (he had become blind) as a pretext to appoint his brother Louis Napoleon as King of Holland from 1806 to 1810. Although the new constitution of 1806 meant a doubling of the amount of representatives, the power of the Assembly became even more insignificant. Centralization, now in the form of a monarchy, increased. King Louis, however, identified with the Dutch a little too much, at least to his brother’s taste. The Emperor saw his brother as a ‘simple’ prefect, the executive of imperial orders. Louis, on the other hand, took his job as King seriously and increasingly chose the side of the Dutch in conflicts with France (Lok, 2009: 40-41). As a result, between 1810 and 1813, Emperor Napoleon dismissed his brother and turned the former Kingdom into a part of the Empire, which was now directly ruled from Paris by French institutions. This final episode in the long succession of regimes and changes of state was very important for the Netherlands. The annexation meant that French laws and regulations were firmly implemented, that functional and geographical unity were ensured and that a new legislative organization with true separation of powers and a coherent legal system were set up (cf. Lok, 2009: 13-17; Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 1995; Peters, 2008; Rugge, 2003).

The annexation to the Empire led to crucial shifts and new foundations for government and administration in the Netherlands (cf. Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 1995: 220; Van Sas, 1992, 2005; Van Sas & Te Velde, 1998). Standardization and the introduction of

uniform administrative and legal organization of the state (Lok, 2009: 41-42) was in many ways the true beginning of the so-called Napoleonic model of government in the Netherlands. The model is that of an omnipresent government based on a uniform division of territory and a uniform organization of the civil service through hierarchy and unity of command. In the model administration and politics were separated as much as possible. Chosen representatives had limited (constitutional) power and a depoliticized civil service was there for execution of policy only. The model was centred around a civil service grounded in law and selected on the basis of expertise (Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 1995: 201).

Compared to the *ancien regime* of the Republic, the introduction of the Napoleonic Model meant a fundamental shift. It brought more vertical and centralized rather than horizontal and decentralized coordination and organization. This, in turn, led to top-down rather than bottom-up administration to which the Dutch Republic had grown accustomed. Government increasingly consisted of strong institutions on the national level (such as a King, a cabinet and a parliament) and weaker institutions on the provincial and local levels. Bureaucratization and professionalization were ‘natural’ consequences of such a shift. The ever stronger reliance on more central government from 1795 onwards also meant that public service delivery by the state grew (cf. Boels, 2011; Schama, 1977: 370-374). The later nineteenth century witnessed the rise of ‘big government’ with a multitude of ‘public’ tasks. More government on a wider variety of policy fields, in turn, increased bureaucratization and professionalization of the civil service and also included more emphasis on the moral elements of public administration. Some have pointed to the emergence of so-called *Napoleonic model*, which is important in the context of this study. It is supposed to be a system of organization as well as the embodiment of new ideas on ‘good government’ (Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 1995: 201). It stressed, for instance, the importance of centralized rule, hierarchy, and legal frameworks. This is important to assess public value change at the time (see also chapter eight).

## 4.5 Political culture

Following the previous overviews of main institutions and Dutch political history a final overview to help describe and understand changing public values and perceptions of political corruption deals with Dutch political culture. While a notoriously difficult concept, a useful definition is provided by Baker (1987, part I; xii; 1990: 4) who wrote that “if politics, broadly construed, is the activity through which individuals and groups in society articulate, negotiate, implement, and enforce the competing claims they make upon another and upon the whole [then] political culture is the set of discourses or political practices by which these claims are made”. According to Klein (1995: 2) such a definition sees political culture as “the constant battle in any society between arguments and counter arguments, between depictions and alternative imaginations and between individual and collective actions and counter-actions”. This makes political culture a mental and a social phenomenon. It is dynamic and always subject to change in wide networks of communication. Despite inherent contingency one can point to several main elements of Dutch political culture between 1748 and 1813. In the following these will be discussed. This is not, it has to be remembered, an exhaustive overview but serves as essential explanatory context for changing public values.

