

***Values in early modern administration:
Cornelis Schrevelius and the 18th century practice of bestowal of office.***

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Abstract

Although corruption can be studied in a variety of ways, the 'neo-classical' approach seems especially promising in grasping the complexity and changing meaning of political corruption in a historical context. This approach offers us the possibility to include multiple coexisting standards of correct ethical conduct as well as to take into account the specific historical context of corruption. As administrative values are by no means rigid and unconditionally valid, historical scandals concerning political corruption can serve to provide material that substantiates, complements and/or corrects abstract and general notions of political corruption and the underlying public values. In order to show how corruption and public values can be conceptualized and investigated by way of a neo-classical approach, a case study has been selected from the middle of the 18th century, focusing on upheaval regarding the bestowal of office between two prominent magistrates in the Dutch city of Leiden. Events in this Dutch city serve to illustrate changing conceptions on the proper way to obtain an office in early modern administration. Through mutual consultation the magistrates often concluded contracts to prevent possible strife with colleagues if offices became vacant. Yet consensus on the practice of agreements regarding seniority and rotation of offices eventually diminished. As a result a debate developed about the proper way to bestow positions, closely linked to the desirable behavior of a magistrate trying to obtain office. Shifts in values underpinning early modern bestowal of office could thus have a profound impact on what behavior was deemed ethical (or unethical), thereby defining a magistrate's desirable conduct, his qualities and characteristics.

Conceptualizing corruption

Providing an encompassing survey of the phenomenon 'corruption' seems to be an impossible task. Researchers have already taken into consideration a variety of approaches to study this complicated topic. Especially worth mentioning are the concept of corruption, the methodology to trace the underpinning values and the values themselves, all of which are closely intertwined. A preliminary investigation into conceptualization and methodology is essential in order to better understand research into values underpinning early modern Dutch administration.

Heidenheimer distinguished three basic concepts from the variety of definitions regarding corruption, 'public-office-centered', 'market-centered' and 'public-interest centered', which all have a behavioral emphasis. The first category is related to a modern (Weberian) notion of office, regarding rules, the second to an economical modern public-private notion. The third is strongly connected to the general interest (Heidenheimer 1989: 8-11). Scott also elaborated on three criteria to establish standards of corrupt behavior, the public interest, public opinion and legal norms. As he considered the first two to be ambiguous, this author preferred the 'public-office-centered' approach defining corruption as 'behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains, or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence' (Scott 1972: 4). Nevertheless, definitions on corruption have some serious disadvantages. It remains unclear whose norms set the criteria and if some should prevail above others. A harmonious definition of corruption is lacking as there are only competing standards (Heidenheimer 1989: 12).

Scott supported the viewpoint that the (sole) usage of formal norms seems to rule out historical comparisons (Scott 1972: 6). Moodie acknowledged that a fundamental problem is how to define 'corruption', thereby making possible comparisons across cultural and temporal boundaries (Moodie 1989: 873). Using Scott's and Heidenheimer's culturally bound, relatively narrow definitions seems very problematic for historical research into corruption. A one-sided focus on formal-legal standards will result in the exclusion of other relevant perspectives on public values (to be derived from what was considered corrupt), such as public opinion or everyday political practice. Additionally, research into shifting conceptions of corruption over an extensive time period requires an open mind. Perceptions of corrupt behavior evolve over centuries, but also differ at a random occurrence. 'Corruption' was also termed very differently in the early-modern period, when contemporary authors wrote about, for instance, *kuiperijen* or *knoeierijen*. Another problem stems from the fact that contemporary definitions on corruption tend to entail modern notions of concepts such as public and private which cannot be unconditionally applied to historical research as anachronistic inferences would be prevalent.

