

Representative Government in the Dutch Provinces

The Controversy over the Stadtholderate (1705–1707) and Simon van Slingelandt

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ABSTRACT

This article reconsiders the way political representation was understood in the early modern Netherlands by focusing on the contemporary contribution of Simon van Slingelandt. His views of the representative nature of the government of the Dutch Republic were deeply polemical when he developed them, but went on to have a profound influence on the later literature and are notably sustained in modern histories of the subject. The best way to nuance the view of political representation our historiography has inherited from Van Slingelandt is by returning to the earlier views he set out to discredit. By examining both views, I thus hope to shed some new light on the representative nature of early modern Dutch government.

KEYWORDS

Dutch Republic, eighteenth century, freedom, political thought, representative government, Simon van Slingelandt

The aim of this article is to provide a more nuanced account of the concept of political representation as it was understood in the early modern Netherlands in comparison to how it is usually described in the existing literature by focusing on the contribution of Simon van Slingelandt. Van Slingelandt was an early eighteenth-century theorist whose views of the representative nature of the government of the Dutch Republic were deeply polemical when he developed them, but went on to have a profound influence on the later literature and are notably sustained in modern histories of the subject. To nuance the view of political representation our historiography has inherited from Van Slingelandt we need to return to the earlier views he set out to discredit. Accordingly, the first half of the article discusses how earlier commentators developed their own theories of representative government in the context of a debate about the best polity for the Dutch provinces. The second half deals with Van Slingelandt's intervention within this debate and the alternative theory he put forth.



In describing these competing theories, I trace the origin of the currently prevailing view of what made early modern Dutch government “representative.” What historians generally have in mind when they speak of political representation in the Dutch Republic is the role of the deputies delegated by local communities, mainly towns, to speak on behalf of their constituents in the ruling assemblies, or “States,” of the provinces and the Republic as a whole. It is the pervasiveness of this practice of delegation that is commonly seen to have been the peculiar feature of early modern Dutch government. And it is the corresponding concept of representation as speaking or acting for someone that dominates the historiography on the political culture of the Republic.¹ Yet what our historiography seems to overlook is that this meaning was but one aspect of the conventional understanding of the concept of political representation at the time.² To better appreciate what was peculiar about Dutch representative government, a much more comprehensive grasp of how the concept was understood is required. An attempt here to recover some of its now forgotten meaning may be especially fruitful.

Provincial Freedom and the Form of the States

A series of conflicts broke out in the Netherlands after the death of Prince William III of Orange in 1702. William’s death left most of the provinces without a single head of government—without a stadtholder. Within weeks, the regents ruling the “States” of the province of Holland, known as its “Noble and Mighty Lords,” declared they would take the prince’s responsibilities upon themselves. Hoping their example would be followed by the States of other provinces, the lords of Holland publicly offered to join hands with them.³ For Holland and the provinces that followed it, this ushered in the “second stadtholderless era.”⁴ In this period, various treatises were pub-

1. H. G. Koenigsberger, *Monarchies, States Generals and Parliaments: The Netherlands in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael A. R. Graves, *The Parliaments of Early Modern Europe* (London: Pearson Education, 2001).

2. See E. H. Kossmann, “Popular Sovereignty at the Beginning of the Dutch Ancien Regime,” in *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic: Three Studies* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2000), 133–166; Theo Veen, “De legitimatie van de soevereiniteit der Staten bij Huber en Kluit” [The legitimation of the sovereignty of the States with Huber and Kluit], *Bijdragen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 97, no. 2 (1982): 182–215.

3. *Verklaringen van de respectieve Provincien gedaen ter vergaderinge van haer Hoogh Mog* [Declarations of the respective provinces issued at the Assembly of the High and Mighty] (The Hague: Paulus Scheltus, 1702), 3.

4. [Jan Wagenaar], *Vaderlandsche historie, vervattende de geschiedenissen der Vereenigde*

lished glorifying the government of the provincial States, and it is in these propagandist works that we find the concept of representation put to work.⁵

Some of these publications responded to further political developments in the spring of 1704. The position of stadtholder became the topic of dispute as a result of the efforts of the province of Friesland to increase the authority of its stadtholder, the heir of William III, Prince John William Friso, in the central government of the Republic. First, the town Leiden opposed the prince's promotion as general of the Republic's infantry. Leiden protested that to hand more power to Friso would be to ruin Dutch freedom.⁶ Although this objection did not immediately have the desired effect, it soon played an important role in halting the further increase of the prince's influence. The same objection was repeated in August 1705 when the provinces discussed the possibility of admitting Friso into the council of state, the Republic's central executive body. Again, increasing Friso's authority was fiercely opposed, this time by the provinces Utrecht, Holland, and Zeeland.⁷ The matter of Friso's admission remained unresolved until the spring of 1707. In the intermediate period, the critics of the stadtholderate, those in Holland above all, turned to the pen to gain support for their cause.⁸

The most penetrating defenses of the position of Holland and its allies were the two massive volumes *Mirror of State of the United Netherlands* (1706 and 1707) and the highly polemical *Holland's Ancient Freedom, without the Stadtholderate* published in 1706. The *Mirror of State* was written by Romeyn de Hooghe, a renowned republican thinker and artist who made the engravings for all three books.⁹ The author of *Holland's Ancient Freedom* was Emanuel van der Hoeven who had just completed a major biography

Nederlanden [National history, containing the histories of the United Netherlands], vol. 17 (Amsterdam: Isaak Tirion, 1757), 132–134.

5. Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 962–963.

6. *Extract uyt de resolutie van de Heeren van de grote vroetschap der stad Leyden* [Extract from the Resolution of the Lords of the Great Council of the Town Leiden] ([1704]), 12.

7. *Extract uyt de resolutien van de Hoogh Mog: Heeren Staaten Generaal* [Extract from the Resolutions of the High and Mighty Lords States General] ([1705]). See Marijke Bruggeman, *Nassau en de macht van Oranje: De strijd van de Friese Nassaus voor erkenning van hun rechten, 1702–1747* [Nassau and the Power of Orange: The struggle of the Frisian Nassaus for recognition of their rights, 1702–1747] (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 241–246.

