

## Flemings on the Move. A Profile of Representatives, 1384-1506

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In 1959, Walter Prevenier published as his first book a collection of extracts from the accounts of Flemish cities, castellanies and officials of the counts Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, and his spouse Margaret of Male. The combination of often cryptic and concise justifications of the travel expenses made by representatives of those institutions enabled the editor to establish a list of meetings of cities and assemblies of Estates which had left no systematic archives of their own. He similarly collected data about the activities of representatives and officials, as well as about the subject matters they dealt with<sup>1</sup>. Two years later Prevenier issued a monograph on the same subject, including some chapters on the history of representation in the county of Flanders before the advent of Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, and a substantial number of sources of types other than the accounts published earlier<sup>2</sup>.

Prevenier's early work on representation followed a pattern established before by Joseph Cuvelier with regard to the earliest assemblies of what he labeled as the Estates General of the Burgundian Netherlands<sup>3</sup>. In the absence of any systematic registration of the proceedings, or even of the formation of proper archives of these representative institutions, any details mentioned in other sources had to be collected in order to reconstruct the activity of such important but fairly informal political bodies. The major Flemish cities kept their accounts in series since the 1280s, and hiatuses in one place more often than not could be filled in by the extant information from one or two others, increasingly so from the fifteenth century onwards<sup>4</sup>. This made this type of puzzling out a very rewarding work. The method was used later for other principalities in the Low

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<sup>1</sup> W. PREVENIER (ed.), *Handelingen van de Leden en van de Staten van Vlaanderen (1384-1405). Excerpten uit de rekeningen der steden, kasselrijen en vorstelijke ambtenaren*, Brussels, 1959, XXXV + 488 p.

<sup>2</sup> W. PREVENIER, *De Leden en de Staten van Vlaanderen (1384-1405)*, Brussels, 1961, XXXIII + 415 p.

<sup>3</sup> J. CUVELIER, J. DHONDT, R. DOEHAERD (eds.), *Actes des États Généraux des anciens Pays-Bas. I. : Actes de 1427 à 1477*, Brussels, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> See the overview by W. PREVENIER, *Quelques aspects des comptes communaux en Flandre au Moyen âge*, in : *Finances et comptabilité urbaines du XIIIe au XVIe siècle*, [Brussels], 1964, p. 111-117.

Countries : for the States General<sup>5</sup>, for the duchy of Brabant until 1430<sup>6</sup>, and for the county of Holland. In the latter case, the publication of the sources until 1515 is well under way<sup>7</sup>, while a number of monographs has recently thrown new light on the subject in this region as well<sup>8</sup>.

The new approach, based on the scrutiny of series of all extant accounts and other sources, led to a formidable renewal of our insight in the functioning of representative institutions. It became possible to observe their activities under normal as well as exceptional circumstances, while the latter had always been overestimated in earlier studies based on narrative and diplomatic sources. Moreover, the new approach allowed the quantification of all aspects of the regular functioning of the representation : types of assemblies, their locations, frequency, duration, composition, participants, and subject matters, and at some occasions the wines presented to the deputies. They could now be studied with far greater precision than ever before. The negotiation processes became visible in their entirety, the forms, intensity and effects of the bargaining demonstrable. Quantification and a higher degree of precision in all kinds of details enhanced the possibilities for an in-depth comparison of one of the most original aspects of European history: the emergence of parliamentary representation<sup>9</sup>.

Above all, the classic paradigm of representation by assemblies of Three Estates was proven to be in fact a relatively marginal phenomenon in the county of Flanders : the first assembly was convened in 1384, and only nine of them were held during the twenty-one years' reign of Philip the Bold. On the other hand, meetings of the major cities alone could be counted in dozens — depending on the preservation of the accounts — since the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards<sup>10</sup>. Further, Prevenier showed that the core of the representative meetings was organized not on behalf of the count, but by an informal college of deputies from the three major cities, Ghent, Bruges and

<sup>5</sup> R. WELLENS, *Les États généraux des Pays-Bas des origines à la fin du règne de Philippe le Beau (1464-1506)*, Heule, 1974.

<sup>6</sup> A. UYTTEBROUCK, *Le gouvernement du duché de Brabant au bas moyen âge (1355-1430)*, 2 vols., Brussels, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> W. PREVENIER, J.G. SMIT (eds.), *Bronnen voor de geschiedenis der dagvaarten van de Staten en steden van Holland vóór 1544*. I : 1276-1433, 2 vols., The Hague, 1987, 1991 ; J.G. SMIT (ed.), *ibidem*, III : 1467-1477, The Hague, 1997. The other volumes are in a fairly advanced stage of preparation up to 1515.

<sup>8</sup> H. KOKKEN, *Steden en Staten. Dagvaarten van steden en Staten van Holland onder Maria van Bourgondië en het eerste regentschap van Maximiliaan van Oostenrijk (1477-1494)*, The Hague, 1991 ; J.G. SMIT, *Vorst en onderdaan. Studies over Holland en Zeeland in de late Middeleeuwen*, Leuven, 1995 ; J.P. WARD, *Representation in Holland, 1507-1515*, Leiden, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> W.P. BLOCKMANS, A typology of representative institutions in late medieval Europe, in : *Journal of Medieval History*, 4, 1978, p. 189-215.

<sup>10</sup> PREVENIER, *Leden*, p. 61-67, 116-120.