Hoetjes acknowledged that there isn't a single source or perspective containing universally valid principles clearly defining the concept of corruption (Hoetjes 1982: 16). Johnston did attempt to formulate a definition and considered corruption to be: "the abuse, according to the

legal or social standards constituting a society's system of public order, of a public role or resource for private benefit" (Johnston 1996: 331). The emphasis that Johnston (and Hoetjes) put on the importance of social values has its benefits for research into historical values underlying public administration. The formal-legal perspective is supplemented with research into social standards that often remain implicit (Johnston 1996: 331). Johnston's as well as Hoetjes' approach thereby widens the scope of historical research as they made use of several perspectives. Corruption is not only viewed as a formal but also a moral issue. Secondly, narrow modern notions of corrupt behavior (individual offences) are combined with broader classical concerns about the moral health of whole societies, therefore Johnston's 'neo-classical' approach (Johnston 1996: 331). Although Johnston admitted that his broad focus would not yield precise categories of behavior, attention is directed at the interplay between formal institutions and social values, thereby focusing on society as a whole (Johnston 1996: 326-327). Through his neo-classical approach 'corruption' is used in such a way to make possible research into (conflicting or changing) values in early modern public administration and on how 'corruption' was constructed from these.

How to study public values?

Difficulties remain when defining values underpinning public administration as well as finding them in a historical context. The comparison between different periods and levels of administration is complex (Scott 1972: 6). As already mentioned, concepts of corruption are constantly changing over time. Grasping these developments in Dutch administration proves to be a complicated affair, especially for the early modern period due to a lack of relevant sources. A focus on corruption scandals could circumvent these difficulties, because only during times of upheaval relevant documents were written about transgressions. As a consequence, historical research into corruption entails thorough document study.

Johnston remarked that the increasing social and political fragmentation of societies led to the idea that they are arenas of contest among individuals, groups and their interests. Society is viewed as lacking any coherent system of values (Johnston 1996: 322). Concepts acquire their meaning in the clash over boundaries (public versus private, state versus society, politics and administration) (Johnston 1996: 333; Moodie 1989: 879). Conflicts can produce new standards regarding reprehensible behavior within public administration. The interaction (and possible frictions) between formal institutions and social values lead to the requirement that

rules will need to be effective to have any legitimacy and acceptance. Therefore, existing values regarding political behavior are by no means rigid, but constantly changing (Johnston 1996: 329). Johnston's attention for the construction of 'corruption' focuses on conflicts (scandals) to produce values on public administration, but where do we need to look to find them in historical research?

This research is consequently done according to Hoetjes' approach on 'sources of social values'. Firstly, the application of law in corruption cases encompasses research into legal documents to better understand arguments in judging presumed offenders. The law is an easy accessible source, through which international comparisons could also be made. A disadvantage of legal sources is the fact that formal rules almost always differ from the actual valid norms in a society. Secondly, public opinion on corruption focuses on (for instance) pamphlets and newspapers. Research into public opinion is interesting to gain insight into the actual societal standards. The 'shop-floor'-codes serve a similar goal, concentrating on the everyday rules by which public administration was (supposed to be) conducted. Finally, public rectitude as defined by moral authorities ('the best opinion and morality of the time') could be considered, entailing writings on philosophical ethics and moral theology as well as handbooks on etiquette. These 'high ethical standards' are the norms of the authors of these writings. Therefore, one needs to question to what degree these norms are actually visible in society (Hoetjes 1977: 12-16). Of course (historical) corruption scandals do not always encompass all four sources, as the available material is often limited.

Some brief remarks still need to be made about the (importance of) scandals used for historical research. One needs to keep in mind that not all deviant behavior becomes a scandal and not everyone involved in scandals are punished. It remains difficult to differ between a scandal and random corrupt practices. Authors have however proposed several factors to make this distinction. Sherman considered three elements for behavior to become a scandal: outrage and anger, surprise regarding the deviance and betrayal of social trust (Sherman 1989: 888). He described a scandal as 'a social reaction to the violation of socially invested trust in an institutional role' (Sherman 1989: 887-888). Moodie also summed up three major requirements for a scandal to occur, an informer or exposé, channels to communicate the message and an audience to label the information as scandalous (Moodie 1989: 879). Ultimately, political crises could be considered as structural reactions (social backgrounds) or as isolated incidents.

