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Met recht en rekenschap : de ambtenaren bij het Hof van Holland en de Haagse Rekenkamer in de Habsburgse Tijd (1483-1558)

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Summary

Justice and Accountability. The officials at the Council of Holland and Chamber of Accounts in The Hague in the Habsburg period (1483-1558)

The Burgundian dynasty acquired the county of Holland and Zeeland during the second quarter of the fifteenth century. The new count left the government and justice in the hands of a stadtholder (governor) and a Council in The Hague. During the course of the fifteenth century the Council became more of a well defined institution with specialised officials. The auditing of the accounts of local officers was left in the hands of the masters of the newly created Chamber of Accounts (1446). The marriage of Mary of Burgundy, sole heir of the Burgundian Netherlands, with Maximilian of Habsburg (1477) and her death five years later were the first steps towards a complete change of character of the type of prince the count of Holland and Zeeland would eventually become. In about four decades the count changed from a ruler over just the Burgundian Netherlands, to someone who was also German Emperor and King of Spain. The expansion of power and territory Charles the Bold (†1477) had tried to achieve with warfare was nothing compared to the lands and titles his great-grandson Charles V (1500-1558) united in one person, thanks to a combination of marriages and dynastic coincidence. Even though Charles V was considered a 'natural ruler' by his subjects in Holland and Zeeland, his priorities clearly lay elsewhere.

This research is about the representatives of the count of Holland and Zeeland in the Habsburg period, starting with stadtholder Jan van Egmond (October 7th 1483) and ending with the death of stadtholder Maximiliaan van Bourgondië (June 4th 1558). This timeframe also covers the two regencies of Maximilian of Habsburg (1482-1494, 1506-1515) and the rules of Philip the Fair (1494-1506) and Charles V (1515-1555). The questions which are addressed concern who the representatives of the count were, how they acquired their office, what their duties were and how they performed them, and what this meant for the relationship between the prince and his subjects. The role of the officers as intermediaries, or brokers, is one of the recurring themes of the book. In a society which could not yet fully function with

strict rules imposed by the centre, the prince and his regent and officers in Malines and Brussels, the officers played the role of brokers, smoothing the relations between prince and subjects through the use of informal means.

The Council of Holland, in theory presided by the stadtholder, was tasked with administering justice as the highest court of the province and ensuring the rights of the ruler were observed in general. The Chamber of Accounts was responsible for auditing the accounts of the local officials and maximizing the profits from the count's domains. The growing physical distance between the ruler and his subjects resulted in a less personal kind of rule and also a more visible discrepancy between the interests of the prince and those of the people of Holland and Zeeland. The Habsburg wars were bad for the Holland trade, which resulted in less willingness to pay the subsidies to the prince ('beden' or 'aides'). The Reformation and the subsequent persecution of heretics caused chaos and dispute over the ignored privileges of the major cities of Holland. The officers of the Council of Holland and Chamber of Accounts played an intermediary role between the prince and the subjects, trying to reconcile the interests of both 'sides', but in name always having to side with the count.

More than anything else, the representatives of the prince are at the heart of every chapter. I made use of the prosopographical method to acquire a complete picture of the men representing the prince, limiting myself to the most prominent among them. For the Council of Holland they were the stadtholder, president, councillors, attorney- and solicitor-general, keeper of the charters, registrar and secretaries. In the Chamber of Accounts the masters and auditors were most important. I gathered information about age, studies, work experience, social and geographical background and networks to discover just who the people were that managed to obtain a position in service of the prince. I started with the assumption that the functioning of an institution is dependent on the way the people working there perform their duties, and that the way a person acts in an office can be partly explained by his external character traits. Someone from Flanders for example is less likely to respect the privileges from the cities of Holland, than someone who was raised there and first worked for them as a pensionary. A nobleman without any legal background is more likely to rely on informal networks than a *doctor* in law.

