Lobbying in Company: Mechanisms of political decision-making and economic interests in the history of Dutch Brazil, 1621-1656

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4. PETITIONING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

For Brazil, the late 1630s can best be characterized as a calm and relatively prosperous period. The issue of free trade had been mostly settled and under the government of Johan Maurits, the WIC succeeded in expanding its territory. Things changed in 1640 when Portugal declared independence from the Spanish King and João IV, Duke of Braganza, claimed the Crown of Portugal. This meant that the conquest of Portuguese colonial claims could no longer be justified as part of the war against the Spanish King. Moreover, now that Portugal was in a war with Spain as well, Portugal could be considered an ally in the fight against the Habsburg hereditary enemy. Indeed, in 1641, the Dutch Republic and the King of Portugal signed the Treaty of The Hague. Even though this truce officially had a global ambition, the hostilities between the Portuguese and the VOC in India and the WIC in the Atlantic continued. The Treaty of The Hague, thus, had a much more European scope than originally envisioned. The truce meant, however, that when Portuguese plantation owners revolted against the Dutch rule in Brazil in the spring of 1645, the Portuguese King officially did not support and certainly did not claim responsibility for the revolt.[522]

Official reports from Brazil that a revolt had broken out took about sixty days to arrive in Zealand and rumors about the uprising started filtering into the public sphere. The first rumors made it into the Amsterdam newspapers of Broer Jansz and Jan van Hilten on 2 September 1645, just three days after the news had arrived in Zealand.[523] Since the WIC chamber of Zealand was hosting the meeting of the Board of Directors, it was their responsibility to send out an invitation and list of agenda items to be discussed. Already on 11 August they announced a meeting for that same 2 September, but as several delegates arrived late the meeting did not start until 9 September. Three Sephardic Jews living in Amsterdam, Abraham Erude, Joseph Acosta, and Jeronimo Nunes, arrived in Middelburg on the 14th to present a petition requesting the continuation of the export of sugar and the protection of the colony in Brazil. The Board of Directors responded that they encouraged

[522] C. van de Haar, *De diplomatieke betrekkingen tussen de Republiek en Portugal, 1640-1661* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1961); Klooster, *The Dutch moment*, 77-81.
[523] M. van Groesen, *Amsterdam's Atlantic: Print Culture and the making of Dutch Brazil* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 128-129.

the merchants to voice their concerns to the States General and the City Council of Amsterdam.[524] The three merchants indeed would address their concerns to the City Council, who would forward their concerns to the States General. The three Sephardic merchants did not stand alone, they formed an alliance with other Amsterdam merchants for this endeavor. They found no less than 89 other, interested, Amsterdammers to co-sign a petition for a rescue mission to Brazil; a perfect example of outside lobbying through petitions. In order to properly understand the context of this petition it is important to discuss in detail the definition of public opinion, public sphere, and the historiography on group petitions.

The interaction between the public sphere and petitions is studied in this chapter through petitions with multiple signatures. Signatures on petitions underwent a profound change in the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century as petitions with multiple signatures increased in popularity. All the petitions in the 'petition affairs' (*Liassen Requesten*) and 'West Indian affairs' of the States General until 1652 have been studied in combination with other affairs (*Liassen*). Moreover, the archives of the Burgomasters of Amsterdam have been consulted for additional evidence of petitions with a high number of signatures. Not all petitions have survived from this period. Apart from entire years that are lost, some specific petitions may have been lost over time as well. In a normal situation, the addressee would write an apostil with a decision on the request and hand back the petition to the suppliant. This means that a large percentage of the petitions would not survive in the archive. However, in cases when there were multiple suppliants it would not be possible to return the petition to one suppliant. In these instances, for example with a request for a patent, the States General would make a new, formal, printed decision and hand that to the suppliants.[525] The original petition would remain with the States General. This means that if there were petitions with one or more signatures, these should be retrievable in the archives. Moreover, since the primary interest of this thesis is the influence of petitions on *political* lobbying (i.e. requesting action or regulation by a political body for which there was no need to hand back the petition with an apostil) these should still be in the archives. In other words, it is highly likely that the archives have an over representation of petitions that requested political action with multiple signatures.

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[524] Bick, "Governing the Free Sea," 77.

[525] A copy of such a printed patent (as evidence in another petition) can be found NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv.nr. *7478*, 09-Oct-1618, Petition of the kassawerckers.

The Petition of Nobles (*Smeekschrift der Edelen*) is probably the most famous instance of a group petition in Dutch history. On 5 April 1566, two to three hundred noblemen marched into the palace of Margaret of Parma, the governess of the Low Countries, to present a petition requesting the abolition of the anti-heresy legislation. The noblemen that presented this petition later became known as the Compromise of Nobles (*Eedverbond der Edelen*). The petition included an implicit threat of violence in case the demand was not met. Thus, the governess saw no other option than to give in and to postpone further anti-heresy edicts awaiting a final decision from King Philip II.[526] According to a history of the Reformation from 1671, Hendrik van Brederode, the leader of the Compromise of Nobles, triumphantly travelled through Holland in an attempt to acquire signatures for the petition after it had already been presented to Margaret and included an apostil with her answer. 'In Amsterdam, [van Brederode] summoned a large group of burghers in his inn, and they committed themselves to the common freedom, and to sign the Compromise'. [527] A pamphlet further claimed that 'in Brabant alone 40,000 people were willing to sign the petition'.[528] Nevertheless, the original copy of the petition contains no signatures meaning that a group petition in this period did not necessarily have signatures.[529] Perhaps individuals felt uncomfortable signing a petition? One of the individuals present there in that inn in Amsterdam in July 1566, Floris Rodenburg, allegedly 'had scruples about putting his signature on this chapter', even though he supported the cause.[530] However it may be, the practice of signing group petitions changed during the first half of the seventeenth century, transforming the public sphere.

[526] H.F.K. van Nierop, "A beggars' banquet: the Compromise of the Nobility and the politics of inversion," *European History Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1991): 419; Israel, *De Republiek*, 154-156.
[527] G. Brandts, *Historie der Reformatie, en andre kerkelyke geschiedenissen, in en ontrent de Nederlanden, Tweede Druk, Vol. I*, vol. I (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz Hendrik en Dirk Boom, 1677), 318-319; Israel, *De Republiek*, 157.
[528] Deen, *Publiek debat en propaganda*, 69.
[529] NL-HaNA, 1.11.01.01, inv. nr. *1925*.
[530] Brandts, *Historie der Reformatie, Vol. I*, I, 319.

4.1. *WHAT IS THE PUBLIC SPHERE?*

After the publication of the English translation of Habermas's *Habilitationsschrift* 'The structural transformation of the Public Sphere' in 1989, the debate about the origin and characteristics of the public sphere really took off in the Anglophone academic world.[531] Habermas had argued that in the eighteenth century in the bourgeois circles of the London coffee houses, French salons, and German table societies, a new type of public discourse emerged that brought discussions about politics from the private political center to the bourgeois public periphery. It is important to note that the distinction between center and periphery is here strictly non-geographical and that center refers to the political center of decision-making. These debates on political and economic issues later provided the necessary soil for democracy and civil society.

There are, according to Habermas, four key features that define the bourgeois public sphere. Firstly, a disregard of the status of debaters; someone's opinion is not truer because he is a knight or a wealthy merchant. Secondly, the notion that decisions should be based on rational argument. Thirdly, the arenas of discussion were not limited to a place; both in a literal as an abstract sense of the word. Whereas previously the Church or the State held a monopoly of discussion, the public sphere is defined by the opening of new areas of discussion. And fourthly, these places were inclusive in principle. This means that in theory everyone could acquire access to the place of debate and address an auditorium.[532] 'The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason'.[533] Habermas's arguments for the origin of the bourgeois public sphere emphasize the hermeneutic relationship between individuals and institutions; the public sphere can only exist through the recursive complex set of actions by individuals.

The level of abstractness in the words of Habermas has prompted other authors to attempt to explain how they use Habermas's concept of a public sphere. A considerable number of authors doe not dissociate between 'a' public sphere and the 'bourgeois' public sphere as Habermas's bourgeois public sphere has become synonymous with the public sphere. In the case of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, with its high rate of

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[531] J. Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
[532] C. Calhoun, *Habermas and the public sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 12-13.
[533] Habermas, *The structural transformation*, 27.

urbanization and absence of a ruling monarch, the participation in public discussion became 'bourgeois' (not-noble) very quickly. Therefore, in this chapter, the public sphere is defined as an inclusive publically accessible space where (particularly) political affairs were discussed.

In the Middle Ages, the public side of political affairs had taken the form of 'representative publicity'. The sociologist Craig Calhoun explains that in the Middle Ages publicness had been a status attribute. Representative publicity by the political center, for example lords, was not for the people, but before the people. Through presentation via rituals and symbols, they presented themselves to their subjects, who were not participating in politics but a passive auditorium for the glory of the lords.[534] The Swedish historian Mats Hallenberg concludes that 'there was no distinct political community apart from the king and his court', but that over time there arose an impersonal place without clear authority where politics were discussed; the public sphere.[535] Petitions have been around since at least the Middle Ages, and in themselves, they are not a manifestation of the public sphere; the supplication of a petition reinforces the position of the ruler through a ritual and does not invite the public to participate. However, the process of acquiring signatures on a petition is a testimony of something else. Group signatures on a political petition – even when the number of signatures remained limited – shows public deliberation of political issues. Therefore, a petition with multiple signatures becomes that voice of public opinion on a particular issue.

4.2. THE DUTCH PUBLIC SPHERE

Habermas's thesis has been under much scrutiny; for the bourgeois character of the public sphere, for the periodization in the eighteenth century, and for the localization in England. The last two can probably best be explained through the notion that historians are eager to attribute the emergence or 'invention' of the public sphere to the time, place, and group that

[534] Calhoun, *Habermas and the public sphere*, 7-8; Habermas, *The structural transformation*.
[535] M. Hallenberg, "For the wealth of the realm: the transformation of the public sphere in Swedish politics, c. 1434-1650," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37, no. 5 (2012): 559; Calhoun, *Habermas and the public sphere*, 8.

they are studying as this gives it meaning.[536] In the case of the Dutch Republic the debate regarding the existence or emergence of the public sphere has been focused primarily on printed works.[537] The late sixteenth and seventeenth century Low Countries had a flourishing pamphleteering culture, and a digital database made research on this topic and medium more convenient in the last few years.[538] As a consequence, the past decade witnessed many dissertation-based monographs on pamphlets and the public sphere.