*Enduring political struggles: true liberty and political corruption*

The history of the Dutch Republic between 1748 and 1813 (as well as earlier periods) can be characterized by a few central political disputes and political alignments that served as core themes in the communication and strife between its various groups and institutional levels. Sometimes coalitions were formed between different actors. Some, such as the one between the House of Orange and the reformed church, lasted for a long time. Others, such as the one between populace and the Stadholder or the populace and the regents, would prove more shaky as the popularity of both amongst the populace waxed and waned depending on political, military and economic circumstances. The populace at large would for instance often call upon the Stadholder in times of great need (compare in the ‘year of disaster’ in 1672 but also in 1747, see chapter six) but would denounce him as soon as he proved incapable. A more fundamental and long-lasting dispute was that between Holland and many of its regents on one side and the Stadholder on the other. In a nutshell, the regent oligarchies in Holland’s cities were fearful of anyone with dynastic pretensions (i.e., the Stadholder) who could potentially curb their power. In their eyes, a free Republic ruled by free regents could not suffer such tyranny. At the same time those who opposed the dominance of Holland and its regents (for instance other provinces that envied Holland, noblemen who frowned upon non-nobles in public office, regents who were excluded from offices or preachers who wanted to diminish regent influence over church affairs) would often gather around the banner of the Stadholder. They did so because, as mentioned earlier, although technically nothing more than a provincial official the prestige of the Stadholder and his powers of appointment (see chapter seven) could carry a long way. The Stadholder of course welcomed any backing to boost his power and prestige.

The enduring political struggle between Holland and many of its regents and aforementioned other groups – or rather: the basic antagonism between the House of Orange (i.e., the Orangist faction) and the Holland regents (i.e., The States faction) – would sometimes lead to radical changes in the institutional set-up and political culture of the Republic such as the first (1650 – 1672) and second (1702 – 1747) Stadholderless periods. In these periods the regency gained what has been called ‘True Liberty’; a fundamental element in Dutch early modern political culture that is of vital importance to understand changing public values. It entailed the freedom of the relatively small group of regents to decide what was best for all. It meant they could govern without being hindered by the Stadholder or any other political entity, such as the Generality (Van Deursen, 2004a: 276-280; Rogier, 1954; Schama, 1977: 46). It meant the Holland regents could essentially rule their cities and province without consultation. The regent elites essentially did not have to answer to anyone but themselves. In the two Stadholderless periods (the latter of which is important for this present study) the regents – who, incidentally, could also be fighting among themselves (cf. Schutte, 1978: 270-273) – gained almost full control of the Republic. True liberty obviously worked well for the regents themselves and for a long time nobody really seems to have questioned the idea that these people were actually in the best position to govern based on their own ideas and values. Yet, true liberty would increasingly lead to the criticism that the regents were corrupt. This will especially become clear from chapters seven and eight. Then, such things as a lack of consultation, a lack of legitimacy and accountability, ruling with impunity and regents distributing offices as the saw fit would be fundamentally challenged.

*Particularism and compromise*

Van Deursen (2004a: 224-225) has written how the Republic did not have many constitutional rules and that even if they were there, it was largely unsure whether they were actually followed. “Formal constraints”, he wrote, “do not mean much when they are not confirmed in practice” (cf. De Jong, 1987: 51-52). This goes to the heart of much of the Dutch political culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and can be translated into two basic elements. First, there is the element of particularism which meant that in the fragmented and bottom-up system of administration (see earlier in this chapter) a large variety of autonomous actors all tried to hold on to as much independence as possible (De Jong, 1987: 34). The concept has extensively been explored by Fruin (1922), Van Braam (1986: 349-350) and, more recently, by Price (1994) who have shown how the Republic’s system of government was designed to reflect an enormous variety of particular (religious, commercial or political) interests. Second, there was an element of persuasion, consensus, deliberation, compromise and/or ‘giving and taking’ (Van Deursen, 2004a: 140; Hendriks & Toonen, 1998; Kickert & Hakvoort, 2000: 229; Randerad & Wolfram, 1998). Particularism and the lack of formal rules and regulations created a system in which no single actor or level could really determine the course of the others. Even Holland often had to rely on the other provinces and had to work within the system. Unity among the provinces, according to Van Deursen (2004a: 140), really only served to maintain as much diversity as possible, and statesmanship “required finding a middle way between inherently opposite ideals [...]. Neither force nor violence helped because the provinces were free to do as they pleased”.