Nonetheless, a limitation of the focus on scandals is the fact that only what is regarded undesirable becomes visible during clashes over boundaries. Public values need to be distilled from what was considered inappropriate. Still, corruption scandals are an excellent way to trace values concerning (im)proper behavior over time, as well as the related conceptual changes.

The case of Cornelis Schrevelius and Johan van den Bergh

Yet the debate on the concept of corruption and the methodology on finding values are only part of this paper. They also serve as means for actual research into the values underpinning public administration in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. In order to show how political corruption and the underpinning public values can be conceptualized and investigated by way of a 'Johnstonian' approach, a case study has been selected from a year of political crisis (1747) concerning a conflict between two magistrates from the Dutch city of Leiden, Cornelis Schrevelius and Johan van den Bergh. Focus will be on the strife between the two magistrates as they quarrelled about whether or not a promise was made by Van den Bergh to give Schrevelius the office of sheriff (*schout*) of Leiden. Yet events in the same city serve to illustrate changing assumptions concerning the desired way to bestow an office in early modern administration. Through mutual consultation magistrates (such as Schrevelius and Van den Bergh) had been used to conclude contracts to prevent possible strife with colleagues if offices became vacant. However, the consensus on the practice of contracts and rotation of offices was eventually challenged. As a result of criticism towards the oligarchy a debate surfaced about an alternative and more suitable way to distribute positions. This discussion was closely linked to the desirable behaviour a magistrate in office was expected to display. Shifts in the values underlying the early modern practice of bestowal of office could thus have a profound impact on what behaviour was deemed ethical (or unethical), thereby defining a magistrate's desirable conduct, his qualities and characteristics. First, an overview will be given of the functioning of the Leiden administration as well as the cause of the conflict in 1747 between Van den Bergh and Schrevelius some two decades before. We will then turn to the core of the conflict and the events of 1747 that offered a totally new perspective on the bestowal of office and the values underpinning early modern Dutch administration.

Administration and office in Leiden

As in other cities in the province of Holland in Leiden government in the eighteenth century was organized around the city council (*vroedschap*), in Leiden called the ‘council of forty’ (*veertigraad*, from here on referred to as ‘the council’). An elaborate network, stemming from the council, took care of all the relevant affairs in the city as well as the provincial and national colleges in which Leiden was represented. For an aspiring magistrate membership of the council was the stepping-stone for all sorts of activities that were politically or financially attractive. The council, comprising 40 members who were appointed for life, formed the foundation of city government, from which the sheriff, four burgomasters and eight aldermen (*schepenen*) were selected, together called the ‘*gerecht*’. The more important decisions on city affairs were dealt with by the council, but for the remainder it mainly focused on provincial and national affairs. Legal issues were the responsibility of sheriff and aldermen, while the everyday leadership of city government partly rested with the *gerecht*, but mainly with the burgomasters (Prak 1985: 30, 31-32). The election of magistrates happened according to strict rules of rank and seniority. Often the results were already fixed before a vote was recorded. Under normal circumstances every magistrate was eventually promoted to the position of burgomaster through a fixed series of offices. After appointment in the council, the order of seniority determined admission to the office of alderman, which order of entrance was eventually decisive to become a burgomaster. This system of seniority was common for most of the eighteenth century and often political reality adhered to these rules. Yet sometimes strife would ensue when a magistrate or a minority of the city council would be excluded from or slighted in the order of accession to lucrative offices (Prak 1985: 41). These problems were often closely related to the so-called ‘contracts of correspondence’, which were used as agreements between magistrates in the allocation of offices. Through rotation and everlasting calendars for the distribution of these offices (as well as trade in these positions) peace in a city’s government should be guaranteed (De Jongste 1980-1981a: 48). Yet it was not uncommon that a small majority would exclude the remaining councilmen from the contract of correspondence, which would have disastrous consequences for the career of the outcasts. Often the scandals that resulted from such practices were associated with accusations of corruption, which makes them ideal for research into political corruption in a ‘Johnstonian’ way, as they make explicit the implicit values underlying early modern public administration.