Femke Deen's dissertation deals with public debate and propaganda in Amsterdam in the early years of the Dutch Revolt. She tries to avoid the well-debated issues of the public sphere by describing her study as one of public debate. At the same time, however, she acknowledges that a study of media and opinion cannot ignore Habermas's theory. Her main argument for favoring the use of public debate over the public sphere is that it has been widely acknowledged that the model of a public sphere differs so much from historical reality that it is discredited as a "complete" model for the early modern period.[539] Other dissertations, such as those of Roeland Harms and Michel Reinders, also acknowledge the issues of the public sphere and the Habermasian model but arrive at a different conclusion than Deen. Harms argues that there was indeed a public opinion (what is expressed in the public sphere) in pamphlets.[540] Reinders even specifically points to 1672 when, according to him, for the first time there was a claim to a general and anonymous audience in the public sphere.[541] Helmer Helmers convincingly argues in favor of, what he calls, an Anglo-Scoto-Dutch public sphere between 1639 and 1660. This transnational public sphere functioned as a place for international discursive communities, such as 'Republicans', that were contesting

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[536] J. Pollmann and A. Spicer, "Introduction," in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands. Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, ed. J. Pollman and A. Spicer (Leiden: Brill, 2007); A. Pettegree, "Provincial news communication in sixteenth-century Europe," in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands. Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, ed. J. Pollman and A. Spicer (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1-3.

[537] Harline, *Pamphlets, printing and political culture*; J. Bloemendal and A. van Dixhoorn, "'De scharpheit van een gladde tong'. Literaire teksten en publieke opinievorming in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden," *BMGN* 125, no. 1 (2010).

[538] http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/dutch-pamphlets-online

[539] Deen, *Publiek debat en propaganda*, 8-11.

[540] R. Harms, *Pamfletten en publieke opinie: massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 254-255.

[541] M.H.P. Reinders, "Printed Pandemonium: The Power of the Public and the Market for Popular Political Publications in the Early Modern Dutch Republic" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Erasmus University, 2008), 101. The book with the title *Printed Pandemonium: Popular print and politics in the Netherlands 1650-1672* was published by Brill in 2013.

for a specific auditorium; Dutch, English, or Scottish. However, rather than the Habermasian model, he made use of a Hauserian model that rejects a universal public sphere and favors a meaningful production specific to a particular issue and audience.[542] Hauser calls this 'a plurality of spheres within the Public Sphere'.[543] The main argument for this plurality of spheres lies in the shortcomings in Habermas's theory regarding the failure to reach consensus. This dissensus, Hauser argues, is not always the result of distortion, but can also be the result of difference; people cooperate on one issue, while disagreeing on another.[544] 'Invoking audience-specific standards that can accommodate conflicting interests suggests that good reasons are the operative basis for actual consensus forged through the (…) myriad situated meanings of a public sphere'.[545] However, since a petition with multiple signatures is already the outcome of the public sphere instead of the public sphere itself, it is for this chapter important to be aware of multiple public spheres, but at the same time not necessary to dissociate them.

This chapter does not seek to prove the existence or the invention of a public sphere earlier than what other scholars have argued. Nor does it have the ambition to shift the focus away from England and towards the Dutch Republic. Rather, it takes the existence of public spheres in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic for granted and it describes the transformation in the use of petitions, arguing that this change kept abreast with the changes in the public sphere. In other words, it uses the Habermasian theory to account for a transformation in the use of petitions. Sociologist David Zaret provides a very good and concise overview of the different distinctions that have been made to challenge Habermas's explanation for the emergence of the public sphere. He concludes that every different social class has been given agency, just like every conceivable aspect of Protestantism and capitalism has been used to explain the origins of dialectic discourse. That is why he rather

[542] Helmers, "The Royalist Republic," 26-28. The book with the same title was published with Cambridge UP in 2015.
[543] G.A. Hauser, *Vernacular voices: The rhetoric of publics and public spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 55.
[544] Ibid., 54.
[545] Ibid., 56.

focusses on the changes in communicative practices for the discourse in the public sphere, thus attributing much influence to the role of printing for the scope and use of petitions.[546]

4.2.1. Pamphlets and Dutch Brazil

Before delving into petitions though, it is important to touch upon the relation between Dutch Brazil and pamphlets as well. Dutch Brazil was a 'hot topic' and the WIC tried to control the narratives of its Atlantic endeavors. In particular around the issue of free trade the debate sparked to unprecedented heights.[547] 'I pray', an anonymous pamphleteer wrote in 1636, 'that other distinguished individuals, who could have written this ten times better than I did, will not be suspected of being the author, but that rather my reasons and arguments will be weight instead of carefully scrutinizing this author'.[548] From experience, the author knew what was going to happen after he had started the public discourse on free trade to Brazil. Pamphlets criticizing his view would try to harm his name or discredit his authority. Instead, the author wanted a productive discussion stemming from his arguments; he wanted a public discourse on free trade to Brazil. Some pamphlets went directly head-to-head, forming a dialogue with each other.[549] Many of the pamphlets contributed to public debate through economic, legal, and moral arguments. There is one pamphlet, however, that deserves more attention than it has received so far.

The debate on free trade was a complicated one – so much has become clear in chapter 3. This posed difficulties for authors of pamphlets that wanted to contribute to this issue. How much does the average member of the audience understand of the details of the free trade debate? One pamphlet succeeded particularly well in making a translation from the political

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[546] D. Zaret, "Petitions and the "invention" of public opinion in the English Revolution," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (1996): 1501-1502. The primacy of print for this practice was later already challenged for England, see: P. Lake and S. Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 277; P. Hammer, "The smiling crocodile: the earl of Essex and late Elizabethan 'popularity'," in *The politics of the public sphere in early modern England*, ed. P. Lake and S. Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 112.

[547] Groesen, *Amsterdam's Atlantic*, 117-123; Tol, "Monopolizing arguments."

[548] 'Bidde derhalven, datmen andere apparente persoonen, die het thienmaels beter als wel ick hadden konnen doen, buyten verdacht wille houden, ende vele eer ende meer die redenen ende *argumenta* te ponderen als curieuschicken naer den autheur te vorschen', Knuttel 4425: Anonymous, *Reden van dat die West-Indische Compagnie oft handelinge niet alleen profijtelijck maer oock noodtsaeckelijck is tot behoudenisse van onsen staet* (np: np, 1636).6.

[549] Kn. 7002: Vertoogh, over den toestant; Knuttel 4515: Anonymous, *Examen over het vertoogh teghen het onghefondeerde ende schadelijck sluyten der vryen handel in Brasil door een ondersoecker der waerheydt* (np: np, 1637).

arena to the public arena by comparing the debate to a commonly known board game (*verkeersspel*).[550] The main player [the Company] found a loaded opponent [the King of Spain] who quickly lost much of his gold [captaincies in Brazil]. The main player was joined by people on the left and right side. The people on the right side [investors] started participating in the game, gaining some of the profits that should have gone to the main player. The author posited that allowing free trade for the investors who themselves can trade is not even that bad, but 'the worst is (…) that most of the players on the left [non-merchants] (which includes the lame [widows], the cripple [orphans] and the blind [individuals with no knowledge of trading that trusted the WIC directors]) are watching but are getting nothing'.[551] In other words, it is unfair that the WIC investors that did not have the means to enjoy the privileges of free trade, got cheated out of their profits. The author of this pamphlet clearly tried to appeal to the outrage of the readership over the wrong that was done to these defenseless investors. This was not an argument that was supposed to convince decision-makers; it was an argument designed to increase popular support for a cause.

This pamphlet succeeded in translating complicated political issues into an example that could work on the streets and as such contributed to the public sphere. Making this translation was important. As multiple editions of this same pamphlet circulated it can be expected that this particular pamphlet was popular and found broad readership. In Brazil, meanwhile, there was no printer. Even though plans for finding a printer 'for lowest possible costs' were discussed in September 1645, seemingly nothing came of this.[552] As a result, the only pamphlet from Brazil is a manuscript pamphlet that attempted to convince French soldiers in WIC service to desert.[553]

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[550] Knuttel 4582: Anonymous, *Het spel van Brasilien vergheleken by een goedt verkeer-spel (*np: np, 1638); Knuttel 4583: Anonymous, *Het spel van Brasilien, vergeleecken bij een goed verkeer-spel (*np: np, 1638).
[551] 'Maer het swaerste is noch (…) so staen de meeste part van de Maets aen de linker zijde [niet negotianten] (daer onder Lamme [weduwen], Creupele [weesen] en Blinden [blindt in saken van Negotie, sich simpelijck op de Bewindthebbers vertrouwende] ende kijcken toe en krijghen niet', Kn. 4582: Spel van Brasilien, 5.
[552] NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. *26*, fol 110r.
[553] NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. *60*, [scan 1].

4.3. *Petitions and Public Opinion*

Petitions are an extraordinary source to study early modern exchanges between the political center and the political periphery. The center here refers to the political mandataries, and the periphery to those outside the realm of decision-makers. Of course, petitions were not the only medium for political messages in this period. As mentioned before, pamphlets were a principal device, but also sermons, news, or political ordinances. Daniel Bellingradt, in a case study of Cologne and Hamburg, argued that especially in a city, but also on a larger scale, 'media impulses were used to mobilize public opinion for both political and private purposes'.[554] What makes the petition stand out as a medium is that it is that it moves from the periphery to the center rather than the other way around.[555] Furthermore, petitions are an ideal source to study the political periphery because individuals that are closer to the political center would be more inclined to use other means to request something such as personal relations. This is especially true for the early modern period when patronage and a system of clients were still important for politics.[556] That means that if a topic is discussed in a petition it was *de facto* discussed outside the political center; even if the petitioners had access to the center of the political arena. What makes the Dutch Republic stand out in this period compared to England is that it was no offence in the Low Countries to talk about politics outside the arena of parliament like it was for MPs in England.[557]

Femke Deen identified three types of political exchanges between the center and the periphery that played an important role for the public debate in the early years of the Dutch Revolt. The first is public proclamations. This includes statutes, placards, and letters from prominent individuals that were read out loud in public places. These proclamations had a strong ritualized character that included tolling bells or trumpets that preceded the proclamation. In some cases, these proclamations were even included in religious sermons to expand the scope of a message.[558] The rituals and symbols that were used in proclamations

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[554] D. Bellingradt, "The Early Modern city as a resonating box: media, public opinion, and the urban space of the Holy Roman Empire, Cologne and Hamburg ca. 1700," *Journal of Early Modern History* 16, no. 3 (2012): 205.
[555] Zaret, "Petitions and the "invention" of public opinion," 1498.
[556] Janssen, *Creaturen van de Macht*. See also chapter 5.
[557] Lake and Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 276; Zaret, "Petitions and the "invention" of public opinion," 1508.
[558] Deen, *Publiek debat en propaganda*, 59-63.

make it an excellent example of representative publicity in the period before the bourgeois public sphere.