Ypres, and from the large and prosperous rural area covering the northwestern part of Flanders, called the Bruges Free Quarter. Its representatives often were noblemen — 16.66 % in 1384-1405 —, which diversified the composition of the college of the so-called "Four Members"<sup>11</sup>. What looked like an exception in the research on parliamentary history in Europe in 1961, was proved by further research to be just one of the various patterns of representation, very similar to those in Brabant, Holland and other highly urbanized regions such as Piedmont and the lower basin of the Vistula<sup>12</sup>. The delimitations of the traditional "estates" mattered less than the reality of the power repartition in civil society<sup>13</sup>.

For all these innovative insights, Prevenier's early work on the Flemish representative bodies can truly be labeled as pioneering. But he traced yet another path, that of the prosopographic study of the representatives themselves. He showed, as already mentioned, that 16.66 % of the deputies of the Bruges Free Quarter were noblemen, and that some noble families were prominent in Ypres. In Ghent, most delegations were carefully composed of one member per section of the local political bodies, viz. the bourgeoisie, the weavers' craft guilds and the smaller crafts. Prevenier's student Marc Boone later demonstrated that this system of repartition of political offices among the "three members of the city" became general at all levels after about 1360<sup>14</sup>. The most active deputies, however, were not the members of the magistracies elected yearly, but the permanent officials, called *pensionaris*, receiver of a salary, who served for entire careers. Among the seven most frequently delegated by each of the Four Members, four have been *pensionaris*<sup>15</sup>. The biography of one of these, the Bruges official Niclais Scoorkinne, a canon of the local St.-Donatian chapter, showed that he attended 202 of the 471 meetings about which information is available<sup>16</sup>. An in-depth study of the restauration of commercial relations between Flanders and England in the years before 1407, shows clearly that the Bruges family Scutelare played an extraordinary role in this complicated

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41-45 ; W. PREVENIER, Het Brugse Vrije en de Leden van Vlaanderen, in : *Handelingen van het Genootschap Société d'Émulation te Brugge*, XCVI, 1959, p. 5-63, esp. 62-63 ; IDEM, Réalité et Histoire : le Quatrième Membre de Flandre, in : *Revue du Nord*, XLIII, 1961, p. 5-14.

<sup>12</sup> BLOCKMANS, *A Typology*, p. 195, 198-200.

<sup>13</sup> See the inspiring debate by J. DHONDT, "Ordres" ou "Puissances". L'exemple des États de Flandre, in : *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 5, 1950, p. 289-305, reprinted in : J. DHONDT, *Estates or Powers. Essays in the parliamentary history of the southern Netherlands from the XIIIth to the XVIIIth century*, W. BLOCKMANS (ed.), Heule, 1977, p. 25-53.

<sup>14</sup> M. BOONE, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen ca. 1384-ca. 1453. Een sociaal-politieke studie van een staatsvormingsproces*, Brussels, 1990, p. 36-160.

<sup>15</sup> PREVENIER, *Leden*, p. 252-257, 301-303.

<sup>16</sup> W. PREVENIER, Niclais Scoorkinne, in : *Biographie Nationale*, XXX, Brussels, 1959, col. 761-763.

diplomatic affair. They were international merchants in wool and cloth, having long-standing relations with England and Italy, and counting members in the urban magistracy and administration. Prevenier brilliantly showed the close links between economic and political interests which proved of strategical importance<sup>17</sup>.

However exciting these results were, they remained limited to a relatively short period of time, which implied that many careers of representatives could not be studied in their entirety. Moreover, it remained to be seen in how far the years immediately after the Ghent revolt of 1379-85 were to be considered as typical. Prevenier motivated two of his earliest students to continue his work, which, after many years, resulted in the publication of the sources for the representative bodies of Flanders for the entire period of 122 years from 1385 until 1506<sup>18</sup>. The *gouvernance* of Lille, Douai and Orchies was not included since it had a representative system on its own. Flanders so became the first principality in Europe for which serial sources have been published covering such a long continuous period. Monographs on the representative system as such and on the subsidies granted have already been published on the basis of the collected material before it was entirely available in print<sup>19</sup>.

Apart from a few samples and the elaboration of a programme for further research, the prosopographical analysis of the representatives has not yet been carried through. The reason is obviously the very high numbers of persons and meetings involved. The task was considerably more complicated indeed than that of the forerunners in the parliamentary prosopography. In contrast to the situation in Flanders, elsewhere the number of meetings was small, while that of deputies relatively high but standardised. The most extensive prosopographical research has been carried through for the English Parliament. It counted the lords, twenty-one bishops, seventy-four knights of the shires and representatives from eighty to ninety cities and boroughs. From 1445 onwards, it was no longer

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<sup>17</sup> W. PREVENIER, *Les perturbations dans les relations commerciales anglo-flamandes entre 1379 et 1407. Causes de désaccord et raisons d'une réconciliation*, in : *Économies et Sociétés du Moyen Âge. Mélanges Édouard Perroy*, Paris, 1973, p. 477-497, esp. 482-485. About the Anglo-Flemish relations, see further : M. HAEGEMAN, *De anglofilie in het graafschap Vlaanderen tussen 1379 en 1435. Politieke en economische aspecten*, Kortrijk-Heule, 1988.

<sup>18</sup> A. ZOETE (ed.), *Handelingen van de Leden en van de Staten van Vlaanderen (1405-1419)*, 2 vols., Brussels, 1981-1982 ; W.P. BLOCKMANS, *Idem (1419-1467)*, 2 vols., Brussels, 1990-1995 (the Index vol. is still under preparation) ; *Idem (1467-1477)*, Brussels, 1971 ; *Idem (1477-1506)*, 2 vols., Brussels, 1973-1982.