The aforementioned contracts of correspondence were also used in Leiden to guarantee smooth proceedings during the election of new magistrates. On the 5th of September 1702 the

magistrates of Leiden entered into a new contract, after the death of stadtholder William III, (in practice) the most powerful magistrate of the province of Holland. The stadtholder had a considerable influence in the appointment of city magistrates. Yet only in 1747 a successor would be appointed. The Leiden agreement of 1702 therefore regulated the election of magistrates, ensuring friendship and unity between the regents, making an end to unrest and strife within the government. Two 'columns' (groups) stood central in the new contract, their mutual cooperation should ensure stability within the city and its surroundings. An example was the election of the aldermen, where both columns should have an equal vote (papers regarding Leiden, 9-5-1702, Van Mieris 1759: 169-171, Regional Archives Leiden (RAL), Bibliotheek Leiden en Omgeving (LB) 264). The contract of 1702 was eventually terminated as a result of the tensions between the Leiden magistrates. Nevertheless, during two decades the contract of 1702 had ensured peace and stability within administration as the order of appointment was respected. Moreover, the contract of 1702 had led to appointments that were not necessarily politically motivated. There were still differences of opinion, but acquired offices could not be taken away anymore as a result of undesirable political standpoints (Prak 1985: 86). On the 23rd of February 1722 the majority of the city council united itself under a new contract, excluding Cornelis Schrevelius and his companions. Ironically, in the new agreement the intention was formulated to preserve the common interest and unity of government. Yet only 24 (eventually 26) members of the council would join the new contract. Concerning the succession in the council, preference was of course given to the best and most qualified persons, more specific those whose ancestors and relations had already been a member of government (papers regarding Leiden, 2-23-1722, Van Mieris 1759: 172-175, RAL, LB 264). The new contract lasted from 1722 to 1747. The biggest difference with the preceding contract was of course the fact that only part of the city council was included and that columns were lacking. The initial 24 stood united against an excluded minority (among whom Cornelis Schrevelius). The majority had to act in harmony as internal strife could lead to possible intrigues by the ignored magistrates. The career of the outcasts would turn out to be an unfortunate one. Suddenly they were excluded from administrative and political influence. After 1723 members of the minority lost the opportunity to obtain lucrative offices. Only in 1747 were these excluded magistrates able to make a modest return in the Leiden political arena thanks to the new stadtholder William IV (Prak 1985: 86-88).

The ambitions of Johan van den Bergh in 1725

Next to the offices in the city of Leiden members of the council also had several duties outside the city walls. Without elaborating too much on the various offices one is relevant for this case. The city of Leiden and the surrounding villages formed a part of the dike board (*hoogheemraadschap*) of Rijnland. The dike board had several lucrative offices for which Leiden citizens could be taken into consideration. Leiden magistrates fulfilled the position of secretary of Rijnland during the entire eighteenth century and the position of steward (*rentmeester*) for 27 years (1733-1760). Between 1725 and 1751 even the highest office of the dike board, that of dike reeve, was fulfilled by a burgomaster of Leiden, Johan van den Bergh. The obtainment of this office by Van den Bergh would eventually result in a serious strife between him and Cornelis Schrevelius in 1747 on which we will further elaborate later (Prak 1985: 37). Johan van den Bergh (1664-1755) descended from a family of Leiden magistrates. His father and grandfather had both been members of the city council. Van den Bergh became a member of the council in 1693 and would retain his seat for 55 years. A prosperous career would follow, as several times (from 1702) he would be appointed burgomaster of Leiden. Beside that Van den Bergh would be appointed as deputy of the Council of State (*Raad van State*) in 1704 and would eventually even become one of the most influential administrators in the Southern Netherlands, where he was appointed in 1707 (Druyvesteyn 1983: 106-118). In 1725 the powerful magistrate wished to expand his influence as the position of dike reeve of Rijnland became vacant because the former reeve, Wigbold van der Does, had died in the spring. The position of dike reeve was a very lucrative office possibly yielding up to 15.000 guilders a year (papers regarding Leiden, 6-29-1726, RAL, LB 15032; also Prak 1985: 90). Traditionally the reeve was a gentleman from the Holland nobility, which also had its own candidate. Leiden therefore had to come up with a strong candidate, no other than Johan van den Bergh. In the month of June 1725 a delegation from Leiden toured the cities of Holland trying to win support for the candidatedship of Van den Bergh, as the States of Holland (wherein the cities were represented) would eventually make the decision (Prak 1985: 90).