The second type that Deen identifies are the copies of resolutions. Deen found a large collection of manuscript copies of resolutions in the inventories of earthly possessions of prominent Amsterdam individuals in archives. The resolutions originated not only in Amsterdam, but also other cities such as Antwerp. This leads her to conclude that there was most likely some sort of circulation of manuscript copies of political decisions within the Low Countries. Moreover, it is documented that the famous historian Lieuwe van Aitzema ran an illegal news service in the mid-seventeenth century for which he used clerks to make copies of political documents. Other instances have been found of manuscript copies of printed documents, and printed versions of previously circulated manuscript documents.[559] This circulation of resolutions allowed for a potential locus where politics, religion, and economy could be debated in a public sphere. This would confirm the idea put forward by Lake and Pincus that printing was not necessarily central to the public sphere.[560] However, the circulation of manuscript separates was most likely confined to a small and closed off administrative elite. That would mean that this is not a public sphere as the elite is not inclusive in principle. The third type identified by Deen are petitions.

A study of the use, function, transformation, and social implications of petitions in the seventeenth century in the Low Countries is long overdue - not only for a better understanding of the situation in the Republic, but also to allow a comparison to other countries. The English are a case in point.[561] In order to allow for this dialogue, this chapter will primarily engage with David Zaret's article from 1996. Firstly, because it is one of the few articles dealing with petitions in the early modern period, and secondly because Zaret argues for the importance of print for the emergence of a public sphere in England, which my study shows that at least for the Dutch Republic is not true. As a starting point this chapter focusses on the practices of petitioning, especially the canvassing of a petition, and the relation between the development of the petition and the public sphere. In his article, Zaret writes: 'Do petitions have tangible links to opinions held at the individual level, to

[559] Ibid., 63-66.
[560] Lake and Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 277.
[561] Fletcher, *English civil war*, 191-227; Zaret, "Petitions and the "invention" of public opinion."; Pettigrew, "Free to Enslave," 12-15.

discussion and debate in civil society, or are they merely literary productions with no discernible relation to a public sphere?'. This requires a study of the practices of signing and framing a petition.[562] Zaret argues that there was indeed a link between petitions and the public opinion. Moreover, it was a change in communicative practices (the use of print) that allowed for a change in scope and content of petitions, thus transforming the use and the relation to the public sphere. However, this chapter posits that not communicative practices, but rather the use of signatures, changed the relation between petitions and the public sphere. However, first it is important to assess the relevance of print for petitioning in the Dutch Republic.

4.3.1. Printed petitions

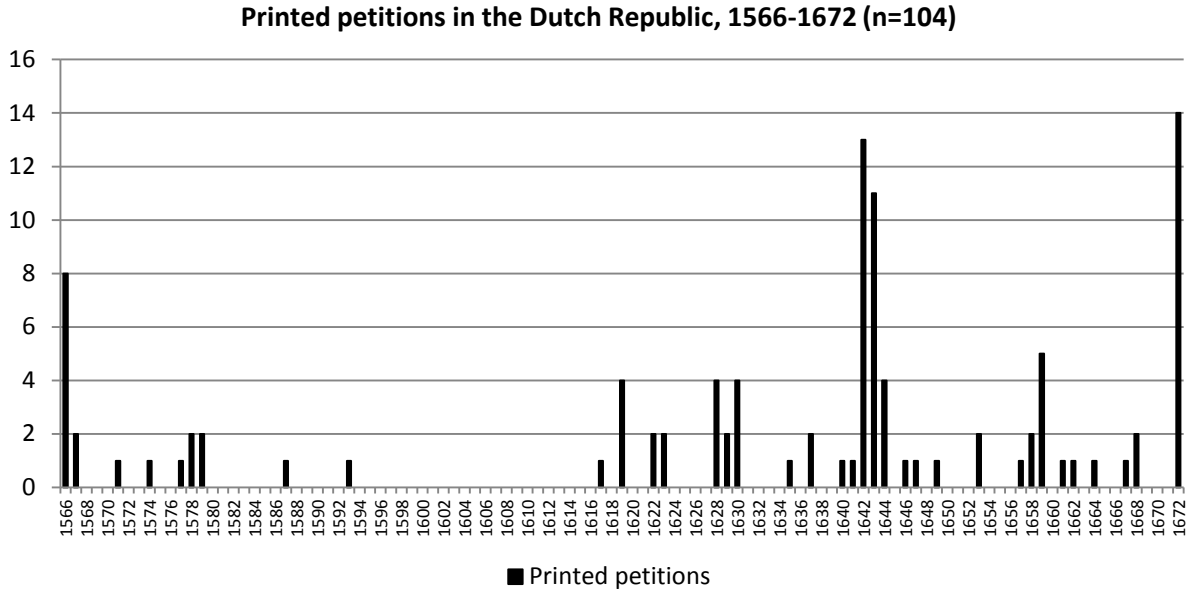
The petition presented by the Compromise of Nobles on 5 April 1566 was afterwards manually copied sevenfold, and divided over seven prominent noblemen. Each one of them was charged with the task of rallying support in the form of signatures, each in their own provinces. The individuals made primarily use of their own family and client networks. Brederode, the main leader of the Compromise, was in charge of Holland and Friesland, but he was not very successful in Friesland, despite the use of the networks of the gentry with Frisian wives. The low number of signatures in the provinces of Zealand and Groningen may also be due to the lack of familial and cliental ties between the members of the Compromise and the local elites or a disagreement with the contents of the petition.[563] Another tactic the leaders of the Compromise used to increase or show support was the printing of the petition. This was an unprecedented practice for the sixteenth century, and was not rivaled at this scale in other European countries or even in the Dutch Republic until after the 1620s.

Printed petitions became so recognizable and popular that it became a genre for pamphlets, as becomes clear from the imitation of a petition sent allegedly by the wife and children of a famous politician, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who was in a longtime conflict

[562] Zaret, "Petitions and the "invention" of public opinion," 1521.
[563] A. Duke, "Dissident propaganda and political organization at the outbreak of the Revolt of the Netherlands," in *Reformation, revolt and civil war in France and the Netherlands, 1555-1585*, ed. P. Benedict, et al. (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1999), 120.

with the Stadtholder.[564] Even though print existed and petitions were printed, the archives of the States General do not contain any printed petitions until the 1670s.[565]

Graph 4-1: The number of printed petitions in the Dutch Republic. Based on queries for 'Reques*', 'Rekes*', and 'Petiti*' in the TEMPO database.[566]



Source: TEMPO database

Back in 1566 and 1567 the printed petitions were a novelty. That the Compromise of Nobles understood the value of a printed version of a manuscript is demonstrated through their use. The petition was translated into French and German, and printed in Brussels, Antwerp, and Vianen. The latter location might seem odd, but Vianen was part of the area where van Brederode had authority as a nobleman.[567] Other editions were printed in Emden amongst other places, and smuggled into the Low Countries. Nicolas du Bar, one of the financial backers of on the most important pamphlets in 1566, ordered 2,000 copies in Dutch, and

[564] Knuttel 2880: Anonymous, *Request, aen de eedele grootmoghende heeren, mijn heeren de Staten van Hollant ende West-Vrieslandt. Van weghen de huysvrouwe ende kinderen vanden heere van Olden-Barnevelt* (np, np, 1619).

[565] See chapter 7.

[566] Other spellings such as 'Rekwe*', have been omitted because they did not return any results. Results from other words such as 'Remonstranti*' have been omitted because even though it returns too many hits, the style of a 'Remonstrance' differs from that of a petition or request as it a more general term. It should be noted that the enormous peak in the 1640s is strongly related to the English civil war and contains various translated and original copies of English printed petitions.

[567] Deen, *Publiek debat en propaganda*, 58.

1,500 copies in French from the printer Gilles le Clercq.[568] Evidence from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century indicates that printruns of 1,000 to 1,250 copies were common. These numbers give an idea of the scale of the at least nine different versions of the petition that circulated in print.[569] We should bear in mind that reading was a social activity that people did together, and after one had finished reading the pamphlet was often passed to other people.[570]

Despite this engagement with a public arena, 1566 cannot be deemed the year of the emergence or invention of a public sphere in the Low Countries. Even though the *Smeekschrift* shows clear signs of popular participation in political decision-making, the contributions to the debates were limited to the members of the nobility. The discourse arena was, therefore, not inclusive in principle. Moreover, the delivery of the petition in a procession through Brussels by hundreds of noblemen is a clear example of the display of status. This procession was not for the people, but before the people. When this status was discredited by the *seigneur* of Berlaymont by calling them beggars (g*ueux*), referring to their status as lower nobility, the Compromise appropriated this new nickname during a celebratory dinner at the palace of the Count of Culemborg.[571] This happened again in an arena where the ordinary people had neither influence in the discussion, nor access to the arena. The Compromise of Nobles did claim to voice a common concern and function as a broker between 'ordinary people' and a sovereign. At best, however, the Compromise was the gateway between the periphery and the political center. Furthermore, even though van Brederode and other prominent leaders of the Compromise travelled around the country attempting to acquire signatures, they again limited the signatures to members of the nobility, and they did not provide the petition with signatures.