8. [Wagenaar], *Vaderlandsche historie*, XVII, 274–276.

9. Jonathan Israel, *Monarchy, Orangism, and Republicanism in the Later Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdams centrum voor de studie van de Gouden Eeuw, 2004), esp. 12–14; Henk van Nierop, *The Life of Romeyn de Hooghe 1645–1708: Prints, Pamphlets, and Politics in the Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 396–401.

of the brothers De Witt, symbols of the “first stadtholderless era.”¹⁰ In this work, Van der Hoeven celebrates the return of a free States government.¹¹ Looking to win over the lords of the other provinces to join Holland’s cause, De Hooghe and Van der Hoeven saw themselves as needing to refute the abiding view that in its “old and perfect form,” the government of the Dutch provinces resembled a mixture of the freedom of the town councils or *vroedschappen*, the nobles, and the authority of a stadtholder. The outcome of this vision of Dutch constitutional history was the claim that the towns, nobility, and stadtholder together “possess sovereignty.” This is how the argument is stated, for example, in *Holland’s Salvation and Disasters*, published in 1686 at the height of William III’s power.¹²

Responding to these claims, the propagandists of the States of Holland turn to a competing historical interpretation of the traditional order or “ancient state” of the Dutch provinces. On this account, the form of government most suited to living in freedom is the one established by the ancient forefathers of the Dutch.¹³ The reason it is so important for these writers to stress this ancient freedom is it enables them to develop two further claims about the original form of government. It first enables them to bring out the deep-seated aversion to monarchy that, as De Hooghe writes, moved the Dutch throughout the ages to retain “their old way of arranging their governments.”¹⁴ The polemical point is drawn out by Van der Hoeven who assures us that stadtholders are no different from “counts, princes, dukes, kings, and emperors.” As Van der Hoeven sees it, the stadtholders proved themselves to be no better than other monarchs by oppressing the people of Holland. It was, he affirms, only thanks to Holland’s knighthood, nobles, and towns that the license of monarchs was eventually “bridled” and freedom preserved.¹⁵ This takes us to the second claim these writers unfold. Echoing a platitude of humanist historiography, they argue that the old Dutch government was free

10. Wyger R. E. Velema, “Anti-Monarchism in Early Modern Dutch Political Thought,” in *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 31–51, here 43–44.

11. Emanuel van der Hoeven, *Leeven en dood der doorlugtige heeren gebroeders Cornelis de Witt . . . en Johan de Witt* [Life and death of the illustrious brothers Cornelis de Witt and Johan de Witt] (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1705), I:1.

12. Dionisius du Toict, *Hollands heyll’ en rampen ofte desselfs gelukk’ en ongelukken* [Holland’s salvation and disasters or its fortune and misfortunes] (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1686), 2:333. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

13. Romeyn de Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat des Vereenigde Nederlands* [Mirror of State of the United Netherlands], vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1706), 1:18. Also see Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid, buyten het Stadhouderschap* [Holland’s ancient freedom, without the stadtholderate] (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1706), 1.1:12.

14. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 1:4.

15. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, sig. b1v.

because its form mirrored the traditional orders, or “States” of the people: the nobles or knighthood (*ridderschap*) and towns. The principal authority of De Hooghe and Van der Hoeven is Hugo Grotius who, at the outset of his *Annals*, proclaims that it is by these customs and “by this state of government” that peace and equity have survived in the Netherlands.¹⁶

The propagandists of provincial freedom go out of their way to bring out the correspondence between the form of government they describe and the order of the people’s estates. They usually bring out the resemblance by invoking a bodily metaphor: members of the provincial States are said to constitute or make up (*uytmaken*) the whole people. With the ancients, De Hooghe informs us, we can see the true free States government, which consisted “of nobles and strongholds which together constituted the people.”¹⁷ In the hands of earlier writers, the argument had sometimes been stretched to include a further point. Not content to sketch only the outlines of government, some writers had proceeded to furnish a more precise account of how governors ought to be elected from the orders of society. This is the strategy we encounter, for example, in Johan Uytenhage de Mist’s *Discourse of the Common Freedom* of 1684. Uytenhage de Mist writes that in Holland’s old government, the most notable citizens of the towns and the inhabitants of the countryside “chose their own magistrates and *vroedtschappen*.”¹⁸ Picking up the argument, Van der Hoeven reiterates that the ancient Dutch subjected themselves only “to governors chosen from the people and the knights.”¹⁹

The States propagandists are well aware that with the nobles and towns scattered across the country it will be “impracticable,” as Uytenhage de Mist highlights, to try to bring the rulers of all regions to a single place. The solution is that “from each region one or more persons are sent to convene in a common assembly of all regions in which they speak on behalf of their constituents.”²⁰ The polemicists of the 1700s place even more emphasis on the need to delegate the exercise of sovereignty, or “supreme power,” to a States assembly.²¹ Van der Hoeven recounts that when the ancient Dutch found themselves in dire situations, they summoned an assembly of persons each

16. Hugo de Groot, *Nederlandsche jaerboecken en historien* [Dutch annals and histories], trans. Joan Gorris (Amsterdam: the widow of Joannes van Someren, Abraham Wolfgank and Hendrik and Dirk Boom, 1681), 4.

17. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, I, 1:71.

18. [Johan Uytenhage de Mist], *Vertoog van de algemeene vryheydt der Staten van Hollandt ende West-Vrieslandt* [Discourse of the common freedom of the States of Holland and West-Friesland] (S.l., 1684), 28.

19. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands Aeloude Vryheid*, 1.1:15.

20. [Uytenhage de Mist], *Vertoog van de algemeene vryheydt*, 11.

21. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.1:18.

delegated by their own “tribunal, township, hamlet, or district.” This assembly had “the power of peace and war and the imposition of taxes” to finance the common defense against the sea and foreign enemies.²² De Hooghe likewise maintains that in times of need the nobles and towns used to put “their heads together.” The right of the nobles and towns, he confirms, has always been to exercise the sovereignty of the “body of the whole people.” To make this exercise possible the towns chose “common men or councils” to present the popular interests in an assembly, where the “noble knights and lords” spoke for the remaining countryside.²³

The Theory of Representative Government

This view of an unchanged form of government throughout Dutch history was long-standing. When the same constitutional vision had been delineated by earlier writers, they sometimes added a further and absolutely crucial claim about the nature of this polity. The classic text to do so was François Vranck’s *Short Exposition of the Right Exercised of All Old Times by the Knighthood, Nobles, and Towns*, first published on the authority of the States of Holland in 1587 and reprinted countless times thereafter. The *Short Exposition’s* argument is, that when the magistrates and councils of the towns convene with the assembled nobles, it is possible to say all of them together “represent (*representeren*) the entire state and the whole body of the inhabitants” of Holland.²⁴ To this terminological point, Vranck adds that when the nobles and towns are duly assembled they also “represent the States of this country.”²⁵ Although Vranck admits that the nobility and urban magistrates can only assemble by way of deputies, he insists that the agents of the nobles and towns do not become the subjects of sovereign power themselves. Vranck professes great faith in the binding power of the instruction (the “burden and resolution”) the deputies of the town councils receive from their principals. Such is his faith that he concludes that the right of sovereignty is not transferred to “any particular persons or commissioners in particular,” but remains with the town councils, whom the deputies represent by virtue of their commissions.²⁶ This transformative potential of representation, which

22. *Ibid.*, 1.1:15–16.

23. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 1:62.

24. [François Vranck], *Corte verthooninge van het recht byden Ridderschap, edelen, ende steden van Hollandt ende Westvrieslant* [Short exposition of the right of the knighthood, nobles, and towns of Holland and Westfriesland] (Rotterdam: Matthijs Bastiaensz., [1587]), sig. b1v.

25. *Ibid.*, sig. b2r.

26. *Ibid.*, sig. b3v.

allows agents to act as if they were their principals, informs the thinking of Vranck and his followers so profoundly that they generally refer to the nobles and towns of a province, as well as to the assembly of their deputies, simply as “the States of the country.”

The *Short Exposition* was one of the fundamental constitutional documents of Dutch politics and its line of reasoning resounds throughout the succeeding literature, especially in the immensely influential *Inquiry into the Right of Supreme Power Entitled to the Noble and Mighty Lords*. This treatise by Dirk Graswinckel was published after his death in 1667. Graswinckel draws on Vranck’s argument to assert that in Holland “we recognize the Noble and Mighty Lords, the Lords States of Holland and Westvriesland” as “our sovereign supreme powers.” The reason these lords are rightfully sovereign, Graswinckel underlines, is “because they are represented by the very title and collective capacity of the knighthood, nobles, and towns.”²⁷ The resonance of the *Short Exposition* was even further amplified by the fact that it was frequently appended to commentaries that appealed to its authority. This is also seen in *Holland’s Ancient Freedom*, where Van der Hoeven presents it as an accurate description of the old form of government.²⁸ De Hooghe even goes so far as to integrate the whole text into his own argument, likewise introducing it as an authentic account of the “true ancient form of the state and its government.”²⁹

In their own accounts, however, De Hooghe and Van der Hoeven choose to redescribe the argument by invoking a wider political vocabulary that by their time had come into currency. The almost identical claim they advance is that if the assembly has the right to speak for the nobles and towns based on the fact that it is made of the same members, then it is also possible to say the assembly constitutes an image (*beeld*) of the nobles and towns, and the role of the deputies is to depict or portray (*verbeelden* or *uitbeelden*) their constituents. We find this vital point presented in *Holland’s Ancient Freedom* as an outcome of the Dutch civic lifestyle. Van der Hoeven here adds that, in contrast to other Germanic tribes, the forefathers of the Dutch settled in towns, which they ruled in a free manner. The result was that from this point forward, the assembly of the States was made up of the knighthood and deputies of the towns. The reason, again, is because otherwise “such towns cannot be depicted (*verbeeld werden*).”³⁰

27. Dirk Graswinckel, *Nasporing van het recht van de opperste macht toekomende de Edele Groot Mogende Heeren Staten van Holland en Westvriesland* [Inquiry into the right of supreme power entitled to the noble and mighty lords of Holland and Westfriesland] (Rotterdam: Joannes Naeranus, 1667), 376.

28. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 2:19.

29. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 1:127.

30. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.1:61.

In turning to this extended vocabulary, the States propagandists build on the same imagery that controlled Dutch thinking about government since Vranck's *Short Exposition*. The concept the verb *verbeelden* at the beginning of the eighteenth century expressed was exactly that of representing something. As the *New Dictionary of Latin and Dutch Languages* of 1704 testifies, this meaning had its origin in two distinct classical contexts. One standard use of *verbeelden* and its synonym *uitbeelden* mentioned in the *Dictionary* is the saying "to depict something to be present."³¹ This usage goes back to Pliny's famous anecdote about a picture of curtains so realistically represented (*repraesentata*) their viewer was deceived into believing the curtains were actually present.³² Another idiomatic use of *verbeelden*, according to the *Dictionary*, was the phrase "to depict a person," explained as signifying the act of acting for someone.³³ This phrase took its political meaning from Cicero's *De officiis*, from his injunction that a magistrate should always consider himself to bear the person of his city (*gerere personam civitatis*). By the early modern period, this expression (as Cicero's seventeenth-century editor illustrates) had acquired the additional meaning of acting for "the whole people" of the city.³⁴ It is the confluence of these two meanings we encounter in the Dutch political writings. This is perhaps best illustrated with a last example from the *Dictionary*. When this work of 1704 translates Cicero's Latin adage into Dutch, it becomes the precise phrase the States writers adopted shortly thereafter: "to depict a town."³⁵

These are the main concepts Dutch political writers had in mind when they said the deputies in the provincial assembly "make up" and "represent," "depict," or "portray" their constituents. When these writers invoke this vocabulary, they join together the two meanings mentioned above. In Graswinckel's *Inquiry*, the right of an agent to act on behalf of someone else is said to derive from the representative relationship that exists between the agent and his principal. According to Graswinckel's theocratic vision of politics, all worldly sovereignty comes from God, by whom alone political rulers can be held accountable. The ruler, in this view, is a representative portrayal (*representative uitbeelding*) of God, and therefore authorized to act on God's behalf. For as Graswinckel summarizes his theory: "those who rep-

31. S. Hanot, *Nieuw woordenboek der Nederlantsche en Latynsche tale* [New dictionary of the Dutch and Latin languages], ed. D. van Hoogstraten (Amsterdam: Hendrik Boom, the widow of Dirk Boom and François Halma; Dordrecht: Dirk Goris, 1704), 813, 909.

32. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historiae* [Natural history], vol. 3 (Leiden: Hack, 1668), 577.

33. Hanot, *Nieuw woordenboek*, 813.

34. Cicero, *De officiis libri tres* [Three books on moral duties], ed. Johannes Georgius Graevius (Amsterdam: Pieter and Joan Blaeu, 1688), 136.

35. Hanot, *Nieuw woordenboek*, 744.

resent God in government are subjected to Him whose name they portray and whose judgments they carry out.”³⁶

Returning to the polemicists of the first decade of the eighteenth century, we see that like Graswinckel they are interested in the connection between the two meanings of representation. They affirm that when a deputy speaks for his town or a nobleman speaks for the countryside, they have to be understood to depict their constituency as a whole. These later writers accordingly full-heartedly confirm that—as Van der Hoeven paraphrases the *Short Exposition*—the colleges of the towns together with the assembly of the nobles “depict the entire state and the whole body of the inhabitants.”³⁷ Van der Hoeven expresses the same idea with respect to the medieval polity of Holland. When the count wished to levy taxes, he says, he first needed to obtain the consent of the assembly of nobles who depicted “the common knighthood.”³⁸ The full force of the argument of these later writers, however, comes from the way in which they extend this way of seeing the role of the representative to every Dutch province. With regard to the town of Deventer in the province of Overijssel, De Hooghe notes that its assembly depicts “the entire town.”³⁹ And in an earlier passage he speaks in the same way of the province of Zeeland, observing that although most nobles have lost their votes to the towns, one of them, the marquis, retains his place in the assembly over which he presides and where he portrays “the entire knighthood and the whole of Zeeland.”⁴⁰

At the same time, the States writers also have a deeper interest in the connection between the idea that nobles and deputies of the towns form an image of the States and their right to act for the whole body of the people. The essential tenet of the theory of representative government being brought back to prominence in the first decade of the eighteenth century concerns the sovereignty of the province. As Graswinckel explains, in the thinking of these writers, because the deputies attending the provincial assembly “make up the entire state of the province,” what is represented in this assembly “is sovereignty itself.”⁴¹ The additional point of the eighteenth-century writers is that since the States assembly exercises sovereign power in the name of the people, the people really govern themselves and are thus free. De Hooghe sets forth precisely this argument in the *Mirror of State*. He first hints at it in the first volume, observing that in the old government the towns and knighthood depicted “the free supremacy of the

36. Graswinckel, *Nasporinge*, 94.

37. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 2:66.

38. *Ibid.*, 1.2:6.

39. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 5:126.

40. *Ibid.*, 1, 2:364.

41. Graswinckel, *Nasporinge*, 771.

country.”⁴² At this point, De Hooghe does not explain why a government of the States should be considered free. But in his second volume, he goes on to provide a detailed answer to this exact question. He writes that due to the representative nature of the Dutch polity, the people retain their original power. This informs his historical claim that no ruler, not even the former dukes and counts, ever truly held a sovereign right over the Dutch provinces. The reason is that “supreme lordship” always resided with the “free people” of each country. And it was the function of the States to perform “the representation,” or fashion and display “the image and person” of these free peoples.⁴³

The crux of the argument of these writers is accordingly that under the rule of the States the people do not give up their rights of sovereignty. This postulate underpins their doctrine of States supremacy, and it similarly supports one of the most striking features of their works: their ferocious attacks on the authority of every institution that ever encroached upon the exclusive sovereignty of the provincial States. When discussing medieval history, the main targets of these writers tend to be the former monarchs of the Netherlands. When referring to more recent times, they often focus on the “High and Mighty Lords,” the assembly of the States General. The argument is that only the lords of the provinces act directly for the people, which entails that public authority can only ever be delegated by the provincial States and remains subjected to them. This line of thought is best laid out by De Hooghe. His account of the relationship between the loci of political power in the Netherlands highlights that the “duke, count, or lord” of a province served only as “portrayer” of the States because the latter “could not remain assembled at all times.” The monarch depicted the States in the same way the States represented the people.⁴⁴ Turning to the assembly of the States General, De Hooghe maintains that the picture of sovereignty it shows is only “somewhat representative” because the provincial States never give up their sovereignty, “a supremacy that resides in all the inhabitants of a country.”⁴⁵ The implication is therefore that—as Van der Hoeven explains—“every province possesses its own complete sovereignty” due to the fact that “there are no secondary supreme powers in a country.”⁴⁶

This way of framing the matter may appear to leave the argument of the advocates of the lords of the provincial States exposed. If the deputies of the

42. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 1:231.

43. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1707), 1:78. Also see Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.1:95.

44. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 2, 1:144. Also see *ibid.*, 1, 1:73; Van der Hoeven, *Hollands Aeloude Vryheid*, 1.1:120, 1.2:3.

45. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 2, 1:199, 207–208.

46. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.2:342.

provinces in the States General do not possess “supreme power,” then how much authority can the deputies in the provincial States possess? Just like their counterparts in the States General, the provinces’ lords are not “sovereigns” but act as mere “proxies or deputies.” Anticipating this objection, the States writers focus on the bond between a deputy and his principal. What we need to keep in mind, as Van der Hoeven notes, is that a deputy “portrays the position of his sovereign” and that anyone who acts in some manner to him “does the same to his master.”⁴⁷ Once we appreciate the nature of this relationship between principal and deputy, the States writers next suggest, we cannot fail to see that the assembled nobles and deputies of the towns really do constitute “an image of sovereignty.” A significant corollary of this way of seeing things is that a province’s sovereignty can only ever be appropriately represented when all its members consent to the same policy and none of them is “overruled” by its peers. The States writers notably stress this point with respect to taxes,⁴⁸ but their argument has more general relevance. As De Hooghe says about the province of Gelderland, “none of these members is sovereign in himself, but each member who is admitted to the assembly is a free and complete member and entitled to delegate a body of sovereignty.”⁴⁹ The underlying holistic ideal is perfectly captured by Van der Hoeven in the form of a series of anecdotes at the end of *Holland’s Ancient Freedom*. Here, he illustrates up to which point a provincial assembly can be said to form a truthful portrait of the nobles and towns. He recalls that in 1688, to satisfy his personal ambitions, William III suppressed Holland’s freedom by committing the powers of its assembly to a few lords who were under his control. William then made these lords depict the whole body of the assembly and had them decide on behalf of all its members, as if each of them had approved the policies they ratified.⁵⁰ The point, then, is that such an assembly ceases to be a true representation of the province.