As the Leiden party minutely gave an account of their undertaking we are excellently informed. The delegation was appointed on the 31st of May 1725 and consisted of burgomaster Johan van den Bergh, town councilmen Petrus Cunæus and Aegidius van der Marck and pensionary Pieter Marcus. The gentlemen departed on the 1st of June and visited several cities in the northern and southern parts of the province of Holland. After arriving in Amsterdam, the party continued to the northern cities of Enkhuizen, Medemblik, Hoorn,

Alkmaar, Edam, Monnikendam, Purmerend, back to Amsterdam, eventually followed by a visit to Haarlem. After returning and reporting in Leiden on the 8th of June the delegation continued its journey through the southern part of Holland. First the delegates arrived in Delft, and continued to Schiedam, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, Schoonhoven and Gouda, eventually returning to Leiden where the delegation reported about its 'dealings' on June 12th. Ultimately the cities of Briel and Gorinchem were visited on June 30th and the 1st of July, the party returning to Leiden on July 2nd. At times the answers of the local magistrates were friendly but evasive or a service was asked in return, at other times hopeful because concrete promises were made to support Van den Bergh's candidacy. Visits to two cities were especially relevant for this case study. According to Pieter Marcus' accounts, the delegation arrived in Haarlem on Thursday the 7th of June and was greeted by burgomaster Sijlvius, who would be the representative of Haarlem at the assembly of the States of Holland in July where the crucial vote would take place. The burgomaster gave the delegation many expressions of sympathy so that the travelling party was fully satisfied about the promises made (and probably confident of the vote of Haarlem). Secondly, the party conversed with burgomaster Witte, who said that the burgomasters had not yet deliberated about their preference for the new dike reeve of Rijnland, a similar response as burgomaster Sijlvius, yet he also showed an inclination towards the requests of the delegation. Afterwards, several other magistrates were called upon. The city of Gouda was visited on the 10th and 11th of June. Although the magistrate Van Bleskensgraaf was not available on the 10th, the day after the delegates did manage to speak the influential burgomaster Van Eijck who would be the Gouda representative during the vote by the States of Holland. According to the accounts, Van Eijck reacted very favourably to the requests for support by the Leiden party, whereby the delegation was convinced of the vote of Gouda (papers regarding Leiden, 6-12-1725, 501 A Sa (Stadsarchief Leiden) 1574-1816, 5455; also Van Maanen 2000: 97-106 and Van Maanen 1997: 25-26.) Van den Bergh had the luck that Leiden had joined twelve other cities in a correspondence, so that the Holland nobility (which traditionally held this position) remained only a minority. The journey through Holland was therefore important to convince these cities to support Van den Bergh's candidacy (Prak 1985: 90). Eventually Van den Bergh did manage to obtain the lucrative office. On the 21st of July 1725 he assumed office as the new dike reeve of Rijnland (Van Maanen 2000: 105). Yet in 1747 (22 years later!) Van den Bergh's success of 1725 could still bring about discontent with a fellow magistrate, Cornelis Schrevelius.

Honoured or broken promises?