Naturally, a group picture alone does not suffice to give a satisfying answer to the posed questions. Considerable attention was also paid to the institutions, the available functions, recruiting mechanisms, and the way the officers could play an intermediary role between the prince and his subjects. Since it is hard to trace individual influence during court matters and the auditing of accounts, the emphasis here lies on the administrative duties, even though the other tasks are included whenever relevant and possible. The most difficult matters with which the officers dealt were subsidies ('beden'), trade and heresy.

The backbone of the research is formed by serial material such as accounts (from officers of the prince or the subjects) which were used to determine my research po-

pulation (164 officers) and in which I could find data concerning the holding of offices, institutional changes and gifts. Other important serial documents were sentence books of the Council of Holland and Great Council of Malines, which often provided detailed information on the officers involved in a lawsuit. In the so called ‘vroedschapsresoluties’, decisions made by the city councils, I could find information on the early ‘dagvaarten’, meetings of the States of Holland during which representatives of the prince and of the subjects met. For the reign of Maximilian and his daughter Margaret as regents for the minor Charles V, there is correspondence in the archive of Lille, for the bigger part already published in the nineteenth century.

The amount of available source material expands rapidly around the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Most importantly there is the increasing amount of correspondence between the Council of Holland and the central institutions for the Netherlands in Brussels and Malines, now kept in the ‘Algemeen Rijksarchief’ in Brussels. Special mention goes to the hundreds of letters from president Gerrit van Assendelft to stadtholder Anton van Lalaing (count of Hoogstraten) between 1525 and 1540. Also starting around 1525, there are the official recordings of the ‘dagvaarten’ from the advocates of the common land (‘landsadvocaten’) Aart and Adriaan van der Goes and the less formal travel diaries of individual pensionaries. For the heresy conflicts, the publication of relevant documents by Mellink and Frédéricq formed very useful resources.

In secondary literature the year 1531, in which new ordinances for the provincial councils in Flanders, Brabant and Holland were drawn up, is generally seen as a time of important institutional reformation. Here it is shown that for Holland the changes of 1531 went back, for the larger part, not only to the ordinance of 1522, but also to that of 1515 and smaller regulations in addition to those ordinances in between. Neither the count, nor the Council of Holland or States of Holland alone were the driving force behind the institutional changes. Such changes were instead driven by a dynamic process of negotiations and consultations between these entities and other related institutions. Even though the role of the Council as a court of justice was very important, it was occupied with administrative duties as well, and had a clear influence on the regulations from the count and regent.

In theory it always was the prince, or Maximilian as regent for his minor son and grandson, who appointed the officials. In reality the count usually made his decision by relying on the advice of his influential personal councillors or the stadtholder. Since the appointments were always personal, a new ruler was not obliged to keep the personnel of his predecessor in the institutions. Philip the Fair left the Council in peace when he came of age in 1494, but he did reorganise the Chamber of Accounts in 1495. Two of the masters were fired, probably on the instigation of their colleague Lucas van Teilingen. In the sixteenth century the aunt and sister of Charles V, regents Margaret of Austria (1507-1515, 1517-1530) and Mary of Hungary (1531-1555), could usually dispose of the patronage of distribut-

ing offices on the provincial level. The last years in which the ruler clearly put a personal mark on the appointments in Holland was in the period 1515-1517, after the future Charles V had come of age, but before he went to Spain. A number of officials of the Council of Holland were the victim of the young Charles' appointment strategies. He reduced several councillors ordinary to the status of councillor extraordinary, who only regained their position after heavy protests and only together with the newly appointed men.

A wide variety of recruiting mechanisms could play a role when there was a vacancy. The interference of one or more brokers to obtain an office was very frequent. The patron, usually the prince or the regent, could dispose of the office, while the broker could persuade the patron to give an office to a client of his own. There was also the possibility of 'resignatio in favorem' by which an officer could ask the patron, sometimes with the help of a broker, to give his office to a particular person, usually a friend, relative or maybe someone who offered him the necessary amount of money. When an officer had served the prince well in another capacity he could also obtain a 'promise' for the next vacancy of a particular office. It of course also was possible that different methods of applying for an office were used simultaneously by one person. In any of these cases one could, and usually would, make use of a broker.