The outcome of this account of provincial freedom is that there is only one original form of government that suits all Dutch provinces. This is a polity in which, as the *Short Exposition* concludes, “the sovereignty of the country is with the States in all matters.”⁵¹ The later writers confirm that in Holland the States “have always possessed the supreme power” and extend this perspective to the other provinces as well.⁵² The success of their strategy is evidenced by a declaration of the knighthood and towns of the province

47. *Ibid.*, 1.2:343.

48. See [Uytenhage de Mist], *Verloog van de algemeene vryheydt*, 12.

49. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 1:83.

50. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.2:399–400. See *ibid.*, 1.2:325.

51. [Vranck], *Corte verthooninge*, sig. [b4r].

52. Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.2:2.

of Overijssel of 1707. In this declaration, the lords of Overijssel subscribe to the two claims the writers from Holland had set out to defend. Van der Hoeven had argued that a free government in which the States rule does not need a stadtholder. Echoing him word for word, the lords of Overijssel affirm that there is no place in their province for a stadtholder to “represent” the States.⁵³ Their declaration likewise confirms that there is thus no reason ever to appoint another stadtholder nor to “undermine freedom” by admitting Prince Friso into the council of state.⁵⁴ This for now ended the debate about the stadtholderate.⁵⁵

Freedom under Attack: Simon van Slingelandt

Despite the success of the argument above, it also invited fierce opposition from the pro-stadtholder party, which remained strong, especially in the northern provinces where Prince Friso was stadtholder. In Groningen, for example, a *Manifest* of 1708 denounced those who “take the word freedom in their mouths” as a disguise for their own desire to rule.⁵⁶ The opposition to Holland and their allies grew more widespread after 1713, when the costly Dutch involvement in the war of the Spanish succession came to an end.⁵⁷ Some polemicists now blamed the provincial rulers for the high financial costs of the Dutch war effort, accusing the regents of having stolen the country’s resources under a false “appearance of freedom.”⁵⁸ This accusation was soon developed by the apologists of the stadtholderate into the claim that, even more than the greed of the regents, the political system itself was to blame. The *Clapping Parrot* of 1714 starts by condemning the regents for hiding behind privileges to suppress and rob their citizens. But it adds that the real fault is with the existing form of supreme government, which consists of

53. *Ibid.*, 1.2:410–411.

54. *Extract uyt het register der resolutien van de Hoogh Mog: Heeren Staten Generaal* [Extract from the Register of the Resolutions of the High and Mighty Lords States General] ([1707]), 3–5, 7.

55. [Wagenaar], *Vaderlandsche historie*, 17, 297–299.

56. *Manifest opgesteld wegen jonckeren, hovelingen, eygen erfjden en volmachten der Ommelanden* [Manifest drafted on behalf of jonkheeren, courtiers, landowners, and deputies of the Ommelanden] (s.l. [1708]), sig. a1v.

57. Donald Haks, *Vaderland en Vrede, 1672–1713: Publiciteit over de Nederlandse Republiek in oorlog* [Nation and Peace, 1672–1713: Publishing on the Dutch Republic at War] (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), 285–286.

58. See “Aanmerkingen over den tegenwoordigen stant der Nederlantsche zaken buiten het Stadhouderschap” [Comments on the present state of Dutch Affairs without the stadtholderate], in *Vierde vervolg van de Latynsche en Nederduitsche keurdichten* (Utrecht: Pieter van der Goes, 1729), 37–55, here 52.

“many members who each have their own interests.”⁵⁹ The *Clapping Parrot* claims that the only way to solve this problem is by restoring the authority of the stadtholder.⁶⁰

This was also the standpoint of the secretary of the council of state, Simon van Slingelandt, who formulated a powerful counterblast to the prevailing view of political freedom. The council of state wanted to replenish the Republic’s treasury, and to this end, Van Slingelandt tried to persuade the provincial lords to delegate deputies who were endowed with sufficient authority to remedy the constitutional defects preventing the provinces from reaching agreement about taxes. This is what Van Slingelandt himself tells us in his *Discourse on the Defects in the Present Constitution of the State of the United Netherlands*, which he wrote in January 1716.⁶¹ To achieve his purpose Van Slingelandt recognizes that he has to convince the provincial lords to renounce their allegiance to the “unbridled freedom fashionable nowadays,” which, according to Van Slingelandt, had become institutionalized as a capital defect in the Republic’s central government.⁶² He directs his attention to the heart of the problem in his *Dissertation on the Old Government of Holland*, which he finished sometime later in 1716. This piece contains a critical commentary on the prevailing doctrine of the representative sovereignty of the States of Holland. To subvert the dominant view of representation in Holland, Van Slingelandt sets out to demonstrate that the historical analysis on which it rests is itself flawed.

Van Slingelandt partially bases his historical survey on some of the revisionist scholarship of the seventeenth century, which had already challenged the orthodoxy that the States had always been sovereign. But significantly he also undertakes his own analysis of surviving documents. His conclusion—contradicting the propagandists of the States of Holland—is that the counts possessed the main parts of sovereign power.⁶³ He thus denies that the States had any part in sovereignty.⁶⁴ He identifies the *Short Exposition* as the principal source of the mistaken view that the count received sovereignty from

59. *De klappende papegay* [The clapping parrot] (S.l., [1714]), sig. a2v, a3v.

60. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

61. Simon van Slingelandt, “Discours over de defecten in de jeegenwoordige constitutie der regeering van den Staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden” [Discourse on the defects in the present constitution of the state of the United Netherlands], in *Staatkundige geschriften*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Petrus Schouten, 1784), 171–314, here 179.

62. *Ibid.*, 190–191.

63. Simon van Slingelandt, “Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland onder de Graaven, en van de Verandering daar in gevallen sedert de Troublen” [Dissertation on the Old Government of Holland and on the changes made in it since the Troubles], in *Staatkundige geschriften*, 1, 1–150, here 12.

64. *Ibid.*, 29.

the States, and briskly responds that the States had neither “a right of sovereignty” themselves nor “the power to confer sovereignty” on someone else.⁶⁵ This does not mean, however, that Vranck and his followers had been entirely wrong about the rights of the States in medieval times. Van Slingelandt has no problem agreeing that the States of Holland have long had the right to represent the inhabitants. He is also perfectly willing to accept that the States spoke for the people. His discussion likewise resembles that of his adversaries by taking it for granted that it is possible to refer both to the nobles and towns and to the provincial assembly as “the States” of Holland.⁶⁶ But for Van Slingelandt what is crucial is that the States had their right to represent the people only by concession of the counts. It was the count who initially asked the nobles for advice. And it was also the count who eventually allowed the towns to partake in his deliberations with the nobility.⁶⁷ Based on these findings, Van Slingelandt infers that Holland in medieval times was essentially a monarchy, having a “one-headed” government. This monarchy was “limited” or “mixed” only insofar as the counts were forced to remain on good terms with the States in order to gain their approval for taxes.⁶⁸

Van Slingelandt’s provocative message is that, in his view, the true government of Holland not only represents the nobles and towns, but also contains a monarchical element that embodies its unity.⁶⁹ He further claims that Holland retained this mixed form of government during the early years of the revolt against Spain.⁷⁰ As such, he rejects the much-repeated view that a government cannot be free if it includes some monarchical element that represents sovereignty.⁷¹ As Van Slingelandt recounts, in 1572, the States of Holland ruled with Prince William of Orange, whom they had restored to his office of stadtholder and representative of Philip II of Spain.⁷² At this point, the legislative power remained *de iure* with Philip, and was exercised by the stadtholder.⁷³ Contradicting the *Short Exposition* and echoing some of the apologists of the stadtholderate,⁷⁴ Van Slingelandt judges that the ef-

65. *Ibid.*, 32.

66. *Ibid.*, 65.

67. *Ibid.*, 33.

68. *Ibid.*, 10, 15.

69. I. Leonard Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution: History and Politics in the Dutch Republic* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 47–50.

70. Van Slingelandt, “Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland,” 92, 104.

71. See “Den regten Hollander” [The True Hollander], in *Nederduitse en Latynse keurdichten, by een verzamelt door de liefhebbers der oude Hollandse vryheit* (Rotterdam: Pieter van der Goes, 1710), 509–511.

72. Van Slingelandt, “Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland,” 87.

73. *Ibid.*, 93.

74. [Vranck], *Corte verthoeninge*, sig. [b4r]. Also see *De klappende papegay*, 8.

fectiveness of government in these years was determined by the combined authority of the States and the prince.⁷⁵ It was only thanks to the efforts of William that unity was preserved.⁷⁶ Van Slingelandt draws out the polemical implication of his historical exercise in the *Discourse*. Here, he writes that the defects, which in his time thwarted the Republic from acting with unity, had their origin in the choices that had been made after William's death in 1584.⁷⁷ It was then that the States of Holland first assumed absolute power and started to use "that part of sovereignty which had previously belonged to the count in an absolute way."⁷⁸ The regents of Holland then modified the regulations of decision-making in the assembly of the States, thereby making it "extremely difficult to arrive at uniform decisions." While the lords of Holland thus kept the "outward form" of government the same, they changed its internal constitution with disastrous results.⁷⁹

The outcome of the prevailing account of provincial freedom had been that the people could only be well-represented if sovereignty is with the States. Van Slingelandt's opposite conclusion is that the existing defect of government can only be remedied by restoring its authority and restricting freedom.⁸⁰ He offers two possibilities. Either the States assembly should be allowed to make decisions without the uniform consent of its members, or in case of disagreement the issue must be submitted to the decision of a stadtholder or other "neutral" persons.⁸¹ What these solutions have in common, Van Slingelandt highlights,⁸² is that they are both irreconcilable with the ideal of provincial freedom dominant at the time. Neither solution was compatible with the idea that the province can only be adequately represented when the deputies of the nobles and towns all agree on new policies. The question we must therefore ask is what Van Slingelandt has to say about the precise manner in which the States represent the province.

The Representative Body of the States

The immediate challenge facing Van Slingelandt was how to show that the States can be lawfully represented by a minority of their members. As he

75. Van Slingelandt, "Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland," 98–99.

76. *Ibid.*, 95.

77. Van Slingelandt, "Discours over de defecten in de jeegenwoordige constitutie," 202, 223.

78. Van Slingelandt, "Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland," 105.

79. *Ibid.*, 106, 115, 118.

80. Van Slingelandt, "Discours over de defecten in de jeegenwoordige constitutie," 249.

81. *Ibid.*, 205, 234, 236–237.