In 1747 Cornelis Schrevelius, a member of the minority in the Leiden council, looked back on years of total exclusion from the political arena. On the 22nd of August the frustrated magistrate published a pamphlet (Knuttel, 1978: microfiche [mf.] 17783, 8-22-1747; also papers regarding Leiden, 1747, RAL, LB 687 and RAL, LB 707) about the troubles that befell him after 1722, when several magistrates were excluded from government. Schrevelius had a different account of Johan van den Bergh's tour past the cities of Holland. After the death of Wigbold van der Does, Van den Bergh intended to become his successor as the new dike reeve of Rijnland. Schrevelius stated that the Leiden delegation eventually arrived in Haarlem where Van den Bergh had spoken with burgomaster Hendrik Witte, a close friend of Cornelis Schrevelius. Witte had apparently stated that in return for his efforts on behalf of Van den Bergh's plans, the latter should also honour some wishes of the Haarlem burgomaster. Witte had demanded an end to the strife in the Leiden administration as well as to the exclusion of several magistrates from participation in government. More specific two of his close friends should be reinstated (in the contract of correspondence), the magistrate Van Thol and Cornelis Schrevelius. Van den Bergh replied he considered Van Thol to be a fine gentleman and Cornelis Schrevelius was a cousin of his wife. According to Schrevelius Johan van den Bergh therefore agreed with these arrangements and swore an oath to God to reinstate the two gentlemen. In an attempt to further Van den Bergh's chances, Witte managed to change the preference of the burgomasters of the city of Haarlem in favour of Johan van den Bergh. The pamphlet stated that Witte even attempted to influence the vote in the nearby city of Gouda. An envoy was sent to the magistrate Van Bleskensgraaff as he had the most influence among the magistrates of Gouda. Cornelis Schrevelius solemnly expounded that these facts were told to him several times by Hendrik Witte himself. Eventually, on the 21st of July 1725, Van den Bergh did become the new dike reeve of Rijnland (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17783, 8-22-1747, folio [f.] 3-5). In September 1727 three persons were to be nominated of whom one would be chosen as the new sheriff of Leiden on the 10th of November. The nomination for this office was usually made on the 10th of September. Since 1669 the sheriff fulfilled his position for a period of three years after which he would not be eligible for re-election for six years. From a nomination of three names the States or the stadtholder chose the new sheriff, who took office on the 10th of November. (Prak 1985: 40). Cornelis Schrevelius cousin, Rynier Roosenboom, considered that it was time for Johan van den Bergh to honour the promises made to Hendrik

Witte. As Van den Bergh was also indebted to Roosenboom, the latter demanded that the influential Van den Bergh should choose the magistrate that Roosenboom would suggest to him as the potential new sheriff. Van den Bergh solemnly promised to honour Roosenboom's request. Of course Cornelis Schrevelius would be the chosen one (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17783, 8-22-1747, f. 5). Yet Cornelis Schrevelius stated that he soon found out that Johan van den Bergh was not a man to keep his word. The second day after cousin Roosenboom had informed Van den Bergh about his preferred candidate, Schrevelius' sister, married to Jan van Teijlingen, came to visit asking for advice. Van Teijlingen's uncle Johan van den Bergh had also offered the position of sheriff to Schrevelius' brother-in-law. According to Schrevelius' sister her husband had his doubts about accepting the position. As sheriff Van Teijlingen would not be able to fulfil the office of burgomaster. He therefore ran the risk that younger magistrates could become burgomaster before he did. Schrevelius response was evasive. He did not want to give his sister any advice, because if he advised her husband to take the position his brother-in-law could miss the possibility of becoming a burgomaster. If he advised her not to take the position his brother-in-law ran the risk of not obtaining any office at all if none of the incumbent (or former) burgomasters would pass away. Schrevelius' sister thanked him for the advice, but after a couple of days Jan van Teijlingen did decide in favour of the offer. Yet both magistrates, Cornelis Schrevelius and Jan van Teijlingen would eventually miss out on this lucrative office. According to Schrevelius Johan van den Bergh had duped them both. The promise of the latter to reinstate Schrevelius as a member of the correspondence (the majority of the council) and to nominate him as the new sheriff had been false. On the 10th of November 1727 fellow magistrate Van der Mark was appointed the new sheriff (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17783, 8-22-1747, f. 7-8).

Yet in 1747 Schrevelius' opponents were quick to react with their own pamphlet (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747; also papers regarding Leiden, 1747, RAL, LB 712) as they claimed the magistrate's assertions to be false and published with the sole intent to arouse hatred towards Johan van den Bergh. No promise made by the latter to Reinier Roosenboom to appoint his cousin Cornelis Schrevelius as the new sheriff, had ever existed. First, several inaccuracies in Schrevelius' account were pointed out. His cousin Reinier Roosenboom, for instance, had already deceased on the 22nd of November 1725! The discussions between Roosenboom and Schrevelius in August 1727 could therefore not have taken place, because Roosenboom had already been dead for two years (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 4).