<sup>19</sup> W.P. BLOCKMANS, *De volksvertegenwoordiging in Vlaanderen in de overgang van middeleeuwen naar nieuwe tijden (1384-1506)*, Brussels, 1978 ; A. ZOETE, *De beden in het graafschap Vlaanderen onder de hertogen Jan zonder Vrees en Filips de Goede (1405-1467)*, Brussels, 1994.

required that electors should return local representatives, which led to an invasion of borough seats by members of the gentry and other outsiders. Members of Parliament increasingly used their election to obtain positions and offices for themselves and for their clients, or to further other private interests by means of petitions<sup>20</sup>. More than 81 % of the about 700 knights of the shire returned from 1439 to 1509 were county justice of the peace. Half of the sheriffs became MP at some time in their lives, returned their son or were returned by a colleague for another county. Hundreds of MPs have been identified as escheators (the King's agent in feudal death duties), collectors, controllers or surveyors of customs, commanders of royal castles or holders of other royal or county appointments. Many such appointments were arranged while Parliament was in session, which leads to the conclusion that hope of patronage was a strong incentive to obtain election to Parliament. On the other hand, this attitude undermined the autonomy of the representative institution. Prosopographical research has further shown, for France as well as for England, the absence of clear cut social divisions between the estates or houses. The share of university degrees may have been somewhat lower than in the French States-General — one out of five English MPs around 1420 — probably the result of the differences in the legal systems, but the tendency to erode the action of representative institutions from within by extending royal patronage, helps to explain the general loss of political impact of the institutions, if not of their members<sup>21</sup>.

The French States General of 1468 counted between 350 and 400 participants, of whom 130 have been identified ; in the 1484 assembly, 284 persons were entitled to reimbursement, of which 269 are known by their names. These 399 names constitute the whole corpus for the second half of the fifteenth century. In 1484 royal officials numbered up to 84 of the 269 representatives, nearly one-third. They constituted 63% of all members of the third estate and nearly 22 % of the nobility. The latter estate was further closely linked to the monarchy by honorary titles such as that of royal councillor (which was the case of 40 among the 83 noble representatives) or by royal pensions. Only 21 urban officials (less than 8 %) participated, and again three of them were afterwards honoured by a royal or seignorial office. Only 13 % of the latter held a university degree, most in law, while this was the case for 70 % of the royal officials acting as representatives and 93% of the members of chapters. In this respect, the use of latin obviously favoured the university graduates. In 1484,

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<sup>20</sup> J.S. ROSKELL, L. CLARK, C. RAWCLIFFE, *The History of Parliament. The House of Commons 1386-1421*, 4 vols., Stroud, 1992, p. 43-45, 63-67, 101-103.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 171 ; J.C. WEDGWOOD, *History of Parliament, 1439-1509*, vol. 1, London, 1936, p. XVII-XLVII.

even more than in 1468, royal officials and clients acted as a supra-regional power elite, linking local and regional interests with the court. The cities, and the estates in general, clearly were unable to act independently from the crown. On the rare occasions when they were summoned, they got lost in the extension of networks of power brokers<sup>22</sup>.

From the outset, it was clear that the Flemish representatives showed a very different picture from that in the neighbouring kingdoms. From 1384 to 1506, their numbers ran into thousands, which required a different research method. When I elaborated my PhD thesis in 1972-1973, I struggled some time with punch-cards in the hope to retrieve not only the careers of all Flemish deputies, but also the matters and the types of meetings they were involved in<sup>23</sup>. In those days, the assistance required for such a project was simply not available for a simple PhD-student. Waiting was not a pure loss in this case, since computer technology made my boldest dreams come true twenty-five years later. The indexes of the edited sources printed decades ago could be scanned and thus became easy to manipulate by computer. Instead of huge hardware and complicated software, we can now build up a database and search it at high speed in our personal computers. I was especially lucky to have been helped in this task by excellent research assistants<sup>24</sup>.

### The data

The basis of the data were the four published indexes of the volumes of the extracts of accounts concerning the representative assemblies in the Flemish speaking part of the county of Flanders from 1384 to 1506. The index for the volumes covering the reign of Duke Philip the Good has directly been made by computer, the older ones have been scanned. Decisions then had to be taken about the identification of homonyms in successive volumes, since it now became possible for the first time to group the data concerning the complete careers of successive generations. Similar decisions had to be taken about the identity of names mentioned with great intervals, sometimes decades, or

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<sup>22</sup> N. BULST, *Die französischen Generalstände von 1468 und 1494. Prosopographische Untersuchungen zu den Delegierten*, Sigmaringen, 1992, p. 38-39, 321, 334-335, 338-367.

<sup>23</sup> BLOCKMANS, *Volkvertegenwoordiging*, p. 569-583 ; IDEM, *Le régime représentatif en Flandre dans le cadre européen au bas Moyen Age, avec un projet d'application des ordinateurs*, in : *Album Elemér Mályusz. Studies presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions*, LVI, Brussels, 1976, p. 211-245.

<sup>24</sup> I want to thank most sincerely for their hard work and creative collaboration especially mrs. Marie-Charlotte le Bailly and mrs. Justine Smithuis who took care of the input of the data in an Access database.

appearing successively in different places. In all these cases, conservative choices have been made, considering the identity of homonyms to be acceptable within relatively long careers. Research has shown that the careers of local magistrates often enough lasted twenty to twenty-five years. In Ghent, 26 % of the magistrates served from 8 tot 21 years, 12.8 % from 22 to 34 years, and 4.6 % 35 years or more<sup>25</sup>. Similarly, homonyms appearing in different places were interpreted as the migration of one and the same person as long as no other reasons such as explicit family ties, the coincidence in time or most unlikely upward or downward mobility made this identification problematic. Anyhow, in cases of possible doubt, a conservative interpretation has been chosen, which kept the numbers of representatives low. Doubts hardly exist about prominent families or very active representatives, since their careers could normally be followed closely. Few cases occurred, especially in small towns, where representatives were not named by name in the accounts but referred to at for example "the treasurer" or "the clerk". Their numbers were as negligible as their influence.