It is hard to give a conclusive reason to explain why someone was chosen to become a princely officer. Some patterns could be distinguished however. The stadtholders all were from high nobility and personally chosen by the count. The presidents were of a less high status and usually chosen on recommendation of the regent. A necessary condition to become councillor ordinary was some work experience, often as councillor extraordinary, who did the same job without any wages. The councillors extraordinary often were in the 'waiting room', sometimes for a long time, until they were rewarded with an ordinary position. A degree in law also became an important factor, since the last councillor ordinary without such an education was appointed in 1503. Nonetheless, in 1539 the possibility of appointing a man without a degree in law as councillor ordinary was seriously discussed.

The councillors extraordinary more often had no relevant work experience than any other kind of officer. In the course of the sixteenth century they commonly were young graduates from university in the second half of their twenties, and born in a 'councillor dynasty'. There were also councillors extraordinary however, who were less frequently present in The Hague, were not necessarily university educated, and occupied themselves more with secondary tasks. For the late fifteenth century it seems that some men who presented themselves in the Council only did this because a higher officer asked them to and without having an official letter of commission from the count. In the second quarter of the sixteenth century we do not see any councillors extraordinary anymore who were not officially appointed. During the same time councillors extraordinary without a university background became an endangered species, with the last appointment of one such example in 1539.

Even though the activities of the Council were mainly focused on Holland, the officers were also responsible for Zeeland. The States of Zeeland therefore could insist that some people from their regions were appointed in the Council. Many councillors from Zeeland, though their number clearly is a minority, were among other reasons appointed because of their origins. In general the group of councillors was quite heterogeneous. Family networks, patronage, political preference, (university) education, origin and, especially until 1510, nobility, were all factors which could play a role in someone's appointment. None of these factors however were either necessary or sufficient. Only after 1555 the selection procedure for a vacancy in the Council was formalised on request of the States. The Council would nominate three candidates, after which the regent chose the most suitable candidate.

As a consequence of the prosecution of heretics since 1525 two officers became more important: the attorney-general and the receiver of the fines and confiscations. The attorney-general already had become increasingly significant after 1520 when the office was combined with that of solicitor-general and a degree in law became obligatory to exercise it. The attorney-general and his substitute were the leading figures in tracing the heretics and capturing them. The attorney-general therefore gained increasing liberties and rights from the count to be able to exercise his office well. In the second quarter of the sixteenth century there is also a process of 'emancipation' of the attorney's substitutes. Even though officially appointed by the attorney, he started to receive an official salary from the count and 'survived' his master in his office. The receiver of the fines and confiscations was responsible for paying the costs of the heretic imprisonment, the search parties and the executioner. At the end of the fifteenth century the office had been so unpopular that hardly any suitable candidate could be found to exercise it. Thanks to the heresy prosecution the salary and importance of the receiver increased in such a way that in 1540 there was a healthy competition for the next vacancy.

The office of secretary extraordinary caused some difficulties because it was used by some of the higher officers as a means to reward their clients. This led to an explosion of secretaries whose number was officially limited in 1525. Nonetheless, the maximum was superseded since the prince allowed some 'resignatio in favorem' and because many officers tried to help a clerk or family member to acquire the office. In addition to the fact that it was a normal procedure to try to help your friends and relatives to advance to higher positions, the councillors also had to take a secretary with them during their investigations in a lawsuit. It is only logical that they gladly took a friend or relative with them on their journeys. A familiar secretary had the benefit, besides pleasant companionship, that potentially questionable things which happened during the investigation stayed 'within the family'.

In the Chamber of Accounts the officers had more influence when a vacancy had to be filled than their colleagues in the Council. Because of the master-pupil relationship within the Chamber, the officers usually succeeded each other without

any problem. A lot of them began their career as clerk in the Chamber, and often as personal clerk of a master, after which they climbed to the ranks of auditor and then master. This mechanism also increased the importance of family relations, since personal clerks very often were younger relatives. Nonetheless almost half of the masters came from outside the Chamber when they were appointed. They had gained work experience as receiver, registrar or secretary. They often partly owed their appointment to the mediating of a broker.