The first time the States General received a petition that was printed was much later, in 1670, when Jacobus Scheltus, a printer, submitted his petition in print.[572] How innovative this practice was becomes clear when we consider that a year before, in 1669, Henricus Hondius, another printer, petitioned for the job of official state printer. Not even his petition was

[568] Duke, "Dissident propaganda," 123-124.
[569] Harline, *Pamphlets, printing and political culture*, 21.
[570] Groesen, *Amsterdam's Atlantic*, 50.
[571] Nierop, "A beggars' banquet," 419-421.
[572] NL-HaNA, 3.01.04.01 inv. nr. *1371/II*, [1670?] Petition by Jacobus Scheltus.

printed, but in manuscript.[573] As will be argued below, the practice of putting multiple signatures on petitions thus occurred well before the introduction of printed petitions, and the printing of petitions therefore did not alter the process of petitioning. However, the printing of a petition after it had been delivered to the States General (or another body) copied its practice from the Compromise of Nobles. This could still increase readership and knowledge while also demonstrating popular support. The development of this practice can be seen in Graph 4-1.

4.4. *MULTIPLE SIGNATURES ON PETITIONS*

The first places to witness the changing practice of putting signatures on petitions were cities. For obvious reasons; it was easier to organize a petition drive in just one city as compared to a provincial or 'national' level. The first time this happened was in July 1608 in Amsterdam.[574] The petition was signed by no less than sixty merchants and requested the abolition of the prohibition of the use of cashiers (*kassiers*) for financial transactions.[575] This prohibition had been proposed by the States General because cashiers had diluted the gold and silver level in coins (*opwisselen*) to as low as nine per cent, resulting in a loss of faith in the banking system. Moreover, it had occurred more than once that a cashier had no available cash to provide when a merchant requested payment from his account. The cashier would then provide a bank draft (*assignatie*) for another cashier.[576] A strongly worded prohibition had been instated on 12 July 1608 by the Amsterdam City Council. While the Amsterdam merchants acknowledged that the cashiers had created problems, they argued that the service of agents was unavoidable for a smoothly operating trading system, in particular for large transactions. This petition successfully influenced the regulations, as on 29 July the City Council softened three crucial passages.[577] One of the signers of the petition was Dirk van Os, who was one of the men responsible for the erection of the Bank of Amsterdam (*Amsterdamse Wisselbank*) less than half a year later, where money transactions were guaranteed.

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[573] NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *7490,* 20-Sep-1669 petition by Henricus Hondius.
[574] Or at least, the first time I could find.
[575] J.G. van Dillen, ed. *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der wisselbanken (Amsterdam, Middelburg, Delft, Rotterdam)* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1925), Vol. I, 14-16.
[576] Ibid., Vol. I, 1, 12.
[577] Ibid., Vol. I, 16-17.

On 23 July 1628, the same City Council received a petition with even more signatures; around 250 people came together to sign. These Remonstrants requested to practice their own religion in a new church.[578] Even though they would initially not be granted this right, the City Council turned a blind eye towards their conventicle after January 1630.[579] The petition stands out through its neat columns on the back page. The petitioners had divided the back into three equal columns where the signers could put their names (see Figure 4-1)

Figure 4-1: Front and back of the petition requesting a place for the Remonstrant's religion with around 250 signatures

Source: NL-AsdSAA, 612 Archief van de Remonstrantse Gemeente, inv. nr. *290*, Stuk bevattende handtekeningen van remonstrantsgezinden (…)

What the petitions for cashier regulations and religious tolerance have in common is not only their multitude of signatures, but also that the groups are quite uniform. This does not mean that they contain the same names. In fact, no signer appeared on both petitions even though both contain a Coymans (Jaspar and Balthazar on the bank petition, and Jeronimo on the religious petition) and the religious petition contains numerous powerful merchants including Willem Usselincx, Joan Huydecoper, and Dirk and Jan Hasselaer that could have

[578] Stadsarchief Amsterdam (NL-AsdSAA), 612 "Archief van de Remonstrantse Gemeente", inv. nr. *290*, "Stuk bevattende handtekeningen van remonstrantsgezinden teradhesie aan het voornemen om enigen hunner een adres tot 'exercitie van religie, inkomen ende relaxatie van predikanten' te laten richten aan burgemeesters en regeerders van Amsterdam. (1628)".

[579] H.C. Diferee, *Drie eeuwen kerkgeschiedenis* (Amsterdam: N.V. van Holkema & Warendorf's uitgevers-mij, 1930), 97-98.

an interest in cashier regulations. Uniform in this context means that the petitioners were similar beyond their shared interest. The Remonstrants obviously shared their religion and the petition on the cashiers has one merchant group that is suspiciously absent from the petition: the Portuguese Jews. The absence of the Sephardim makes the group much more homogenous. However, in the case of the Remonstrants it should be noted that the petition included several women. Interestingly enough, they are grouped together in small sets on the signature list. Even more interesting is that each and every one of them identified themselves by being the widow of someone. Grietgen Dirks, widow of Jan Hectorsz Chanu and Haesjen Hendricks, widow of Hendrick Hooft are just two examples. Other than this, the two early examples of group petitions are rather exclusive; the groups are homogenous beyond their shared interest.

4.4.1. Group petitions to the States General

The oldest dated petition with multiple signatures to the States General (or its predecessors) is from 6 June 1571. It is directed at the Duke of Alva, the successor of Margaret of Parma as the governor of the Low Countries and it contains a request written in French by members of the abbey of Mont-Saint-Éloi to appoint a new abbot because the former one had died.[580] It is signed by six individuals. Six is of course still a limited number, and these six were all members of the same abbey who did not need to go around town soliciting more signatures; the group was exclusive based on their position as members of the abbey.

In 1601 (the northern provinces of the Low Countries had claimed independence from the king of Spain through the Act of Abjuration in the meantime), it was still not common practice to obtain signatures from multiple individuals in order to make claims for a larger body of people. One petition was submitted in this year on behalf of 'the common merchants of Amsterdam, and some other in the province of Holland, that are trading to Königsberg'.[581] Even though this makes a claim to some sort of larger interest, it is extremely vague, and it is very well possible that the author of this petition used this vagueness as a way of portraying a larger shared interest than there actually was; who were 'the common (*gemeene*) merchants'? The text is never specific on who these merchants actually were or from which

[580] NL-HaNA, 1.01.01.03 inv. nr. *24*, 05-Jun-1571 petition from the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Éloi.
[581] 'Request voor die gemeene cooplieden van Amsterdam ende sommige andere van de lande van hollandt, trafficqueerende op conincxbergen'. NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *7474*, [No date], petition from common merchants.

cities they hailed. This is different in a petition from 1639. Here, eight merchants requested the States General to commission someone to estimate the value of their burned ships and cargo. Even though they do not individually sign this petition, each of the merchants is identified in the introduction of the petition: six names were from Rotterdam, one (Sijbrandt Jacobsz) from Amsterdam, and Gerrit Cortes from Schiedam.[582] It is interesting that these merchants succeeded in aligning their interest beyond their own city.

Even though this practice of identifying individuals in a petition by name became increasingly common over the years, it still happened that petitioners identified themselves as a group (i.e. merchants trading to Bordeaux), rather than a collection of individuals (i.e. Jan, Pier, Tjores, and Korneel). This suggests a non-linear development for the importance of corporations for advocating interest.[583] This becomes clear from another petition, also from 1639, by merchants complaining that their cargo aboard twelve small ships (*boeiers*) destined for Rouen was taken by Dunkirk privateers because there was insufficient convoy. Their cargo allegedly was worth over fifteen *tonnen* of gold or 1.5 million guilders. The suppliants identified themselves as 'common merchants trading to Rouen in France, all living in Amsterdam', instead of providing the names of the individuals involved.[584] In this case the merchants did not put any signatures on the petition. Apparently, identifying individuals was not necessary in certain cases of petitioning; a claim to petition on behalf of all merchants in Amsterdam to Rouen was sufficient to add credibility. It is also very well possible that the merchants trading to Rouen had a permanent representative delivering petitions on their behalf. This can be compared to the merchants trading on several Dutch rivers.[585]

After 1645, the practice of petitioning changed and it became more customary to put a signature on a petition. In 1652 for example, the States of Zealand recommended to the States General a request signed by twenty-three individuals. By this time, the Eighty Years' War

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[582] NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *7480*, [no date] petition from eight merchants.
[583] Compare M.R. Prak, "The Dutch Republic as a bourgeois society," *BMGN* 125, no. 2-3 (2010); M.R. Prak, "Corporate politics in the Low Countries: guilds as institutions, 14th to 18th centuries," in *Craft guilds in the early modern Low Countries: work, power and representation*, ed. M.R. Prak, et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
[584] 'gemeene cooplieden handelende op Rouaen in Vranckrijck, alle woonende tot Amsterdam' NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *7480*, 08-Oct-1639, petition from merchants trading to Rouen, all living in Amsterdam.
[585] See paragraph 1.1.3

between the Republic and Spain was over, but the Republic was now involved in a new war with England. The petitioners heard that on 27 June a Spanish treasure fleet of twenty-four ships and galleons had been sighted near the Cape of St. Vincent and was on its way back to Cadiz where ships from the Republic would transport some of the cargo, including silver, back to Holland and Zealand. The petitioners also knew that the Channel was empty of Dutch warships and full of English privateers eager to prize some of this cargo allegedly worth more than 150 *tonnen* of gold or 15 million guilders. If the English would indeed apprehend this cargo, the petitioners argued, this would lead to 'considerable damages and loss of inhabitants of these provinces'.[586] Thus, the petitioners requested that the States General equip 25 to 30 ships to protect the Dutch fleet. Among the signatures are those of individuals of considerable status such as Adriaen Lampsins and Nicolaes van der Merckt, who amongst other functions were directors of the East India Company (VOC). It is clear that the suppliants tried to convince the States General with a (rational) argument that appealed to a common wealth, or joint interest, which superseded the personal concerns of the petitioners. Moreover, in the introduction, the petitioners identify themselves as 'merchants, both trading to Spain as well as the ones interested in that'.[587] This leaves open a larger body of individuals that could support the cause, which is in principle inclusive. Furthermore, the way the petition is signed indicates that it was canvassed to different people. Each signature is put down with a different quill and different shade of ink. This would suggest that rather than all these people coming together in one room to draft this petition and then sign it, it seems most likely that the principal petitioner drafted it, and that it was then brought to different interested individuals for signing. After all, who goes around to meetings bringing his own quill and ink? This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the aforementioned Lampsins and van der Merckt did not sign closely together despite them being in the same place reasonably regularly as directors of the Zealand chamber of the VOC. Moreover, when comparing another list of signatures, for example a list of Jewish inhabitants in Amsterdam, it becomes apparent that these long lists of names are in the same shade of ink, thus indicating that here the ink and the paper had been kept together.[588]

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[586] 'merckelijke schade ende verliese der ingesetenen deser landen'. NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *7482*, no date [around June/July 1652] Petition by 23 individuals trading to Spain.