The art of politics in the Dutch Republic was, therefore, to keep an eye on all relevant actors and levels and find a balance between often diverging and conflicting interests. In the practice of everyday Dutch politics, as Kloek and Mijnhardt have written, the vast majority of politically active individuals managed quite well to prevent polarization and the formation of cabals. This was mainly due to the essential mechanism of compromise due to pragmatism “which prevented the formation of a serious gap between administrators and administered” (Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 158-160). This means that the elements of particularism and compromise were structural-functional parts of political life in the Dutch Republic. This has obvious consequences when one wants to assess and understand changing public values. As long as particularism and compromise were basic foundations of the Dutch political system, practices that were essentially derived from it were not considered corrupt. I will discuss this in more detail in a later section of this chapter on brokerage, patronage, venality and nepotism as elements of Dutch political culture.

*Obtaining office, collegial administration and oligarchy*

From the previous it has become apparent how the centre of political and administrative power was to be found in the cities. From this level the influence of the regents extended to all other levels of provincial and generality government. Obtaining office was the most important goal of regents, especially as commerce and trade, their traditional lifeline, began to wane from the second half of the eighteenth century. Since, however, income from public office was still often not anything like a (fixed) salary, these officials tried to get as much out of their office as they could. This meant that the public and private were closely intertwined and that private gain from public

office was neither uncommon nor abnormal. The economic decay of the late eighteenth century thus actively promoted the hunt for offices that would become one of the core complaints of the various reform movements from Doelists to Batavians (see chapter five). Partly to avoid problems of faction strife, internal competition and abuse of office, government institutions on all levels were organized according to the principle of collegial administration. In essence this meant that organizations were run by cooperative agreement among those directly involved. It should come as no surprise that collegial administration was the most appropriate form of decision-making and organization given the Republic's political structure and its emphasis on particularism and consensus. It allowed making decisions based on mutual agreement between more or less equal actors who could correct each other and keep balance in decision-making. Collegial administration was also often able to prevent open abuse of office as it prevented any one party from becoming too powerful (Van Braam & Bemelmans-Videc, 1986: 349, 383-385, 387-388; Raadschelders, 1992: 28). Regents could simply not afford to alienate themselves from the bigger group because they relied on each other to get offices. Instability within collegial bodies, such as the all-important town councils, would be bad for everyone involved. For this reason, intricate systems of maintaining 'harmony' among the regents in collegial bodies were devised in the course of the early modern period.