Since, unlike the English Parliament or the French States General of 1484, the Flemish representative bodies did not leave any lists of participants, the editors of the collected sources had to reconstruct them. Accounts of the cities and rural districts, mostly castellanies ('*kasselrijen*') are generally rather incomplete about the participants outside their own jurisdiction, especially insofar as the clergy and the nobility were concerned. Most informative were the accounts of the governmental bodies, especially the Council of Flanders, from where messengers had to carry the summonses through the county. But even then, the names of prelates and noblemen were not always registered, and leave us in great uncertainty about the effective participation of the first two orders. All in all, we could find the names of only 47 prelates and 83 noblemen as representatives of their respective order in assemblies of estates, one and two per cent respectively of the total population of 4073 representatives. Given the certainty that they represent only a fraction of the real participation of the two privileged estates, and the relative insignificance of these figures in comparison with the 3943 representatives known for the third estate, we will further concentrate on these. After all, assemblies of three or two estates numbered up to a mere 251, or 6 % of the 4054 representative activities counted in the period<sup>26</sup>. I will not try to explore further the role of the clerical and noble

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<sup>25</sup> W.P. BLOCKMANS, Het wisselingsproces van de Gentse schepenen tijdens de 15de eeuw, in : *Handelingen van de Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent*, XLI, 1987, p. 75-96, esp. 79 ; IDEM, Mobiliteit in stadsbesturen 1400-1550, in : D.E.H. DE BOER, J.W. MARSILJE (eds.), *De Noordelijke Nederlanden in de Late Middeleeuwen*, Utrecht/Antwerp, 1987, p. 236-260.

<sup>26</sup> BLOCKMANS, *Volksvertegenwoordiging*, p. 598-600.

orders here, but shall pay due attention to the role of noblemen and clergymen in the service of cities and rural districts.

Prosopography ideally aims at the collection of as many details as possible concerning family, education, status, other professional activities and relations of an entire population. It is not my purpose to present such data for "my" population of nearly four thousand representatives. The quantitative analysis of a limited number of highly standardized variables for a large population has its own merits, especially in a political system characterized by high participation and high mobility as was the case in Flanders. On this basis, biographical data can always be added or linked to the database in the future. The variables available presently are :

- identification number
- family name
- first name
- place or places represented
- title, insofar as mentioned : clerical, academic, noble or forms of address expressing respectability (for example *her*)
- offices mentioned
- first and last year of appearance
- number of references in the source publications.

The names make further nominative search in the indexes and lists of the printed documents easy, and allow a possible future linkage to the particular meetings, their subject matters and composition. For practical reasons, we took the page references as our basis for the calculation of participation in representative activities, which is not entirely the same. However, one single mention is an undisputable fact which table 1 shows to be very significant, while higher figures will be interpreted as orders of magnitude, grouped in categories.

## A quantitative analysis

| <b>Table 1. Frequency of the mentions of all representatives for the third estate</b> |           |           |            |            |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| mentions  | N persons | % persons | N missions | % missions |
| 1   | 1382      | 35.05     | 1382       | 4.24       |
| 2   | 589       | 14.94     | 1178       | 3.61       |
| 3-6   | 963       | 24.42     | 3965       | 12.16      |
| 7-14  | 566       | 14.35     | 4848       | 14.87      |
| 15-23   | 179       | 4.54      | 2249       | 10.27      |
| 24-42   | 129       | 3.27      | 4120       | 12.64      |
| 43-465  | 135       | 3.42      | 13760      | 42.21      |
| total   | 3943      | 99.99     | 32602      | 99.99      |

On average, representatives carried out 8.27 missions each. The most striking observation to be made on the basis of table 1 is, however, that half the representatives were mentioned only once or twice as participants in a meeting, fulfilling together 7.85 % of the missions. The other extreme of the distribution is equally telling : 6.69 % of the most active representatives, mentioned more than 23 times, took up 54.85 % of all the missions. The conclusion has to be that the Flemish representative system functioned through a small group of about 440 persons mentioned 15 times and more, holding a share of two-thirds of all activities ; at the same time there was a high number of ephemeral participants. It should be noticed that the same pattern was observed earlier within the Ghent magistracy<sup>27</sup>. The duration of a single mission was on average ten days, in which figure the long travels abroad have a disproportionate weight. The normal duration was six days, with a standard variation of between four and eleven days.

<sup>27</sup> BLOCKMANS, *Wisselingsproces*, p. 78.