[587] 'coopluijden zoo trafficquerende op Spaingen als geinteresseerden bij dien'.

[588] NL-AsdSAA, 334, inv. nr. *19*, Escamoth A.

Furthermore, compare also Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4 and the description below of round robins, which were all signed in the same shade of ink.

By putting down a signature, these individuals indicated to the addressee of the petition that they agreed with the content. The text of the petition is neither tampered with, nor altered in any way after it was drafted. This leaves two options for the way it came into being. Either it was collectively put together by all the petitioners and agreed upon, which would indicate a discussion based on rational argument. Or, after it was drafted, it convinced the individuals that signed the petition through its content, which indicates the decision to sign the petition was based on rational argument. Lastly, the content of the petition deals with the foreign policy of the Dutch Republic. It requests the use of military action by the state. This indicates that state affairs, and state policy, were discussed in the public sphere. However, as is apparent from Renselaer's testimony in Chapter 3 it was very well possible that individuals could be pressured to express a certain opinion. Nevertheless, this does not change the function of the signature on paper as a public display of popular support.

It becomes clear that during the first half of the seventeenth century profound changes had taken place in the use of signatures on petitions. Considering that the request by the Compromise of Nobles had zero signatures at the moment of submission, and that the number of signatures had become more common since then (both at a city and a national level), it is safe to say that the process of acquiring petitions had influenced the public sphere. Canvassing a petition had become a new practice and it became a political tool in the hands of interest groups that attempted to lobby though. It had happened already in for example 1618 and 1625 that large groups of individuals submitting a request to the States General had put their signatures on the request. However, because of the nature of these requests (whose aim is the appointment of a certain individual as Consul because that would be beneficial to the traders) it is something that is not covered in this chapter. It seems that the individual who wanted to become the consul asked prominent others to 'sponsor' his campaign.[589] This makes it more a list of patrons for a client than the manifestation of

[589] This part of job seeking is not covered in Paul Knevel's monography on bureaucrats. He focusses more on patronage networks for getting a job. See: Knevel, *Het Haagse bureau*.

something resembling a public sphere; these two requests symbolized the interest of the aspiring consul rather than that of a general public.

4.5. *MANAGING INFORMATION OF THE REVOLT IN BRAZIL*

The group petition related to the WIC colony in Brazil was, thus, not the first instance of group petitioning. However, aside from the Remonstrants' petition of 1628 that had around 250 signatures, it certainly stands out because of the number of signatures. The petition was read by the States General on 2 October 1645. By then, the news of the uprising in Brazil had been circulating for exactly one month. During that month, the WIC had already started to influence the decision of the States General and was attempting to control the information and narrative of the events in Brazil.

The meeting of the *Heeren XIX* had started on 9 September by sifting through the information that came from Brazil. The representatives of the States General at this meeting, led by Johan van der Camer, had been instructed by the committee on West Indian Affairs to determine 'how the conquests in Brazil should be restored' and how to convince the provinces to pay for the necessary subsidies.[590] Six of the directors in the meeting were selected to form a special committee to make a decision.[591] The first step was to quickly dispatch a ship with provisions and the dearly needed ammunitions. The next step was to formulate a strategy on how the events in Brazil should be discussed to the States General and thus 'set' the debate. If the dominant narrative would become that the colony was in crisis due to the negligence of the *Heeren XIX* it would be much harder to convince anyone, in particular the provinces, that someone other than the WIC pay for the security of the colony. The committee drafted a budget of 725,925 guilders for the military relief of Brazil and a report that emphasized the empty coffers of the Company due to the expensive conquest of Brazil. It was, of course, also important to emphasize the great prestige the colony presented to the Dutch Republic and the enormous riches to be gained. The next step in the lobbying campaign was to reach out to the Provincial States of the two richest

[590] Quoted in Bick, "Governing the Free Sea," 70.
[591] Adrian van Hecke of Vlissingen, Johannes de Laet and Johan Schuilenborch of Amsterdam, Nicolaes ten Hove of Delft, Claude Simonsz. Dolphyn of Hoorn, and Thobias Ydekkinge of Groningen.

provinces: Holland and Zealand. The delegation for the States of Holland was formed by directors who were not attending the meeting because travelling from the meeting of the Board of Directors in Zealand would be too time-consuming. Five directors from the Amsterdam chamber, one director from the Zealand chamber and the Company lawyer arrived in The Hague on 19 September. They first addressed the States General's committee on West Indian Affairs and then the States of Holland two days later. The Directors largely followed the agreed-upon plan from the meeting in Middelburg, but added the suspicion of the Portuguese king's involvement in the revolt, which was a violation of the 1641 Treaty. A few days later, on 26 September, a letter from Fredrik Hendrik arrived, further encouraging the provincial assembly to support the WIC's colony in Brazil. The Stadtholder was encouraged to do so after receiving a visit by the directors Abraham van de Perre and Simon van Beaumont. These two directors were sent on commission by the Board of Directors when they had learned about the Portuguese insurgencies. The Prince had received the delegates and after hearing their request for a 'recommendation' on the Brazilian affair had 'accepted to do this favorably'.[592] The words of the Stadtholder were well-received by the States of Holland and a majority was leaning towards funding a rescue mission. However, Amsterdam repeatedly requested additional time to consider the matter as these city's magistrates were afraid of a deterioration of relations with the Portuguese King João IV.[593]

In an attempt to convince the States General of the role of the Portuguese monarch, the Company's lawyer, Gijsbert Rudolphi, supplied the High-Mightinesses with additional information from other sources than the General Missives. The first was an extract from news that had arrived from Paris. On 17 August, the news had arrived in the French city that the King of Portugal had taken control of Pernambuco. As a consequence, the price of sugar had risen immediately everywhere. The author of the letter had heard from a friend who had a reliable source that the instructions provided to the Portuguese ambassador made clear that João IV at least knew of the upcoming revolt and condoned it, and was probably responsible for instigating it. 'In either case the King cannot claim to be unconnected to this

[592] 'het welck sijn Hoog:ht: aegenomen heeft favorablijck te doen', NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. *26*, fol.108v.
[593] Bick, "Governing the Free Sea," 52-76.

treason.'[594] Moreover, after the King had learned that in fact he did not control the whole captaincy of Pernambuco, he provided his ambassador in Paris with new instructions. A second set of information was read by the High-Mightinesses later that same 30 September. It was compiled from 'several missives and other papers, as well as particular advices' that the Board of Directors had received. Most of the information was not new to the members of the States General, but it provided a condensed list of 'talking points' in relation to what the document identified as 'Dutch Brazil'.[595] This included the story of a Portuguese named Carvalho who had refused to sign a document aligning himself with the King of Portugal in exchange for a gold reward and who had subsequently 'caught the eye of [the Portuguese administration in] Bahia'.[596] It again relayed the story of the wedding that was planned on St. John's Day (24 June) where the ringleaders would invite all the members of the High Council and some high officers who would then all be murdered. Moreover, Felipe Camarão and Henrique Dias were leading an army of 4,000 to 5,000 compiled of Portuguese, indigenous Brazilians, and Africans that functioned as support from Bahia for the revolt. More evidence that the revolt was not an isolated incident was found in the words of prominent religious leaders that had traversed back to Lisbon onboard a WIC ship. When the religious leaders were welcomed by high-randing individuals in the harbor and eagerly asked about the state of Brazil, the clerics had responded: 'at this moment Brazil is under the obedience of our King,' even though the revolt had happened after the departure of the ship.[597] In other words, this memorial reiterated the point that 'it was sufficiently clear' that the Portuguese in Pernambuco had revolted 'neither of their own accord, and neither on their own', but must have received assistance.[598] The symbolism of the wedding on the name day of the Portuguese King surely would not have been lost on the members of the States General.

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[594] 'In allen gevalle ditto Coninck kan hem niet exempteren adhevent te sijn van dit verraet', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 Staten-General, inv. nr. *5758*, 30-Sep-1645 "Extract uit een brieff uit Parijs" [scan 156].
[595] 'Nederlandtsch Brasil', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 30-Sep-1645 Memory from several missives [scan 159].
[596] 't selve datelijck naer de Bahia geadviseert ende de voorn: Carvalho daer door seer in de ooghe geraeckt', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 30-Sep-1645 Memory from several missives [scan 159].
[597] 'huijden is Brasil geheel onder de gehoorsaemheijt van onsen Coninck', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 30-Sep-1645 Memory from several missives [scan 159].
[598] 'Connende uijt de alreede bekende actien genouchsaem bespeurt werden dat de ingesetenen Portugesen in Pernambuco de voors: revolte ende verraderijen niet uijt haer selver noch te op haere eijgen machten alleen hebben bestaen aen te vangen, maer met de hulpe van soodanige als alreede

4.6. *PETITIONING THE PUBLIC SPHERE ON BRAZIL*

Abraham Erude, Joseph Acosta, and Jeronimo Nunes, the three Sephardic merchants that had petitioned the Board of Directors in Middelburg on 14 September travelled back to Amsterdam. Back in the city they became involved in what was the second biggest petition drive in Amsterdam. The petitioners addressed their first request to the Burgomasters and Council of Amsterdam. In the opening of the petition they identified themselves as 'the undersigned merchants of this city [of Amsterdam] and interested in the state of Brazil, as well as numerous widows and orphans and others that cannot sign this petition'.[599] This is by far the most inclusive formulation of any of the petitions as the suppliants not only claimed their own agency, but explicitly included everyone that had not been able to sign the petition.

The narrative of the petition reflected the news, rumors, and information that had circulated around the Republic about the Portuguese revolt that had followed the talking points of the WIC. It identified the great treason and murderous plans by the Portuguese or 'so-called *Christianos Vechos*' thus immediately dissociating any relation with the Portuguese Jews, or New Christians, in the Brazilian colony. Moreover, the petition remained quite close to the talking points of the West India Company mentioning that the revolt was 'supported and started by Bahia with soldiers, ships, and ammunition'. This particular passage of the petition was apparently contested as later the word 'apparently' was added in front of the sentence.[600] Another talking point the petition copied from the WIC Board of Directors was the inability of the Company to battle the insurgents on their own. The support of the state was necessary because otherwise the 'damage for the country, insufferable interests of the

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wert aengewesen.', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 30-Sep-1645 Memory from several missives [scan 159].