The core of these systems consisted of office rotation based on seniority. Members of town councils, for instance, would acquire various offices within and outside of the cities in yearly rounds of allocation based on whoever was first in line. Since membership of a town council was for life, all regents would eventually share in the spoils of administration (Gabriëls, 1989: 276; Schöffner, 1978: 245). Maintaining this 'harmony' in day to day politics (on the shop floor, see chapter seven) among a collegial group of ruling regents became all-important (cf. Hoenderboom & Kerkhoff, 2008). Paradoxically, as De Jong (1987: 52) writes, self-interest of the regents prevented any obvious or outright abuse of power because group harmony was a prerequisite for individual well-being. Sometimes such informal arrangements would be semi-formalized in documents called contracts of correspondence. These provided detailed accounts of which members of the town council were to get office and which were not (Van Deursen, 2004a: 277; De Jong, 1987: 56; De Witte van Citters, 1873). To the regents the contracts of correspondence were accepted practice because they prevented faction strife in order to further their shared interest which was, in turn, a prerequisite for their personal interest (Kooijmans, 1987: 94-95). Needless to say the system did not always work. For one, while administrators increasingly became professionals, their jobs often still did not provide (regular or fixed) salaries. These professionals thus had to supplement their income from public office by alternative means and once an office came in someone's possession it became necessary to make the most of it. Also, the number of available offices was fewer than the number of regents because reigning regent families began to restrict the number of available and profitable offices in the course of the eighteenth century. A smaller group of regents wanted to have a bigger share in the spoils. This, naturally, led to the exclusion of others from office (Van Deursen, 2004a: 277; De Jong, 1987: 56; Kooijmans, 1987-95; Roorda, 1979). Life-long membership of a town council, sticking to the earlier example, was now no longer automatically translated into power or any chance of obtaining a substantial income.

Such circumstances created exclusion and faction strife that were increasingly perceived as being politically corrupt (see chapter seven). The intense competition among regents over offices was a dominant theme throughout the period between 1748 and 1813. It could sometimes tear town councils apart and lead to a scramble for positions in which regents handed out offices to

friends or family (patronage and nepotism), sold them (venality) or occupied multiple offices at the same time via so-called substitute offices (De Jong, 1987: 52-53). This, in turn, would in the end divide and weaken the regent bodies of the Republic, marking the beginning of the end of collegial administration. Once the collective body of regents was weakened, other parties (such as the Stadholder) gained influence (De Jong, 1987: 54). During several crucial episodes in Dutch history (such as 1672, 1748 and 1788) the Stadholder and his ‘court’ used internal divisions among the regents in various cities to overthrow reigning factions of regents hostile to the Stadholder and replace them with friendly ones (De Jong, 1987: 60-61).

To those outside of government, one of the most characteristic results of the way the town councils and other collegial bodies functioned was the formation of oligarchies. According to De Wit (1965, 1974), the existence of an unbridgeable gap between aristocrats and democrats in the eighteenth century (see also chapter seven) pointed to the emergence of a true oligarchy in the Dutch Republic. Continued ‘aristocratisation’ of society in which the regents kept the most important offices to themselves (using contract of correspondence and nepotism) meant, to him, that it became increasingly difficult for non-aristocrats (i.e., non-regents) to enter the political realm. Although, as Kooijmans suggested (1987: 94) it had not been uncommon to appoint friends and family in office ever since the seventeenth century, it became part of an “oligarchic ideology” in the eighteenth century.

#### *Brokerage, patronage, venality and nepotism*

Brokerage is a term that is often heard when early modern Dutch political culture is discussed. As a general term it was used by Charles Tilly (1990: 28-29) for his second phase of state formation (roughly 1400 – 1700). In that phase “mercenary forces recruited contractors, predominantly in military activity, and rulers relied heavily on formally independent capitalists for loans, for management of revenue-producing enterprises, and for installation and collection of taxes”. Administration and politics, in this view, were indirect. Put in modern terms, things that we now consider to be public (defence, education, health care or taxation – see case study one) were left to private third parties as much as possible simply because the authorities did not have the capacity or feel the desire to do it themselves. Brokerage is inherently linked to patronage, a situation in which personal power relationships between unequal persons (a superior or patron and a subordinate or client) are primarily meant to yield mutual advantage (Breman, 1971: 31; Ellemers, 1969: 433; Gabriëls, 1989: 147-148; Landé & Graziano, 1983: xx). Brokerage is patronage with the use of middle-men, a special form of patron-client relations where the patron needs the client to exert his powers everywhere (Gabriëls, 1989: 148). Similarly, Blockmans (1985: 231-236) described brokerage as a situation in which clients become middle men or ‘powerbrokers’ who use their access to patrons to make others dependent on them and create their own clients.