While at the end of the fifteenth century there were still at least two nobles in the Council, who also earned a higher daily salary, the nobility lost its two fixed members and higher reward during the reformation of the Council in 1510. This did not mean that there were no more nobles in the Council, but that most of them had a legal background, and the ones who did not were, with one exception, councillors extraordinary who occupied themselves mostly with administrative duties. Hand in hand with a greater distance between the prince and his officers, the prestige an office brought with it seems to have diminished in the course of the sixteenth century. While the officers who lost their office in 1515, when Charles V came of age, were mainly complaining about the shame this brought on them and their relatives and friends, some decades later we see people refusing the office of councillor because they could earn more in the service of the subjects or as a private solicitor. The popularity of an office in service of the prince probably was higher at the beginning of the research period because of the prestige it brought with it, when the idea was still common that the Council was filled with the count's most trusted and noble advisors instead of lawyers.

Under stadtholder Jan van Egmond the civil war between 'Hoeken and Kabeljauwen' still played an important role for the recruitment of members for the Council. After the death of Charles the Bold (†1477) these two parties, dating back to the fourteenth century, were struggling for the power in the major cities in Holland. Eventually the Kabeljauwen led by Jan van Egmond were the victors, resulting in Maximilian choosing their side and appointing Van Egmond stadtholder in 1483. From this time on we see that the Council was occupied mainly by people who had manifested themselves as 'Kabeljauw' or were linked to one of the party's leaders. Van Egmond actively tried to place people from his 'Kabeljauw' network in the Council, but at the end of his era as stadtholder his influence was waning. After more than three decades of service as stadtholder, the ancient Jan van Egmond did not survive the personnel reforms in 1515 and he 'willingly' resigned his office to Hendrik van Nassau. Under the new stadtholder the nobleman Gerrit van Assendelft, who was, quite anachronistically, labelled 'Hoeks' and therefore unacceptable by Jan van Egmond, became councillor ordinary and would be one of the most influential men of his time.

While at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century the negotiations with the representatives of the subjects of Holland, during the so called

‘dagvaarten’, seem to have been undertaken by a large variety of councillors, this task was left to a few influential officers in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Next to the stadtholders and the presidents of the Council there were the possibly even more influential people such as councillor extraordinary Frederik van Renesse and master of the Chamber of Accounts Vincent Cornelisz.. It was not the power which was invested in them through their office that made them so successful, but the informal influence they had and the respect both the prince and the subjects had for them, making them the perfect intermediaries or brokers. The informal ties of a select group of officers therefore remained the key to success when the Holland subjects were called together for the ‘dagvaarten’.

On a local level in the cities the personal ties of a larger group of officers could still be of importance. Councillors were often sent to the cities of their origin when they had to negotiate delicate matters. Once again, we see that it was not the office but the personal ties an officer had which were important to gain the favour of a city. We see the city of Gouda only committing to a ‘bede’ (subsidy) when attorney-general Reinier Brunt swore that the city would not be taxed any further. Trying to persuade a city to agree in the levy of a ‘bede’ usually was not the task of the attorney-general, but because Reinier had family in Gouda and had served there as a pensionary he was the right person to succeed in the negotiations – possibly the only one who could have. The power and position of the important men on regional and local level was also confirmed by the gifts they received from both the prince and the subjects.