[599] 'ondergeschreeven cooplieden deser stadt ende geinteresseerdens bij den staet van Brasil, nevens noch ontallijcke weduwen ende wesen ende anderen die niet teijckenen en konnen', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 2-Oct-1645 Petition to the City of Amsterdam [scan 163].

[600] '[naar alle apparentie] gestift ende gesticht van die van de Bahia met soldaten, schepen, ende ammonitie van oorloge', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 2-Oct-1645 Petition to the City of Amsterdam [scan 163].

inhabitants here and in particular of those in your honorable city' would be unavoidable.[601] In other words, the suppliants were forced to address themselves to the city's magistracy as their lawful lords and they did not doubt the magistrates would exercise themselves to avoid such a disaster – especially for the inhabitants of Amsterdam. In order to achieve the States' support for Brazil, the suppliants requested a favorable recommendation from the Amsterdam magistrates on this petition to the States General. The Burgomaster and City Council obliged and forwarded the request to the States General where it was read on 2 October. Despite the initial reservation of the Amsterdam delegation in the States of Holland, the City Council now thus actively communicated that it supported the cause.

Who were these petitioners that succeeded in removing Amsterdam's opposition to a rescue fleet? Well, they were with many. A total of 92 'merchants and interested' in the state of Brazil signed the petition. The first to sign the petition was Jacques Belten, a merchant originally from Limburg who had moved to Amsterdam in the first half of the seventeenth century, and lived in the Spinhuissteeg.[602] Other notable figures include Paulus Timmerman and Abraham de Visscher, who were both directors of the chamber of Amsterdam.[603] Timmerman was the second signature on the petition which indicates that he was either the principle drafter, or at least one of the main instigators of the petition. This can explain why the petition remained so close to the talking points of the WIC Board of Directors. Other prominent merchants and individuals in the first columns of the petition include Willem Momma, Guglielmo van der Voort, and Hartman Hartmansz (who is depicted on the famous Rembrandt painting of the anatomical lesson of dr. Tulp) (see Figure 4-2).[604] Of course, the merchants trading in the West Indies were also represented, including Jeremias van Collen,

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[601] 'zoo merckelijcken schade voor t landt, onlijdelijcke interesse van de ingesetenen alhier ende namentlijck van die van uw Ed: Stadt', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5758*, 2-Oct-1645 Petition to the City of Amsterdam [scan 163].

[602] A.J.A. Flament, "Het Journaal van Jacques Belten, koopman te Sittard en later te Amsterdam," *Maasgouw* 8 (1886): 91.

[603] J. Jacobs, "Incompetente autocraten? Bestuurlijke verhoudingen in de zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse Atlantische Wereld," *De zeventiende eeuw* 21, no. 1 (2005): 67; Elias, *De vroedschap*, Vol. 1, 246.

[604] J.H. van Eeghen, ed. *Amstelodamum: Maandblad voor de kennis van Amsterdam*, vol. 62 (1975), 136; M. van Gelder, *Trading places: The Netherlandisch merchants in early modern Venice* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 184. For the Rembrandt painting see: https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/portraits/3048.

Guillaume Momma, Mattheus Hoeufft, and Caspar Varleth.[605] Two other noteworthy individuals, considering their place in the higher Amsterdam governing echelons are Jan Michielsz Blaeu, famously portrayed in a *schutterstuk* together with Roelof Bicker by Bartholomeus van der Helst, and Isaac Hochepied, who in 1645 was the regent of the Walloon orphanage (*Walenweeshuis*).[606] The latter obviously at least partly represented the investments of the orphans in the WIC.

Since the names are in different shades of ink and written with different quills, it is again likely that all these people were not in the same room while the petition was drafted, but that instead the petition was canvassed throughout the city. Through the names on the signatures list it is possible to reconstruct the route the petition made as it made its way through Amsterdam. The sixth and seventh names on the list are Elias Nuyts and Jean van Gheel. Van Gheel, also a WIC director, lived on the Heerengracht on the corner of the Warmoesgracht.[607] His neighbor was Cornelis Nuyts, a very prominent sugar merchant, and the father of Elias Nuyts, who lived on the Heerengracht with his father.[608] There is no hard evidence to support this, but people canvassing the petition might have been knocking on the doors of these two neighbors in their attempt to find signatures. Cornelis must not have been home, as his signature as well as his brother David's are absent from the petition, despite the investments of the Nuyts family in the WIC.[609] This would suggest that perhaps Elias was home alone as the petitioners visited this house. Further down the list Willem de Bruijn signed in the same hand and on the same line as his son-in-law Willem Momma. De Bruijn lived on the (St. Anthonie) Breestraat in the house that would later become known as the Pinto house.[610] This street connected the old side of Amsterdam to the area where most of the Portuguese Jews lived and where in 1675 the Portuguese Synagogue would be built.

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[605] Elias, *De vroedschap*, Vol. 2, 645; S. Gikandi, "Slavery and the Age of Sensibility," in *Human Bondage in the Cultural Contact Zone*, ed. R. Hörmann and G. Mackenthun (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 97; A. Johnson, *The Swedish settlements on the Delaware: their history and relation to the Indians, Dutch and English, 1638-1664 : with an account of the South, the New Sweden, and the American companies, and the efforts of Sweden to regain the colony* (New York: Franklin, 1970), 89; Shaw Romney, *New Netherland connections*, 105.

[606] Elias, *De vroedschap*, Vol. 1, 618-619.

[607] The Warmoesgracht was closed up in 1894 and is currently part of the Raadhuisstraat.

[608] A.H. Poelwijk, *"In dienste vant suyckerbacken": De Amsterdamse suikernijverheid en haar ondernemers, 1580-1630* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003), 88; Elias, *De vroedschap*, Vol. 2, 975-976.

[609] Poelwijk, *"In dienste vant suyckerbacken"*, 169.

[610] Eeghen, *Amstelodamum*, 136.

More than thirty Sephardim signed the petition, including the aforementioned Jeronimo Nunes and other prominent Jews from the community such as Isaac Gabay Henriques and Rui Gomez Fronteira.[611] Underneath most of the Portuguese Jews, and almost at the bottom of the signatures, is the name of the WIC director Abraham de Visscher, who lived on Oudezijds Achterburgwal near the Molensteeg.[612] The petition had returned to the inner city of Amsterdam and was making its way to the City Hall where it was presented to the magistrates of the city.

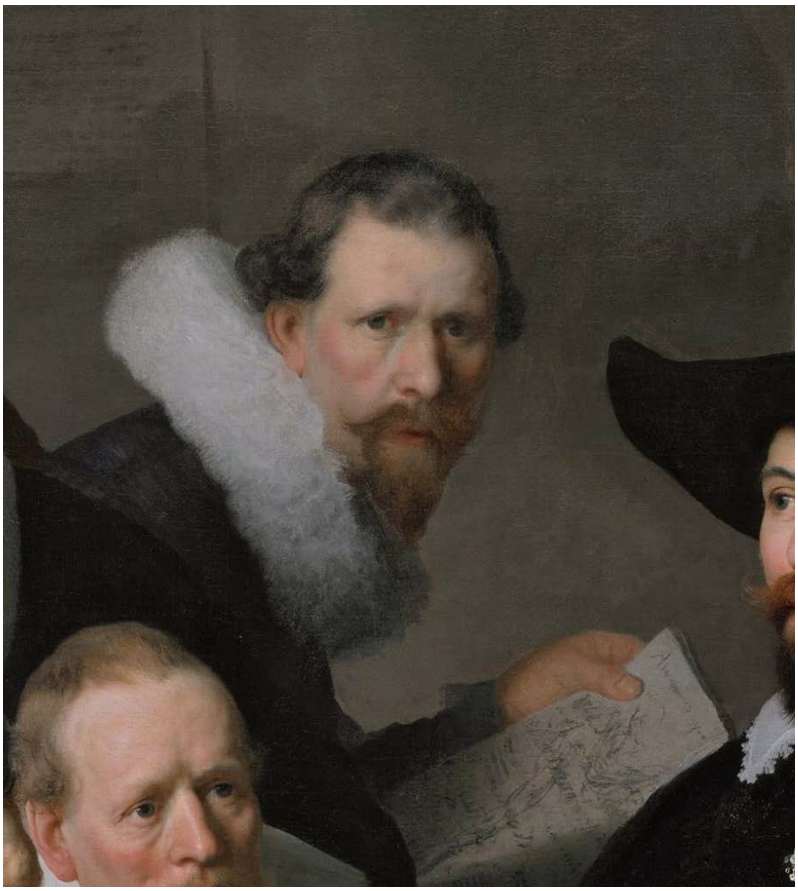
The canvassing of this petition throughout the city of Amsterdam is an example *par excellence* of outside lobbying. The petition claimed the public sphere to debate the political issue of sending a rescue fleet to Brazil to relieve the colonists from the rebellious population. The debate took place outside the political arena, and on the streets of the city, thus expressing public opinion. Moreover, as can be seen in the addition of the word 'apparently' in relation to the involvement of the Portuguese crown, the text had been debated and slightly altered before reaching the final form in which it was presented to the Amsterdam magistrates and later the States General. A second important argument why this is a good example of outside lobbying is that the petition added no new arguments to the political discourse. Instead, it reproduced the talking points laid out by the Board of Directors. Yet, it succeeded in removing Amsterdam's opposition to a rescue fleet. In other words, the city magistrates were perhaps not convinced by the arguments, but certainly pressured by public opinion expressed in the petition. The 92 signatures that included several prominent members of the city showcased the overwhelming popular support for this cause. The combination of the public element of the petition, the extraordinarily high number of signatures, together with the pressure on political mandataries rather than the rhetorical qualities of the petition makes this petition such an excellent example of outside lobbying.

Furthermore, the petition displays a transcendental alliance of different groups in Amsterdam who came together on this intersecting interest. This alliance was forged between Jews and Christians and between wholesale merchants like Servaes aux Brebis and

[611] NL-HaNA, 3.03.01.01, inv. nr. *3006*, fol 105; M. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 90.
[612] Elias, *De vroedschap*, Vol. 1, 246.

smaller merchants such as David Gansepoel.[613] It also connected these merchants with the Amsterdam regents as well as with people that have been seemingly lost to history books such as Daniel van Broeckhuijsen and Cornelis van der Helm. The carriers of the petition drive succeeded in creating an alliance on this particular issue based on the shared interests of the signers.