Meetings tended to become longer from 1419 onwards<sup>28</sup>. First, we have to establish the impact of the fact that 92 % of all the meetings under scrutiny included representatives of at least one of the Four Members, while smaller cities and rural districts were involved only in 28 % of the activities, of which 11 % are related to participations of individual administrations only<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, table 2 isolates the frequency of mentions of representatives on behalf of the Four Members.

| Table 2. Frequency of mentions of representatives on behalf of the Four Members |     |     |     |     |      |    |      |    |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|----|------|----|
| m   | G   | B   | Y   | F   | 4M   | %M | Tot  | %T |
| 1-2   | 318 | 280 | 93  | 80  | 771  | 41 | 1971 | 39 |
| 3-6   | 176 | 129 | 53  | 55  | 413  | 22 | 963  | 43 |
| 7-14  | 90  | 103 | 44  | 37  | 274  | 14 | 566  | 48 |
| 15-23   | 29  | 29  | 30  | 17  | 105  | 5  | 179  | 59 |
| >23   | 15  | 52  | 42  | 134 | 243  | 13 | 264  | 92 |
| totals  | 654 | 619 | 278 | 320 | 1871 | 97 | 3943 | 48 |

m= N mentions ; G = Ghent ; B = Bruges ; Y = Ypres ; F = Free Quarter ; 4M = Four Members ; Tot = Total N of category ; %M = % per category ; %T = % 4M of Total

Table 2 shows that 48 % of the representatives in our population were in the service of one of the Four Members, leaving a small majority for the 28 smaller cities and 10 rural districts. Given their lower participation in representative assemblies, it is only normal that they are underrepresented in our data, and that the frequency of their individual scores is lower than that of the men from the Four Members. Of the 443 persons mentioned 15 times and more, 348

<sup>28</sup> BLOCKMANS, *Volksvertegenwoordiging*, p. 202.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 213, 598-600.

represented one of the Four Members. Significant discrepancies in the frequency distributions between the Four Members and the total population occur only at the extremes : the Members have relatively fewer single or double mentions (41 % as opposed to 50 %) and twice as many cases of more than 23 appearances (13 % and 6.7 %). Nevertheless, 41 % in the category of 1 or 2 mentions is a very high proportion of ephemeral deputies, especially since the Four Members held on average 33 meetings per year, to which each of them normally would delegate two to four persons<sup>30</sup>.

The differences among the Four Members themselves are even more striking than those with the smaller administrations. Table 3 therefore shows the shares of the lowest and highest frequencies alone.

| mentions | G    | B    | Y    | F    |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| 1-2      | 50.6 | 47.2 | 35.5 | 25.0 |
| >23      | 2.4  | 9.0  | 16.0 | 42.0 |

The high mobility which has been observed earlier in the Ghent magistracy<sup>31</sup>, carries over into the high share, more than half, of its ephemeral representatives. On the other hand, Ghent very rarely sent its officials on dozens of missions in a career. Quite the opposite picture appears in the Bruges Free Quarter, which has only one quarter of ephemeral representatives but 42 % of very frequent participants. Evidently, the nature of the documents implies that we are informed in principle about all the delegations on behalf of the Free Quarter, while we do not know the names of the deputies the Ghent magistrate sent to the 1611 (40 % of the total) meetings in its own city<sup>32</sup>. But even then, we know more than twice as many deputies from Ghent as from the Free Quarter. The contrast therefore is primarily one of different constitutions. In Ghent mobility was

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 199 ; PREVENIER, *Leden*, p. 258.

<sup>31</sup> BOONE, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, p. 54-57 ; BLOCKMANS, *Wisselingsproces*.

<sup>32</sup> BLOCKMANS, *Volkvertegenwoordiging*, p. 602.

required and effectuated every year, and even if many of them were offered other public jobs during their compulsory vacancies<sup>33</sup>, these offices did not normally provide access to negotiations on the county level. In the Bruges Free Quarter, aldermen (schepenen) were appointed for life and thus the majority served for their whole career. Furthermore, table 3 shows a striking gradation in the perpetuity between Ghent, Bruges, Ypres and the Free Quarter ; the main difference, however, is that between the annual mutations in the cities and the lifetime appointments on the countryside<sup>34</sup>.

| frequency | N persons | duration |
|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 3-6       | 963       | 7.48     |
| 7-14      | 566       | 14.15    |
| 15-23     | 179       | 18.34    |
| 24-42     | 129       | 18.14    |
| >42       | 135       | 21.71    |

The calculation of the average length of careers confirms the logical correlation between the frequency of mentions as a representative and the time span during which he has been politically active on the inter-local level. Although eight careers lasted for more than fifty years, and twenty-two from 40 to 49 years, which extremes only confirm observations based on other sources, the average duration was around 18 years for representatives mentioned between 15 and 42 times, and a minimum of nearly 22 years for the top scores.

Titles mentioned in the accounts for representatives of cities and districts belonged to three categories : clerical dignities, nobles and academics. The distinction is not always easy to make since a nobleman might well be summoned to assemblies of estates as a member of the second order, and at the same time serve for one of the cities or districts. Titles become more numerous in the second half of the fifteenth century, especially in Ghent and Bruges. In

<sup>33</sup> BOONE, *o.c.*, p. 127-139.

<sup>34</sup> PREVENIER, *Leden*, p. 271.

Ghent, we count 22 nobles, of whom 13 acted as "first alderman". Bruges counted 12 noble burgomasters, while the Free Quarter really was a noble bastion where 28 of their noble deputies acted as burgomasters and developed in that function a great representative activity with an average of 45 mentions.