At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, we see that there was a very thin line between the people representing the interests of the count and those of the subjects. Initially, neither the advocates of the common land (the ‘landsadvocaat’, who in theory represented the collective States of Holland) nor the pensionaries felt bound to serve only one master and shifted from service to the subjects to service of the count and sometimes even back again. Only gradually was the idea that a man could only serve one master institutionalised. Even though clear ties remained between the officers of the count and those of the subjects, more clear rules were drawn up about what was allowed, regarding potentially conflicting loyalties. Starting around the second quarter of the sixteenth century we see a gradual decline of the ‘overlapping officers’. The decreasing influence of nobles in the Council was also a factor in this process. Noble councillors were also allowed to have a voice in the States of Holland as representatives of the nobles. During the course of the sixteenth century however, the number of councillors who could also speak for the nobles on ‘dagvaarten’ declined. After the deaths of Floris Oom van Wijngaarden Florisz. (†1532) and Jan van Duivenvoorde (†1543), the only one who could have such a ‘double agenda’, as representative of both the prince and the subjects, was president Gerrit van Assendelft. Being less connected to the Council, the States of Holland also became more aware and independent, making them a strong force to be reckoned with.

Another development that may have made the ties with the subjects grow weaker was the development of 'officer dynasties' in The Hague. Originally most officers came from one of the major cities of Holland and only resided in The Hague because of their office in service of the prince. When residence in The Hague became more obligatory, a lot of officials made the town their home where they raised children. These children in turn, often became the count's new officers. Even though they could still have strong ties with the city where their roots lay, the bonds grew thinner with every generation. Together with the more strict line between the officers and interests of the prince and those of the subjects, the possibilities of the officers to play the role of intermediaries diminished. This process was amplified by the lack of successors of powerful men like Frederik van Renesse (†1538), Vincent Cornelisz. (†1550) and Gerrit van Assendelft (†1558). The informal ties of the officers with the subjects grew thinner in a time when they were needed the most. So the irony was that the moment things became more rational and formal in Holland and Zeeland, it increased the chances of rebellion against unpopular measures of the count.

There were two main themes which could unite the officers of the prince with those of the subjects. One was the limitation of trade and export due to war or scarcity of grain, and the other was the prosecution of heretics. As a densely populated region with many cities and a limited surface of arable land, the population of Holland had to live on trade. Without the trade people suffered from poverty, famine and unemployment. One of the most disputed themes in the first half of the sixteenth century was the 'congie', a special license for the export of grain. The central government made several attempts to impose this export inhibition, but each time they were confronted with a front of representatives of the subjects and those of the prince on both regional (Holland) and central level (Brussels and Malines). The Holland officials in service of the count did not forget the interests of their fellow countrymen and had no hesitation in writing to the regent explaining that a certain measure was a bad idea since it was going to cause famine and misery and increase the chances of rebellion. This does not mean however, that with every trade inhibition or 'bede' imposed by the count, the officers of the regional institutions objected. More often than not they faced the representatives of the subjects to try to make them see the wisdom of the count's decisions.

The prosecution of heretics became a frequent subject on the agenda of the officers of the Council of Holland in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. It started with the death sentence of the first Holland martyr, Jan de Backer, in 1525 and continued until the measures against heresy became the prime reason for the Dutch revolt in 1568. Between this time the officers of the Council faced many problems with their conscience and, in particular, the rebellious nature of the Anabaptist movement. Because the officials were not always convinced that a repenting or 'seduced' heretic should be sentenced to death, they often tried to request le-

niency from the prince or regent. At times their pleas were answered, but often the regent and count told the officials to strictly follow the rules of the placards. During the highlights of the radical Anabaptist movement, the Westphalian city of Munster was taken in 1534, and the city of Amsterdam almost suffered the same fate in 1535. After the Amsterdam incident the members of the Council of Holland acted swiftly and without mercy when condemning the leaders of the Anabaptist movement there.

Despite their actions in Amsterdam, certain members of the Council of Holland were suspected to have sympathies for heretics themselves. This was not helped by the fact that some heretics claimed to have support in the ranks of the Council, and by the clement role the officials played in literary works about the first protestant martyrs. Regent Mary of Hungary took the accusations and rumours about the orthodoxy of the Holland officials serious and in 1536 president Gerrit van Assendelft had to answer for his supposed heretical beliefs. Even though he was acquitted after a thorough investigation from the attorney-general of the Great Council of Malines, new rumours spread and he was, together with councillor Abel van Coulster, once more under attack in 1539. Abel van Coulster was in later years even rumoured to be a follower of the Anabaptist leader David Joris. Nevertheless, no officer was ever convicted for heresy and none lost an office because of allegations made against him. Good catholic orthodoxy does not even seem to have been a concern when recruiting new officers, until the sixties of the sixteenth century. Zealous prosecution could however increase one's chances of promotion like substitute-attorney-general Jan van Dam proved when climbing to the office of master in the Chamber of Accounts.