Figure 4-2: Portrait of Hartman Hartmansz holding a piece of paper as part of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, Oil on canvas, 1632 (Mauritshuis).



Source: mauritshuis.nl

[613] O. Gelderblom, *Zuid-Nederlandse kooplieden en de opkomst van de Amsterdamse stapelmarkt (1578-1630)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000), 229; Elias, *De vroedschap*, Vol. 1, 466.

4.7. *Petitioning the Public Sphere on the Atlantic*

The next example of a petition that made use of the public sphere is from 29 July 1650. This petition was sent on behalf of the main and lesser investors of the WIC. In contrast to the previous example it was sent directly to the States General and did not limit itself to either one city or even one province. According to the suppliants of the request, the WIC was paying too much on overhead to be a profitable company: excessive taxes, the high salaries for the Board of Directors, and all the other people on the payroll would cause the company to vanish. Thus, the investors felt it was necessary to petition to the States General now, and to ask them to interfere. After all, the investors, who included many widows and orphans, did not invest for personal gain. No, they did so out of 'sincere diligence for the state, and prosperity of this country'.[614] Moreover, if the WIC would indeed cease to exist, 'God forbid, thousands of souls, and subjects of your High-Mightinesses, would be ruined and depraved'.[615] Clearly, the petitioners appealed to the commonwealth of the country in an attempt to bridge personal interest of the supplicants to that of the state at large. In order to solve the first problem, the suppliants suggested that the States General could take over the management of the Company.

The second problem identified in the petition was that the trade on the Guinea Coast was neither monopolized by the Company, nor limited to shareholders and directors, but open to all merchants. The petitioners argued that this denied the WIC much income, and was against the charter originally drafted by the States General. The solution for this problem was to grant 'the undersigned main and lesser investors, as well as others who would like to sign up, to trade to Guinea' outside the monopoly of the Company.[616] Indeed, here again the petitioners try to show that they were not only in it for themselves, but that they have a larger, common, interest at heart. Of course, this would predominantly benefit

[614] 'uit een oprechte ijver voor den staet ende welvaeren deser lande', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *5762*, 29-Jul-1650, petition by the main and lesser investors of the WIC.
[615] 'de gemelte compagnie in haere middel, ende de functie soodanich is verswackt dat deselve onmachtig is ende geschapen staet geheelijk te verdwijnen, daer door (dat Godt verhoede) veel duijsenden zielen ende onderdanen van u Ho:Mo: souden werden geruineert ende verdorven', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *5762*, 29-Jul-1650, petition by the main and lesser investors of the WIC.
[616] 'aen de ondergeteijckende hooft ende minderparticipanten, als oock de geene die hier neffens noch verder souden gelieven te teijckenen, den voors: handel op Guinea voor anderen buijten de gemelte compagnie sijnde gelieven te vergunnen', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 inv. nr. *5762*, 29-Jul-1650, petition by the main and lesser investors of the WIC.

the merchants that signed the petition, but at least they attempted to sell it as if it benefited a larger group of people.

Just like the example from Amsterdam in 1645, the way the petition is signed says something about the way it came into being. In the first place, it is clear that the individuals signed with different ink and different quills, indicating that it was not all signed in one place at the same time. Secondly, by identifying different individuals, it becomes clear that the petition travelled to different cities in an attempt to obtain more signatures. In other words, this petition was clearly canvassed. For example, the first person to sign, Cunera van Luchtenburg, lived in The Hague, on the Lange Voorhout 18.[617] As the wife of a lawyer of the Hof van Holland, Daniel la Main, she was frequenting certain circles with considerable political influence. It is thus interesting that she made use of a petition to achieve her political goals. Other identifiable individuals include Anthony de la Porte, a military solicitor based in The Hague, Johan Sixti, secretary for the Hof van Holland and Burgomaster of The Hague, Cornelis Splinter, member of the Town Council in The Hague, and Nicolaes Loockemans, a silversmith in The Hague.[618] All these individuals are at the beginning of the list with signatures. Then the petition travelled to Middelburg in Zealand, where amongst other people Jacob Scotte, prosecutor (*Advocaat Fiscaal)* in that city and director for the VOC, Bartholomeus van Panhuijs, member of the Admiralty of Zealand, and Maria Godin, the mother of Bartholomeus, signed the petition.[619] One of the other individuals to sign in Zealand, Johan van der Marck, remarks with his signature that he signed 'in absence of his wife's mother, Sara de Trinquet, the wife of Malapert', which might point to the fact that there was some time pressure behind signing this petition. Otherwise they could have waited for de Trinquet herself, or maybe her husband to sign the petition. Whatever the reason might have been, the fact that de Trinquet mandated someone else to sign on her behalf indicates that there had been a previous discussion about this petition.

From Zealand it then travelled to Dordrecht, where Willem Hallingh signed. From Dordrecht it continued to Leiden, where the list of backers included Franciscus de Laet,

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[617] T. Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, ed. *Het Lange Voorhout: monumenten, mensen, en macht* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1998), 260.
[618] J. de Riemer, *Beschryving van 's Graven-hage* (Delft Reinier Boitet, 1730 - Reprint by Van Stockum 1973), 141-154; U. Thieme and F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart Vol. 23* (Leipzig: Seeman, 1929), 310.
[619] Valentijn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën*, 308.

Willem van Kerchem, and Jacob van Spreeuwen.[620] The fact that all these individuals from different places are grouped together with other signatures from the same cities and towns indicates that the petition travelled from place to place. After Leiden, it presumably travelled back to The Hague where it was submitted to the States General for consideration. It is not unlikely that La Porte, who as military solicitor was seasoned in presenting petitions to the States General, delivered the petition.

There are two things that are remarkable about the collection of names on the petition. The first thing is the large number of artists, who were responsible for at least ten per cent of the signatures. Van Spreeuwen and Joan Mijtens were painters, and de Laet and J. van Langenhoven were published authors. These artisans might not directly seem like the typical investors, but – on the other hand – if they were good enough they might have had enough cash to spare and have the right contacts. Moreover, it is possible that they acted on behalf of the St. Luke's guild of painters and other artists and that they pooled money together to invest in a Company that took along painters and scholars to document the colonies. Lastly, it is very likely that Franciscus de Laet from Leiden was the son of Johannes de Laet from Leiden, one of the directors in the Amsterdam chamber of WIC permanently representing Leiden. The second remarkable thing about the individuals that signed the petition, is that it is possible to identify multiple individuals that were sympathetic to the Stadtholder family. The aforementioned Langenhoven wrote a book praising the military qualities of the Stadtholder Fredrik Hendrik.[621] Joan Mijtens was a very prominent painter whose work includes portraits of Maria van Orange Nassau, the daughter of Fredrik Hendrik, and William III of Orange Nassau, the husband of Mary II of England. These portraits were made during the Stadtholderless Period (1650-1672). Another link to the family of the Stadtholder comes via Catharina van den Honert. Her husband was Nicolaas Kien, who had a very good relationship with both the Prince of Orange and the French King.[622] Another link is the aforementioned Cunera van Luchtenburg, who owned a house on Lange Voorhout 18, and

[620] F. van Mieris and D. van Alphen, *Beschryving der Stad Leyden, Vol. 3*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Cornelis Heyligert en Abraham en Jan Honkoop, 1784), 984.
[621] J. van Langenhoven, *Korte beschrijvinge ofte Iovrnael van de op-treckinge des door-luchtigen Prince van Orangiën* ('s-Gravenhage: Henricus en Guilielmus Hondius, 1633).
[622] A.J. van der Aa, *Biografisch Woordenboek* (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1862), entry for Nicolaas Kien.

Johan Sixti, on number 16, who had close geographical proximity to Willem Frederik van Nassau-Dietz, the Stadtholder of Friesland, who owned the house on number 17.[623]

It can of course also not be ignored that several petitioners, including the first signature, were women. Moreover, in contrast to the aforementioned Remonstrants' petition they did not sign as 'widows' or 'wives' of men. They signed in their own right and thus claimed their own space in the public sphere on this issue of trade to West Africa. Secondly, even though there is a large number of (traceable) Orangists amongst the signatures, the petition stands out because of its diversity. High society mixed with artists and again several individuals that seem to be lost to the history book. Moreover, individuals came together from several cities; from several provinces even. In other words, this petition is an excellent demonstration of transcendental alliances forged by interests despite their apparent diversity.

4.7.1. Other forms of signatures

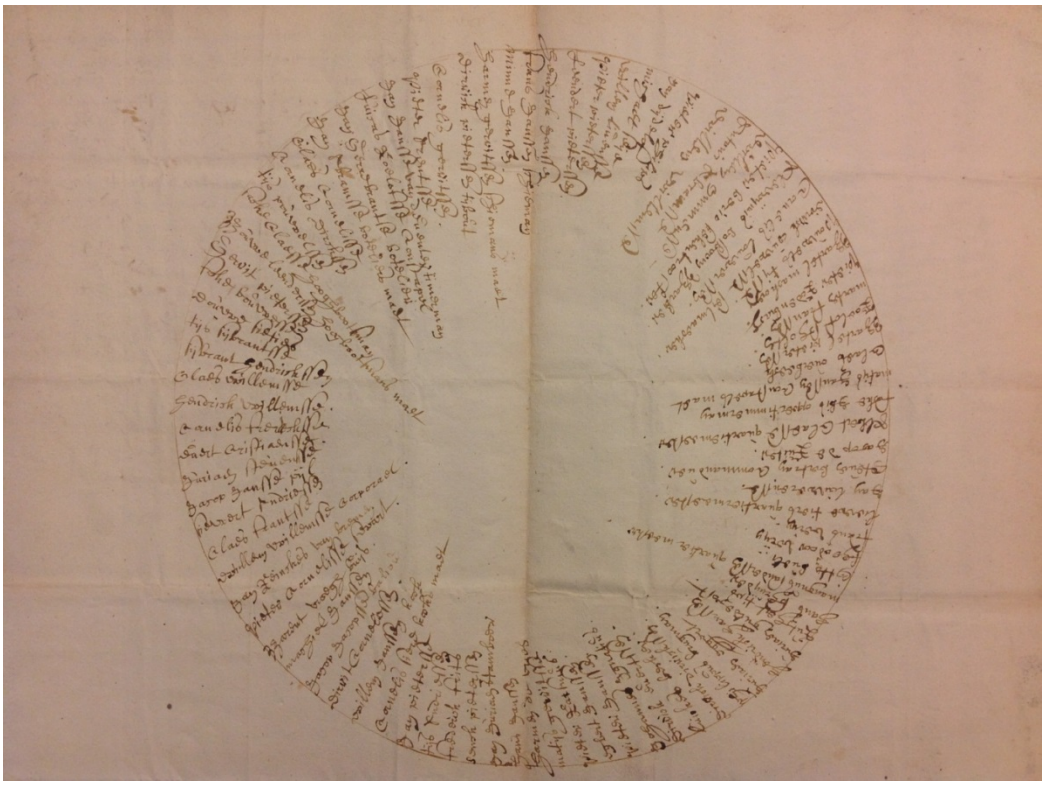
It is possible to deduce from the way the signatures on the petition came into being to argue that in fact these petitions reflected the personal opinions of individuals that signed. To stress this point further, it is important to contrast the petitions to two other requests that were signed by even more people. These two requests were sent to the Directorate for the equipment of warships (*Directie ter equipering van oorlogsschepen*) during the first Anglo-Dutch war (1652-1654). The first, complaining that the ship, *De Witte Engel*, was unseaworthy and the captain always drunk, was signed by 57 individuals.[624] The second one, dated 15 October 1652, stated that they had suffered great damages in a battle with the English, making their ship, *Maria*, no longer seaworthy. They thus requested another ship to 'defend the fatherland until the last drop of blood in their bodies'. This one was even signed by 92 individuals.[625]