82. Van Slingelandt, "Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland," 116.

focuses on this issue, he finds himself having to confront the conventional holism: the idea that the States of Holland together constitute an image or representation of the “whole people.” In formulating his response, Van Slingelandt leaves behind the argument of the *Short Exposition*. Instead, he turns to the extended analysis of the bodily resemblance of the States, which had been developed in the subsequent commentaries and brought into renewed circulation by the polemicists of the 1700s. Van Slingelandt recalls two additions to this political vocabulary. He first invokes and endorses one of the basic claims of his adversaries, confirming that the nobles and towns together make up (*uitmaaken*) the States. He recounts that initially the nobles “made up” the States of Holland on their own, after which the towns came to “make up” the States along with the nobility.⁸³ The underlying corporatism and holism are brought out by Van Slingelandt in his *Discourse*. There, he applies the same way of talking to the union of the Dutch provinces and refers to the provinces separately as members that “collectively make up the body of the Republic.”⁸⁴

In his analysis of the “body” of the States of Holland, Van Slingelandt concentrates on its composition under the last counts, when it “consisted of the nobles and towns.”⁸⁵ It is here that he draws our attention to another addition to the same political vocabulary. He now observes that ever since the larger towns of Holland became “fellow members” of the States, it has been the role of the nobles to speak for the smaller towns in the assembly. Van Slingelandt makes this point by writing that since then the nobles “have represented or taken the place of (*vervangen*) the smaller towns and the countryside.”⁸⁶ He repeats this remark in his *Indication of the True Causes of the Present Great Decline in the General Government of the State of the United Netherlands* of 1717. In this work, he stresses even more strongly that before the revolt, Holland’s smaller towns were “entirely substituted.”⁸⁷ Van Slingelandt was not the first commentator to frame this point in this way. We already encounter the same usage in the treatises of his opponents, who likewise note that when some member of the States speaks for another member in the assembly, the first member substitutes for the other.⁸⁸ Furthermore,

83. *Ibid.*, 32, 44.

84. Van Slingelandt, “Discours over de defecten in de jeegenwoordige constitutie,” 203.

85. Van Slingelandt, “Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland,” 33–36.

86. *Ibid.*, 38.

87. Van Slingelandt, “Aanwysing van de waare oorsaaken van het jeegenwoordig groot verval in de generaale regeering van den Staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden” [Indications of the true causes of the present great delapidation of the general government of the State of the United Netherlands], in *Staatkundige geschriften*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Petrus Schouten, 1784), 1–90, here 23.

88. De Hooghe, *Spiegel van Staat*, 1, 2:358. Also see Van der Hoeven, *Hollands aeloude vryheid*, 1.2:73.

this way of speaking can also be found in the writings of the defenders of the stadtholderate. If we look at the aforementioned *Holland's Salvation and Disasters*, for example, we again read that before the larger towns were admitted into Holland's assembly, the nobles were allowed to "replace" the citizens of the towns.⁸⁹

But in contrast with the manner the verb *vervangen* is used in these earlier works, Van Slingelandt proceeds to draw out one further implication. For him, the key observation is not only that the smaller towns were represented in the sense that the nobles spoke on their behalf, but also that the substituted towns had no right to speak for themselves. Van Slingelandt's pivotal claim is that the represented members of the States are excluded from participation in its meetings. He first introduces this claim in speaking of a declaration of the nobility of 1555. In this document, he explains, it is said that some nobles were duly authorized to take the place and act in the name of the rest of the nobility, as well as the smaller towns and countryside "in the same way as before." What this means, Van Slingelandt insists, is that the represented members of the States were not allowed to send their own deputies to speak on their behalf, since this task was now entrusted to the nobles. Van Slingelandt illustrates his point with the case of the region of Voorne, a part of Holland's countryside. Voorne had long been represented by the nobles and the larger towns. And therefore, Van Slingelandt stresses, no deputies could be admitted into the assembly on behalf of this region, for the precise reason that "the knighthood and nobles already represented them."⁹⁰

This is where Van Slingelandt decisively turns against the prevailing understanding of the representative nature of the States. His attack on the existing orthodoxy involves him in making a positive as well as a negative contribution to the debate. He first rejects the essential tenet of the theory shared by the States propagandists and their more concessive opponents. It had usually been argued that the assembly of the States has the right to exercise, or "represent," sovereignty, because the assembly resembles the form of the orders of the people, and thus resembles the entire province. This connection between the right to act for the people and the representation of their body is also highlighted in the pro-stadtholderate *Holland's Salvation and Disasters*. The author of this work confirms that sovereignty in Holland is represented by the "form" of government, which constitutes an image of the whole people.⁹¹ By contrast, Van Slingelandt never mentions the repre-

89. Du Toict, *Hollands heyll' en rampen*, 2:8.

90. Van Slingelandt, "Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland," 39.

91. Du Toict, *Hollands heyll' en rampen*, 2:435.

sentative form of the States—a deafening silence noted and underlined by some of his followers near the end of the century.⁹²

The reductive thrust of Van Slingelandt's view of political representation also shows in his discussion of the effect of the admission of the smaller towns into the assembly of the States. This development had not traditionally attracted the attention of writers concerned with the government of the provinces. For Van Slingelandt, however, their importance is that they illustrate the relevance of his revised view of representation. His account is cast in the form of a narrative explaining how the nobility lost a good deal of its influence during the revolt. Van Slingelandt first emphasizes that the influence of the nobility before the admission of the smaller towns rested on its right to represent these towns and the countryside, and to consent to taxes on their behalf. The reason was that these towns and the countryside "together contributed more to the taxes than the six larger towns." This right of the nobles was "such a notable privilege" that it gave them "a firm hold on the rudder of government."⁹³ The nobility lost this control with the admission of the smaller towns as "ordinary members."⁹⁴ This meant, as Van Slingelandt somewhat dramatically concludes, that "the rudder of government was suddenly transferred from the nobility to the burgomasters and councils of the towns."⁹⁵

The chief significance of this way of seeing the relationship between members of the States becomes apparent as soon as Van Slingelandt turns to the political problems of his own time. What his account highlights is that a government can only be claimed to successfully represent its people if it effectively exercises the powers entrusted to it. Van Slingelandt's choice to concentrate on this aspect of representation does not indicate that he abandons the traditional view that the assembly of the States—like the people whom it represents—constitutes one body. Instead, he confirms the contemporary criticism that the problem with the existing mode of government is precisely that this body has become ineffective; it enables the assembly to be dragged into endless deliberations by the conflicting interests of its

92. A. G. Waelwyk, *Vaderlandsche remarques volgens en op de Staatkundige geschriften van Mr. Simon van Slingelandt* [Remarks following and on the political writings of Mr. Simon van Slingelandt] (The Hague: Jan Abraham Bouvink, 1787), 7–8; Johan Canter de Munck, *De tegenswoordige regeeringsvorm der Zeven Vereenigde Provintien, gehandhaafd en verdedigd* [The existing form of government of the seven united provinces, maintained and defended] (Middelburg: Henrik and Marinus van Osch, 1787), 188–189, 209.