As a consequence of the nature of our sources, the listing of members of the estate of the nobility is certainly incomplete. Some were named in the accounts of the Council of Flanders which sent out the messengers with summonses, or in other accounts, but none of these ever pretended to be complete. So, even the 192 persons retrieved as noble deputies, must remain far below the reality of their participation. It is striking, moreover, that among these only 27 % are known in their exclusive capacity of summoned representatives of the noble estate, while all the others featured as deputies for cities or castellanies. No less than 53 (27 %) of them acted for the Bruges Free Quarter, 23 for Ypres, 22 for Ghent, 18 for Bruges, 12 for the castellanies of Ypres and Furnes each, and 8 for smaller cities. The prosopography of the deputies thus shows that the borderlines between the estates were far from clear-cut, and especially that even the Four Members of Flanders, the champions of representation of the Third Estate, in practice counted considerable numbers of nobles in prominent roles<sup>35</sup>.

|              |     |             |    |             |     |
|--------------|-----|-------------|----|-------------|-----|
| Ghent        | 43  | Kortrijk    | 6  |             |     |
| Bruges       | 48  | Dendermonde | 5  | Districts   | 8   |
| Ypres        | 21  | Nieuwpoort  | 5  | Clergy      | 2   |
| Free Quarter | 22  | Veurne      | 4  |             |     |
| Total 4M     | 134 | Other towns | 14 | Grand total | 178 |

178 Academic jurists in a population of 4073 is merely 4.3 %, much lower than the figures for the French States General and the English Parliament. Three quarters of them were in the service of the Four Members. Fourteen smaller towns and three rural districts employed at some time a jurist. With regard to the

<sup>35</sup> I will develop this theme further in : *Représentation de la noblesse en Flandre au XVe siècle*, in : J. PAVIOT, J. VERGER (eds.), *Mélanges Philippe Contamine*, Paris, 2000.

moment and the number of appointments, the two major cities were far ahead of the much smaller Ypres, the Free Quarter, the rural district of Veurne (which employed five jurists) and the other towns. On average, 7.33 % of all representatives of the Four Members were jurists, with a marked difference between Bruges and Ypres, where they were 8 %, and Ghent and the Free Quarter, with 6.6 % and 6.8 % respectively. In the other towns and districts the proportion of jurists to all representatives was 1.9 %. The lack of any accounts for the middle-sized town of Sluis, and the partial disappearance of those of many other places certainly leaves us with incomplete information. An interesting phenomenon is the mobility of not less than twenty jurists who changed places, probably for reasons of professional advancement in most cases. Eleven of them moved between the Four Members, four went from smaller towns to one of the Members.

Apart from two abbots, we are informed about the offices held by 79 jurists (45 %). Most were *pensionaris* (55), few clerk (7), only one treasurer. Ten of them were employed in small towns : three in Geraardsbergen, and one in Biervliet, Damme, Lombardsijde, Oostende, Oudenaarde, Sint-Anna-ter-Muiden and Veurne ; some of them stepped over from one to the other place. An interesting number of 37 burgomasters and aldermen (21 %) were academics, of whom nine served some time as *pensionaris*. There was thus no absolute boundary between political and official's careers. In the course of time, an increase in the presence of academics can be observed, in line with the general trend of increasing professionalization.

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| 1400-1419 | 21 persons |
| 1420-1439 | 32 persons |
| 1440-1459 | 35 persons |
| 1460-1479 | 33 persons |
| 1480-1499 | 45 persons |

We will now have a look at the representative activity of officials, including local treasurers, in comparison with that of those holding political functions such as burgomaster and its equivalents (*voorschepen, voogd, proost, landhouder, hoofdpointer*) and alderman (*schepen, raad, wethouder, keurheer*). Depending on the local constitution, deans of craft guilds might play a role, especially in Ghent and Bruges, notables and occasionally a bailiff or sheriff. For

1629 (41 %) of the representatives, the sources explored here do not provide details of this type.

Table 7 shows the numbers of those who held exclusively the one office or function headed. Switches during careers complicate the picture and lead us to higher numbers. In total, 101 alderman have been official in their town or district as well. This applies to 32 Ghent aldermen, equal numbers of whom held the offices of *pensionaris*, clerk and treasurer. In Bruges, 15 treasurers once became aldermen. The total number of 421 persons who have been at some time *pensionaris*, clerk and treasurer made up 18 % of those whose office or function is known. All the burgomasters and aldermen together added up to 1840 persons, or 79.5 % of those whose function is known (2314). As Prevenier has already demonstrated for the reign of Duke Philip the Bold<sup>36</sup>, it was obviously the *pensionarissen* who held an overwhelming position based on frequent participation, while clerks and treasurers were far less often mentioned beyond the level of 14 times. Clerks typically were the officials in the lower ranks in larger cities and the only officers, maybe with a treasurer, in smaller places. The contrast between officials and political functionaries can be expressed in yet another way, viz. by the average of the mentions as representatives.

| Table 7. Activity of officials and political functionaries |    |    |    |     |      |      |        |
|--|----|----|----|-----|------|------|--------|
| freq   | P  | C  | T  | B   | A    | unkn | totals |
| 1-2  | 15 | 42 | 23 | 136 | 558  | 1065 | 1971   |
| 3-6  | 15 | 23 | 19 | 118 | 425  | 319  | 963    |
| 7-14   | 7  | 16 | 13 | 93  | 255  | 140  | 566    |
| 15-23  | 13 | 6  | 4  | 20  | 85   | 36   | 179    |
| 24-42  | 9  | 5  | 3  | 16  | 44   | 35   | 129    |
| >42  | 39 | 3  | 2  | 10  | 41   | 34   | 135    |
| Totals   | 98 | 95 | 64 | 393 | 1408 | 1629 | 3943   |

P = *pensionaris* ; C = clerk ; T = treasurer; B = burgomaster; A = alderman; unkn = function or office unknown - NB the A column includes 269 persons who were both alderman and burgomaster

<sup>36</sup> PREVENIER, *Leden*, 254.