However, in contrast to the petitions discussed before, these requests are signed in a round-robin, rather than a list. This non-hierarchical setting makes it impossible to identify

[623] Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Het Lange Voorhout*, 250, 258-260.
[624] NL-HaNA, 1.03.02, inv. nr. *4-II*, no date.
[625] NL-HaNA, 1.03.02, inv. nr. *5-I*, 15-Oct-1652.

the leader.[626] Moreover, the signatures of the request with 92 individuals are all set in the same handwriting, indicating that it was perhaps less voluntary, and that the decision to sign the document was less based on rational argument (see Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4). This presentation form was also the popular choice in early modern Japan when villages presented collective petitions.[627]

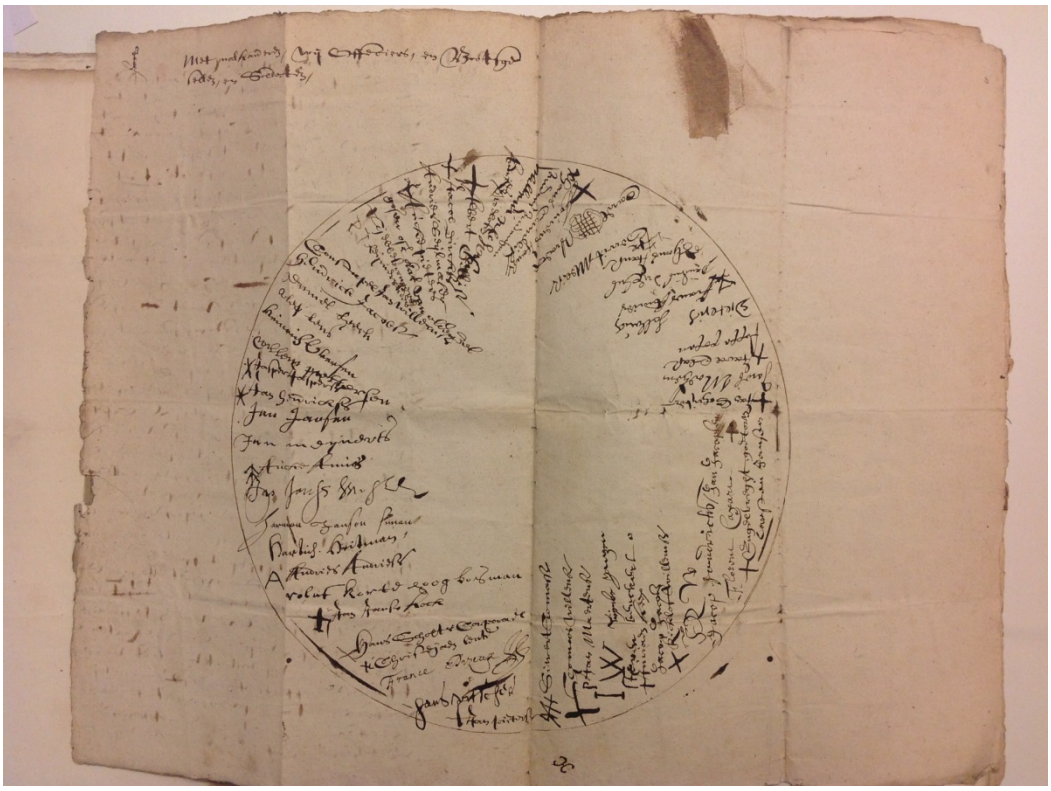
Figure 4-3: The 92 signatures in a round-robin supplied on 15-Oct-1652



Source: NL-HaNA, 1.03.02, inv. nr. *5-I*, 15-Oct-1652.

[626] N. Frykman et al., "Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution: An Introduction," in *Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution: A Global Survey (International Review of Social History Special Issue 21)*, ed. N. Frykman, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6.
[627] J.W. White, *Ikki: social conflict and political protest in Early Modern Japan* (Ithaca/London: Cornell Univerity Press, 1995), See dust jacket and 142-144.

Figure 4-4: A less organized round-robin



Source: NL-HaNA, 1.03.02, inv. nr. *4-II*.

4.8. CONCLUSION

The relation between pressure from public opinion and changed policy is often circumstancial or at best anecdotal. The resolutions from the States General seldom reflect on reading pamphlets or hearing news on the street. It does ocassionally happen though that a document specifically justifies its relevance by stating that the author was 'being informed through public rumors'.[628] Michiel van Groesen quotes Arnoldus Buchelius who was intimately acquainted with of the political process in 1637 as another example that demonstrates the relation between policy and the public sphere. The documents that circulated in the Republic 'both in manuscript and in print' were read by the political mandataries before they debated on an issue.[629] Moreover, the example of Amsterdam in this

[628] 'Ende vernemende uijt publijcque geruchten (…)', NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. *5759*, 17-May-1647 Memory for mr. van Gent [scan 0373].
[629] Groesen, *Amsterdam's Atlantic*, 121.

chapter showcases the possible connection between pressure from public opinion and a change of policy. In other words, public opinion was important to pressure the political mandataries in their decision-making process.

One could argue that the examples of petition drives presented in this chapter are not very significant because the number of signatures remained rather limited, rarely exceeding more than one hundred signatures. To some extent this is indeed true. After all, these petitions do not yet show the numbers of a century later, in 1758, when the representatives of the States General received six petitions with no less than 650 signatures from merchants from several cities in the Republic.[630] Neither do the signatures reach into the thousands like they did in England in 1642. However, the English number was only reached because of an arms race for the number of signatures between competing factions. The signatures were to a large extent acquired by clergymen who pressed their flock into signing a petition. Over and above this, in several parishes in Essex it was considered sufficient to read the petition out loud, pass the petition by acclamation, and to send in a list of the individuals present.[631] The number of signatures was more considered a proof of how well the faction was organized than proof of popular support for a cause. Nevertheless, the number of signatures is a very useful tool for studying collective mobilization or collective action.[632] The canvassing of petitions, or the organization of a petition drive, clearly shows to what extent interest groups succeeded in mobilizing an alliance of individuals.

This study of the process of acquiring signatures on petitions answers Zaret's question whether these signatures did indeed represent public opinion in the affirmative. Putting signatures on a petition before submitting it is *de facto* happening in the public sphere and is as such an expression of public opinion. Moreover, the limited number of signatures increases the likelihood that these individuals signed because they supported the cause instead of being coerced into putting their signature on paper by a minister or another authority. This chapter has also demonstrated that rallying and expressing support through the canvassing of a petition was an extremely useful tool to outside lobby political bodies. The example of the petition requesting a recommendation from the Amsterdam

[630] Heijer, "A public and private interest," 166.
[631] Fletcher, *English civil war*, 195.
[632] Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*.

Burgomasters and Council for a rescue fleet to Brazil in 1645 showcases the success of outside lobbying in relation to the Dutch Atlantic.

Contrary to what David Zaret has argued, printing was not a necessary step for the transformation of petitions in the Public Sphere; in particular within a city, manuscript petitions were sufficient for a petition drive. A possible explanation for the relative unimportance of print might be the high rate of literacy in the urban centers of the Republic.[633] Printed documents were easier to read than manuscript documents for individuals with less comprehension of alphabetic writing. If printing was not a necessary step for the transformation of the public sphere, something else should be contributed to this. This chapter argued that the process of putting one's signature on a petition is what transformed the public sphere. When comparing the development in the first half of the seventeenth century to the examples of the sixteenth century it becomes clear the process of collecting signatures is what transformed the petitioning process. Collecting signatures displays the awareness of the power of public opinion for the political decision-making process.

The signatures on the group petitions display transcendental alliances in the sense that they transcend traditional borders and categories. The petitioners came together on the issue that united them whether they were a man, a woman, a Christian, a Jew, a merchant, a regent, a peddler, an Orangist, or a State's supporter. Moreover, these alliances could transcend city, and even provincial, boundaries. It was exactly these transcendental alliances that shaped and influenced the Dutch experience in Brazil and the wider Atlantic. The example of petition from 1645 that succeeded in removing the objections of the city of Amsterdam to a rescue fleet for Brazil is in this regard an excellent case in point. It is important not to overstate its influence though as equipping the ships for Brazil would turn out to be laborious process. On 9 October 1645, the Board of Directors read a report from Pieter Bischop, the Board's agent in The Hague since the news of the revolt had reached the Republic. In a lengthy report he communicated 'that nothing effective has been resolved yet'.[634] As will become clear in the next chapter, it would take almost two more years before a

[633] Harline, *Pamphlets, printing and political culture*, 59-60.
[634] 'dat noch niets effectivelijck is geresolveert', NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. *26*, fol. 114r.

fleet would be dispatched as details slowed down the decision-making process, and it became intertwined with the peace negotiations in Münster.