Patronage and brokerage were – not surprisingly considering the aforementioned – another elementary characteristic of Dutch political culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Dutch Republic, with its particularism and compromise and its lack of centralized authority, small bureaucratic system and vague lines between public and private interests, provided the ideal circumstances in which these practices could flourish. The weak Dutch state needed informal and personal systems to relieve strain and tension between highly autonomous layers of administration. Patronage and brokerage were often – much like other elements

I discussed in the above – structural-functionalist practices without which society and politics could hardly have functioned. We should therefore wonder whether and, if so why, how and when this kind of behaviour actually came to be perceived as corrupt. Some, like Schöffner (1978: 168) have argued that the sale of public office was not considered fraudulent at the time. Similarly, Schutte (1978: 280) has said that to profit from the system was acceptable according to the political norms of the eighteenth century. Schama, finally, noted that by eighteenth century standards the conduct of the Dutch regents was not considered outrageously scandalous. “Offices”, Schama writes, “had always been bought, sold and inherited as commodity rather than bestowed as duty” (1977: 48). The traffic of offices was often considered necessary by the Estates General and the Council of State and, as Schama (1977: 48) notes, was even taxed to the benefit of the public treasury until as late as 1800. Answers to the question whether, when and why such conduct did eventually become unacceptable will be discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine. From these chapters it will become clear that as soon as consensus among the closed group of regents and the idea of particularism were fundamentally questioned, people did begin to voice fundamentally different opinions on formerly more or less accepted practices such as brokerage, patronage, venality and nepotism.

#### *Popular sovereignty, representation and participation*

Some final important elements of Dutch political culture in the period are the ideas of popular sovereignty, representation and political participation that emerged from the second half of the eighteenth century amidst major changes in the political-administrative set-up of the Dutch Republic. While the Doelists of the 1740s emphasized the importance of greater ‘popular participation’ in and ‘representation’ of government, in reality things were not so bad. As Kloek and Mijnhardt (2001: 158-159) have for instance discussed in detail, the practical level of political participation in (roughly) the second half of the eighteenth century, was relatively high when compared to surrounding countries because of the decentralized and ‘bottom-up’ way of governing. Roughly two thousand Dutch regents decided, in various ways, on the fate of about two million inhabitants. That was, for instance, roughly fifteen times as much as in England. Kloek and Mijnhardt (Ibid.) also noted how in Dutch local administration, levels of participation were even higher, both formal and informal and direct and indirect. Still participation and representation became big issues from the Patriot period onwards, in part because of emerging ideas and concepts such as popular sovereignty, constitution and liberty which, however – according to Klein (1995: 199) – really meant something different to the various participants in the political debates of the 1770s and 1780s. As a rough indication, however, the Patriots did seem to have had a more inclusive perspective than most of their Orangist adversaries (see chapter five).

With the emergence of the Batavian Republic, the political culture changed quite dramatically. It is clear that from 1795 onwards, fundamental debates occurred over the meaning of such key concepts as participation and representation because of the creation of a new political order and a new ‘democratic’ political culture. Just how the meaning of such concepts changed and what various parties thought these were is beyond the scope of this study and requires independent research. Still, here (or rather in chapter eight), I do wish to answer a fraction of this question as it is directly related to changing public values. It is, I believe, safe to hypothesize – admittedly in a very general sense – that the radical changes between 1795 and

1813 and the creation of new political institutions (such as parliaments and constitutions), questions of participation, representation and accountability (indeed a new kind of democracy in general) became the centre of public and/or political debate. We can easily imagine, after all, that questions arose as to just how 'representative' the new members of the National Assembly were actually supposed to be or just how much representatives were to be answerable to voters? As the ancien regime seemed well and truly over after 1795, its 'old' political culture of particularism, compromise, collegial administration, the formation of oligarchies, patronage and nepotism might also have started to give way to a new political culture based on fundamentally new and different public values. Just how much this was the case, will be assessed in chapter eight.