| Table 8. Average activity of officials and political functionaries |               |      |                       |       |             |      |
|--|---------------|------|-----------------------|-------|-------------|------|
|  | all officials |      | <i>pensionarissen</i> |       | politicians |      |
|  | corr.         | reg. | corr.                 | reg.  | corr.       | reg. |
| Ghent  | 27.4          | 19.6 | 48.7                  | 34.8  | 7.1         | 5.1  |
| Bruges   | 45.2          | 34.8 | 84.5                  | 65.0  | 15.6        | 12.0 |
| Ypres  | 65.6          | 62.5 | 74.2                  | 70.7  | 12.2        | 11.6 |
| Free Quarter   | -             | 90.3 | -                     | 108.5 | -           | 37.9 |

corr. = corrected ; reg. = registered

The differences among the Four Members are as striking as the sharp contrast between the far higher representative activity of the officials than that of the political functionaries. The latter were more numerous but mostly did not stay in office as continuously as the officials. Again, the *pensionarissen* scored much higher than their lower-ranking colleagues, especially in Ghent and Bruges. The tremendously numerous missions the 21 Ypres and 22 Free Quarter's academic jurists had to accomplish compensated in some way their lower numbers, but their 48 colleagues in Bruges were both the most numerous and very active. The interpretation of the registered activity of individual deputies is complicated by the fact that travel expenses are the basis of our information. These were, in fact distributed very unevenly among the Four Members since less than 5 % of the meetings took place in Ypres. This implies that — apart from eventual losses of accounts — we know the names of Ypres deputies to 95 % of the meetings. On the other hand, names are missing in 30 % of the cases for Bruges and 40 % for Ghent, since most meetings were held in those cities<sup>37</sup>. The administration of the Free Quarter registered travel expenses in all cases. Therefore, I corrected the registered activity of deputies by extrapolating the data up to the total number of meetings, which provides us with better comparable figures. Even after this correction, the activity of all categories of individual deputies was by far the highest in the Free Quarter. The lifetime appointment of their aldermen made the

<sup>37</sup> BLOCKMANS, *Volksvertegenwoordiging*, p 258.

difference between them and their *pensionarissen* less sharp than it was in the three Cities : one to three in the Free Quarter, against one to 5.4 in Bruges, one to six in Ypres and one to seven in Ghent.

Ghent seemed to rely relatively more on their political representatives than Bruges and Ypres, even with their extremely high turnover. In Ghent, 68 deans of the craft guilds played a visibly representative role. Those who held only that office, scored on average just 2.44 mentions, while others made their way as aldermen, clerks and treasurers. Bruges obviously had the most professional administration of the Four, having both most and very active officials. In Kortrijk, the most important of the second-rank cities, the five *pensionarissen* active there in the course of the whole period, reached an average of 29 mentions, which brings them well in line with their colleagues of the Four Members.

Overall, even after correction, the individual scores of all the Ghent deputies remained far below those in the other Members. Even on the level of its officials, individuals developed a far lower level of representative activity. If the figures in table 2 are corrected for the lack of data, there may have been 916 deputies for Ghent, 805 for Bruges, 292 for Ypres and 320 for the Free Quarter. Constitutionally and in practice, the political system of Ghent was far more open than those of the other Members. Ypres did not compensate the much lower numbers of its deputies by higher individual activity, as did those of the Free Quarter — *except on the level of the lower officials. Taking into account that the Free Quarter has been excluded as the Fourth Member during about 13 years, which is more than one tenth of the whole period, it becomes all the more obvious that it invested heavily in its political participation on the highest levels. The impoverished city of Ypres had to rely heavily on its officials to keep up its privileged political standing. Bruges combined high numbers of deputies with their high activity, and can thus be qualified as the most prominent player in the Flemish representative system.*

If one looks at the most active families, it becomes clear that most of their members were politicians, but that almost one in four chose for a career as official. This implies that the families could ensure in this way their continuity in powerful positions. In the Free Quarter, where the aldermen had continuous careers, only four officials belonged to the five most active families, as against 35 politicians. In Ghent, however, the ten most active families, counting seven or more representatives, had among them 20 officials against 74 politicians ; in Ypres, among the five most active families with seven or more representatives, 8 were officials against 37 politicians. The largest family of representatives was the Ypres noble family Belle, who had 22 individuals in the running, three of

whom were officials<sup>38</sup>. Next came the 13 members of the old Ghent patrician families Utenhove, with 4 officials, the 12 van Vaernewijc, with one official, the ten de Grutere, the nine Damman. More old patrician families such as the Bette, Sersymoens, van der Zickelen, Borluut, Rijm remained with four to six members very active representatives of their proud city<sup>39</sup>. The Ypres family Belle attracts our special interest, since eight of their members among the 22 deputies were entitled as *ridder*, and their three officials carried out dozens of missions. It appears, that the family lost much of its political influence since only two members entered a career after 1450. Five of the Belle deputies had rather short-lived careers. This raises the more general question if all members of important families were equally active. Especially in Ghent, several well-represented families counted a relatively high number of poor performers : 3 of the 13 Utenhove, 7 out of 12 Van Vaernewijc, 5 out of 10 De Grutere and 7 out of 9 Damman. Family strategies obviously were troubled by the political upheavals, as well as, of course, by obvious biological uncertainties.

Some artisans' families also achieved this high political level : the weavers Van der Eeke, who had nine representatives, six of whom made at least part of their career as officer and dean, the seven of the shippers Everwijn and the seven of the family of Jan Goedghebuer, the dean of the weavers' guild<sup>40</sup>. In a recent article, Marc Boone and Jan Dumolyn elaborated the careers of three generations of the Everwijn family. Their intensive activity as aldermen and their moderate political attitude obviously turned them into acceptable partners in the higher society. Denijs Everwijn married the sister of one of the most prominent clerical councillors of the duke, and he accordingly lived in an impressive stone house in one of the most dignified streets of Ghent. Other members of their family married into the old patrician lineages van der Sickelen and Utenhove<sup>41</sup>. The representatives of the crafts should therefore not merely be considered as acting within the constitutional framework ; their networks might link them with the duke's officials and the local patricians.