93. Van Slingelandt, "Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland," 39.

94. *Ibid.*, 40–42.

95. *Ibid.*, 44.

members.⁹⁶ His constitutional argument is that after the States of Holland acquired absolute sovereignty, they compromised the capacity of government to act effectively for the body of the people, and thus to represent it. Because as he describes the consequence of this alteration, he takes “the rudder of government formerly residing in the common body or in the assembly representing it” to have been “transferred to the particular members in such a way that, since those changes, the primary functions of the body depend on each member separately.”⁹⁷

The final outcome of Van Slingelandt’s analysis is his claim that the only prerequisite to be met before it would be correct to say that the States are being represented is that their sovereignty is exercised.⁹⁸ It is precisely this claim Van Slingelandt advances to support his proposal for the restoration of the authority of government. One of his suggestions is to appoint a new stadtholder to undertake the task of making decisions in case the members cannot agree on the adoption or rejection of a new policy. As Van Slingelandt now clarifies, in this situation, the stadtholder would fulfill the responsibility of the States to represent the people on their behalf. One consequence of the success of the doctrine of States sovereignty in these years was that the idea of entrusting the stadtholder with this responsibility had been dismissed out of hand. As Van Slingelandt summarizes the argument of his opponents, the reason for this dismissal had been that, in their view, the States are “always present” and do not need to be represented by a stadtholder (a “placeholder or representative”). But according to Van Slingelandt, this is simply to ignore the fact that the States are not always in office. For as he observes, only when the nobles and the deputies of the towns are assembled together do they “represent” the States. In the absence of the assembly, the States were already represented by another administrative institution—proving that the States might just as well be represented by a stadtholder.⁹⁹

Writing after the death of Prince Friso in 1711, Van Slingelandt must have realized that the reinstatement of the stadtholderate was unlikely to take place in the near future.¹⁰⁰ Yet this does not keep him from adding that the stadtholder should have been given more responsibility in Holland’s

96. See Van Slingelandt, “Discours over de defecten in de jeegenwoordige constitutie,” 187.

97. Van Slingelandt, “Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland,” 118.

98. J. R. Thorbecke, “Simon van Slingelandt’s toeleeg om den staat te hervormen” [Simon van Slingelandt’s Attempt to Reform the State], in *Historische schetsen* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1860), 66–83, here 69–70.

99. Van Slingelandt, “Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland,” 126.

100. See Van Slingelandt, “Aanwysing van de waare oorsaaken van het jegenwoordig groot verval,” 6.

government,¹⁰¹ and that the province's stadtholders "have always been part of the council of state."¹⁰² Van Slingelandt's main point, however, is a more general one. As he indicates in his *Discourse*, he wants his contemporaries to see that the political problems of their time can be solved by returning to the principles of Dutch government. If these principles were followed, then the exercise of sovereignty would no longer be assigned to deputies who lack both the authority and the common purpose for this task. Van Slingelandt's message to the regents of his day is thus that they should make the restoration of this authority of government their priority.¹⁰³

Political Representation in the Dutch Republic

Van Slingelandt's intervention in the early eighteenth-century constitutional debates reveals that our literature on the government of the Dutch Republic has inherited an extremely one-sided understanding of its representativeness. It is striking how modern commentaries tend to glide over the very aspects of political representation Van Slingelandt's account is intended to obfuscate. No modern study has anything to say about how contemporaries viewed the relationship between members of the same representative assembly. Nor is there currently any study of the impact of these views on the way the connected issue of the representativeness of the whole assembly was understood. These issues seem to have been of particular importance in the Dutch Republic where practices of consultation and delegation were firmly institutionalized in the form of cooperation between local, provincial, and central governments.¹⁰⁴

The lasting legacy of Van Slingelandt's contribution is embodied in the abundance of later commentaries sharing his views. This can be observed in Adriaan Kluit's early nineteenth-century survey of the history of the government of Holland. In this massive work, Kluit sets out to refute the idea that the principle Holland's government had always been based on is direct popular sovereignty.¹⁰⁵ Kluit clearly draws on Van Slingelandt's analysis, like

101. Van Slingelandt, "Verhandeling van de oude regeering van Holland," 135.

102. *Ibid.*, 144.

103. Van Slingelandt, "Discours over de defecten in de jeegenwoordige constitutie," 197. Also see Van Slingelandt, "Concept van een voorreden" [Draft of a preface], in *Staatkundige geschriften*, 1, v–xvi, here esp. vii–x.

104. See Ida Nijenhuis, "Representation by Numbers: How Attendance and Experience Helped Holland to Control the Dutch States General (1626–1630)," in *Political Representation: Communities, Ideas and Institutions in Europe (c. 1200–c. 1690)*, ed. Mario Damen, Jelle Haemers, and Alistair J. Mann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 182–202.

105. Veen, "De legitimatie van de souverainiteit der Staten," 200–202.

him determining that the meaning of the “representation” of the people by the States was never that the States assembly formed an image of the people or that its members “were” the States themselves. Instead, the right of the States to represent the people merely signified the right of the assembly to act for the people.¹⁰⁶ Van Slingelandt’s influence is even more noticeable in later and less partisan accounts of early modern Dutch government. Robert Fruin in his classic work of Dutch institutional history, for example, visibly echoes Van Slingelandt’s focus on the role of deputies. Fruin confirms that the instructions the deputies received from their principals imposed serious restrictions on the capacity of the States assembly to exercise sovereignty. And he extends Van Slingelandt’s analysis of representation from Holland to the other provinces.¹⁰⁷ With this move, Fruin established what remains to this day the standard interpretation of the representative nature of government in the early modern Netherlands.

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106. Adriaan Kluit, *Historie der Hollandsche staatsregeering tot aan het jaar 1795* [History of the States government of Holland until the year 1795], vol. 4 (Amsterdam: Wouter Brave, 1804), 589.

107. Robert Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen in Nederland tot den val der Republiek* [History of the state institutions in the Netherlands until the collapse of the Republic], ed. H. T. Colenbrander (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1901), 209, 212–213.