During the 'era Van Egmond' (1483-1515), the influence of the stadtholder and other officers on appointments and how things were run in The Hague in general was significant. Besides the Kabeljauw influence, a lot of officers were able to do a successful 'resignatio in favorem'. After Van Egmond's time other networks than that of the (former) Kabeljauw party started to play an important role, both on a regional (Holland) and central (Brussels and Malines) level. The influential Frederik van Renesse for example, was in service of the new stadtholder Hendrik van Nassau when he followed him to The Hague. Gerrit van Assendelft also had a good bond with Van Nassau, even prior to his appointment as councillor. In the meantime however, Floris van Egmond, the nephew and substitute of the late stadtholder Jan van Egmond, still had a lot of influence in Holland and on the officials in the Hague, even if he officially had no connections with the regional institutions anymore. These connections resulted in very questionable, if not to say corrupt, behaviour from some of the clients of Floris van Egmond, when they put his interests above those of the count.

During the sixteenth century master Vincent Cornelisz. almost managed to create a monopoly for his sons and sons in law as officers in the Chamber of Accounts.

Despite the ordinances for the Chambers of Accounts in Lille and Brussels of 1541 and very possibly a similar one for The Hague in which such blood ties were forbidden, the Chamber in The Hague remained for a good part filled with relatives of Vincent Cornelisz.. A nobleman like Gerrit van Assendelft addressed Vincent, whose noble origins were in the best case quite vague, as an equal if not with reverence. His fame spread past the borders of Holland, resulting in gifts from many different sides and his appointment in the Council of Finance in Brussels. It is more likely that Vincent owed his appointments in Holland and in Brussels to his influence, than the other way around. Already before he became a master he was known as the 'Groote Vincent' (Great Vincent), where his nickname probably referred to his power rather than to his stature.

Not only Vincent Cornelisz managed to create an 'officer family'. Other good examples are the families De Jonge, with members in both the Council and Chamber of Accounts, Oom van Wijngaarden and Van Dam. In the letters of commission for the officers from these families it is sometimes directly stated that the appointment was made in consideration of the good services done by an older relative. When Klaas van Dam became too old to be the substitute of the attorney-general, he was allowed to resign that office to his son Jan and the office of secretary extraordinary to his son Willem. Family membership within the ranks of councillors was limited, however, in the ordinance of 1522, when it was stipulated that no fathers and sons, brothers or cousins could be members of the Council at the same time. At the beginning of the sixteenth century it was still possible for two cousins and a brother in law to be in the Council simultaneously (the cousins Floris Oom van Wijngaarden Jansz. and Florisz. and Jan van Duivenvoorde).

Too many family ties within the institutions and in other offices of the count were the main reason that councillor Willem Snouckaart, of Flemish origins, launched an attack on his colleague Cornelis Suys. According to him the regional institutions were so much 'monopolised' by the family and 'alliance' of Suys that they could always outvote the other members and get their way. Willem Snouckaart also scolded the 'alliance' of Suys because they acted as judges in cases concerning their own family members. The attack of Snouckaart on Suys was part of a bigger attack launched against president Gerrit van Assendelft, starting in 1554 and only ending in 1559 with the verdicts in two cases for the Great Council of Malines (one against Van Assendelft and one against Suys) when Van Assendelft had already passed away.