These facts encourage us to reflect on the reality of political participation of craft guilds. Even after the most penetrating social and political revolution of Western Europe in 1302, and a series of further guild revolts which gave the Ghent craftsmen the right to appoint 20 of the 26 aldermen, and in spite

<sup>38</sup> Compare PREVENIER, *Leden*, p. 256, note 7.

<sup>39</sup> F. BLOCKMANS, *Het Gentsche stadspatriciaat tot omstreeks 1302*, Bruges, 1938, index ; BOONE, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, p. 104-105 ; 129, note 249 ; 268-269 ; 444-445.

<sup>40</sup> BOONE, *Ibidem*, p. 117, note 229 ; 72 ; 105 ; 66 note 38.

<sup>41</sup> M. BOONE, J. DUMOLYN, Henri Goethals, doyen de Liège (+ 1433) : un homme d'Église gantois au service des ducs de Bourgogne Jean sans Peur et Philippe le Bon, in : *Publication du Centre européen d'études bourguignonnes (XIVe-XVIe s.)*, 38, 1998, p. 97-103.

of the strong influence of the two super-deans, the four most politically prominent families in the fifteenth century, and nine out of the 28 families with four or more representatives, were still the heirs of the old patricians. Our present research focuses only on representation on the territorial level, but it should be emphasized that these families were at the same time playing on other chessboards as well, viz. local institutions and the service of the duke of Burgundy.

As a consequence of the nature of our sources, the listing of members of the estate of the nobility is certainly incomplete. Some were named in the accounts of the Council of Flanders which sent out the messengers with summonses, or in other accounts, but none of these ever pretended to be complete. So, even the 192 persons retrieved as noble deputies, must remain far below the reality of their participation. It is striking, moreover, that among these only 27 % are known in their exclusive capacity of summoned representatives of the noble estate, while all the others featured as deputies for cities or castelnies. No less than 54 (27 %) of them acted for the Bruges Free Quarter, 23 for Ypres, 22 for Ghent, 18 for Bruges, 12 for the castelnies of Ypres and Furnes each, and 8 for smaller cities. The prosopography of the deputies thus shows that the borderlines between the estates were far from clear-cut, and especially that even the Four Members of Flanders, the champions of representation of the Third Estate, in practice counted considerable numbers of nobles in prominent roles<sup>42</sup>.

It seems that leading merchant families were not interested to play a prominent role as deputies on a lasting basis. The case of the Bruges Scutelare family mentioned earlier may illustrate this. Lievin and Lubrecht have been very active deputies in their functions of alderman, councillor and burgomaster only between 1389 and 1413. In 1413, Jacop was mentioned for a very brief moment. During the revolt year of 1436-1437, Jan participated in three important delegations of his city to the duke, two of them with the Three Estates of Flanders, as the representative of the guilds of the leather trade. However important the family may have been in strategic moments, they did not chose massively for political careers.

More detailed biographical research will certainly reveal highly relevant connections between families. For example, the famous jurist Philip Wielant, has been a burgomaster in 1478-1479 and 1482-1483, and a representative, in a period when the Free Quarter was excluded from the College of the Four Members. He was a grandson of Jan van den Kethulle, a former *pensionaris* of the same district. Both his grandfathers had served as high-ranking officials of

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<sup>42</sup> I will develop this theme further in my *Représentation de la noblesse en Flandre au XVe siècle*, in : J. PAVIOT, J. VERGER (eds.), *Mélanges Philippe Contamine*, Paris, 2000.

successive dukes, as did his father-in-law and Philip himself. This might lead to the supposition that he belonged to the monarchical party during that period of tensions and open revolt<sup>43</sup>. It will be possible to make such linkages in a systematic way as soon as we will have at our disposal prosopographies of the duke's officials and councillors<sup>44</sup>. It seems highly unlikely, however, that the share of prince's officials among the Flemish representatives would ever raise up to the 63 % counted in the French States General or the hundreds of royal appointees among the Members of the English Parliament. The numbers of deputies involved in the representative systems in the Low Countries simply made its control much harder than in the neighbouring monarchies. This may well offer a fundamental explanation for its continued independent attitude towards the government, culminating in its leading role during the Revolt against King Philip II.

The database we had the pleasure to present here as the achievement of a vast research Walter Prevenier started and encouraged, will hopefully add and unlock additional information which will allow a deeper insight in the reality of representation in fifteenth-century Flanders. The few quantifications we presented here certainly do not exhaust the possibilities to exploit these data from various questionnaires. We simply hope to have pointed to some possibilities they do offer for various approaches of the Flemish political elite.

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<sup>43</sup> J. BUNTINX, *Filips Wielant*, in : *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek*, 5, Brussels, 1972, col. 1009-1019 ; J. MONBALLYU (ed.), *Filips Wielant. Verzameld Werk I : Corte instructie in materie criminele*, Brussels, 1995, p. 7-20. Compare with J. VAN ROMPAEY, *De Grote Raad van de hertogen van Boergondië en het Parlement van Mechelen*, Brussels, 1973, index sub Kethulle and Wielant. The Utenhove family is another example : BOONE, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>44</sup> Mr. Jan Dumolyn is presently preparing this work for a PhD thesis at Ghent University.