What had started as a list of complaints drawn up by Snouckaart and fellow councillor Geleyn Zegers against the States of Holland soon became an open attack on the position of Gerrit van Assendelft and his protégé Cornelis Suys. The two were accused of an unhealthily close collaboration with (some) members of the States of Holland, fraud, corruption, acceptance of gifts and unfair ruling in court. In short, the attack was pretty much targeted at all aspects of 'informal rule' which

is still seen in states with a not yet strongly developed centre. Snouckaart's attack does not mean that there were less of such practices before. We have already seen how the ties between officers of the prince and those of the subjects slowly diminished. The acceptance of gifts became less easily accepted and the number of family members in one institution was at least formally restricted. We must see Snouckaart's move, leaving the numerous personal grievances aside, as one of the many examples that practices which were perfectly 'acceptable' before, became questionable in the course of the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Snouckaart's complaints were taken seriously, but in the end Van Assendelft and Suys were acquitted. Snouckaart had failed, probably because the government could not do without exactly the informal connections he had launched an attack on.

The episode of Snouckaart versus Van Assendelft and Suys does show however, just how gradual the 'separation' of Council and States of Holland was. Even if officially stricter rules were formulated, informal ties between the Holland elites, whether as representative of the prince or the subjects, continued to play an important role. It also shows that the classic 'distinction' between Council and States may not tell much for earlier periods. Reorganisations of the Council could happen on instigation of the States, whose members however could have been influenced again by individuals from the Council. Plans and wishes coming from either the Council or the States could in reality be the initiative of the same institute overlapping networks.

The attack of Snouckaart also shows that at times the count or regent had to sail between a Scylla and Charybdis when appointing the officers. The best way for a prince to avoid his officials to act too independently was to appoint men from outside the established local or regional networks. The only problem was that the subjects usually objected to any 'foreign rule' and that foreign officers could not play the role of brokers as well as already established elites. In 1477 all foreign officers were banished from the Council of Holland on request of the States, but in the second quarter of the sixteenth century two men with origins in Flanders acquired a position in the Council. Because they were not part of the Holland networks, they most likely thanked their appointment to a broker on central level, which shows that the influence of local networks was less deciding than in the years under Van Egmond. The Chamber of Accounts was less protected from foreign influences than the Council. The appointment of 'foreigners' in the Chamber of Accounts caused some troubles at the beginning of the sixteenth century, resulting in the States of Holland not immediately recognising their authority after the death of Philip the Fair in 1506. While the established elites did not forget the interests of the subjects, a foreign councillor like Willem Snouckaart was less burdened by such conflicting loyalties. His strict investigation in a tax matter around 1550 was the start of the long conflict between him on the one side and the States and some members of the Council on the other.

The respect Charles V and his sister Mary of Hungary, as regent, enjoyed in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands, and which Philip II, Charles' son and heir, lacked often is cited as one of the major reasons of resistance against his policy. On the provincial level the disappearance of the 'great men' possibly was just as important. With the death of Gerrit van Assendelft in 1558 the last man with a lot of informal power next to the stadtholders had gone. Vincent Cornelisz. (†1550), Frederik van Renesse (†1538) and to a lesser extent Joost Sasbout (†1545) and Reinier Brunt (†1539) had preceded him. They were worthy successors of the men who had built a powerful position under the Van Egmonds, like receiver-general Thomas Beukelaar (†1516) and the family Oom van Wijngaarden (Floris Florisz. †1532).

The gap the people from the 'age Van Assendelft' left was filled by men from his network like Cornelis Suys and Arnoud Sasbout. They missed however, the prestige, the informal power, the social capital, of their predecessors. The first half of the sixteenth century saw a stricter living by the rules, formalisation of procedures and the separation of the different spheres of influence, slowly carried out and sometimes reversed again in a complicated dance between prince, Council and States. During that process the foundations which held the relations between sovereign and subjects together were gradually eroded. Those foundations were needed more than ever in a time when taxes, trade impediments and the prosecution of heretics caused most feelings of resistance among the subjects. When William of Orange, ironically the stadtholder of Holland, led the Revolt in 1568, the count lacked a group of Holland officials who could form a successful counterpoise.