Secondly, a promise of Van den Bergh to Roosenboom could not have been made earlier in time either. The latest term for the position of sheriff had taken effect on the 10th of November 1724 when Willem van Zanen was appointed. Burgomaster Van den Bergh, then, could not have made an earlier promise to Roosenboom to appoint Schrevelius as the new sheriff, as this promise resulted from the untrue commitment of the magistrate Witte of Haarlem to support Van den Bergh in his quest to become dike reeve of Rijnland and this office had only become vacant in 1725 (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 6). Apart from the factual inaccuracies, Schrevelius' opponents stated that Johan van den Bergh's freedom to make a promise was quite limited. In the year 1727 Van den Bergh had to consider six other (former) burgomasters and members of the correspondence, who were more senior members of the council than himself. With so many magistrates of equal authority, how could he have made the promise of the position of sheriff to Schrevelius' brother-in-law Jan van Teijlingen? After all, the latter had already been an alderman three times and was a member of the correspondence himself. He should have known that observing rank and order of seniority were the foundations of politics (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 7)! Inaccuracies also existed regarding Schrevelius' account of the tour of Van den Bergh, Van der Mark and pensionary Marcus to the cities of Holland. For Marcus, as already expounded above, had written his own account of the visits the Leiden delegation had made to several magistrates during its tour and this account differed greatly from the accusations of Cornelis Schrevelius. Firstly, after arriving in Haarlem on the 7th of June the travellers spoke to burgomaster Sylvius who would be present at the vote of the States of Holland. He inclined towards Van den Bergh's ambitions to become bailiff of Rijnland. Only afterwards burgomaster Witte was visited who stated that the burgomasters had not yet deliberated about the subject, yet he was also sympathetic towards Van den Bergh's intentions (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 13-14). Many other discrepancies existed. According to Schrevelius' accounts, Hendrik Witte had said to Van den Bergh that the travelling party had only encountered evasive answers during their visits in the north of Holland with the result that Van den Bergh would not become the new dike reeve. Yet Marcus' reports show a contrasting picture, the deputation had received positive reactions in Alkmaar, Hoorn and Monnikendam. Yet another example of Schrevelius' incorrectness and the improbability of his assertion that Hendrik Witte of Haarlem had demanded the reinstatement of Van Thol and Schrevelius in exchange for his support for Van den Bergh. For the latter it would be impossible to reinstate the two Leiden magistrates, as this would mean a serious disruption of the existing correspondence in Leiden! The writer of

the pamphlet asserted that Witte knew the importance of a correspondence as well as a similar contract existed in Haarlem (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 15-16). Another falsehood of Schrevelius was his account of pensionary Fabricius' visit to Gouda to speak to the magistrate Van Bleskensgraaf, according to Schrevelius the most influential, in order to influence the vote of Gouda on behalf of Van den Bergh. In reality the Leiden deputation had already been in Gouda on the 11th of June, about which Marcus' account stated that they had spoken to burgomaster Van der Eyk, whose answer was very favourable to Johan van den Bergh's ambitions. Van der Eyk would be the Gouda delegate at the assembly of the States of Holland in July. Therefore, there was no logical explanation for Fabricius' visit to Van Bleskensgraaf in Gouda to obtain the vote of this city. As Van der Eyk would have the deciding vote, why try to influence the magistrate Van Bleskensgraaff (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 18)? So what had really happened according to Van den Bergh and his supporters? After the gentlemen Van den Bergh, Van der Mark and Marcus had ended their visit to Haarlem no relevant promises had been made between Johan van den Bergh and Hendrik Witte. Shortly after his return to Leiden Abraham Musquettier, who offered him the vote of Haarlem, called upon Van den Bergh. Van den Bergh eventually accepted whereby Musquettier noted that Hendrik Witte should be credited for this favour. When afterwards Van den Bergh spoke to Witte and expressed his gratitude, the latter requested whether Van den Bergh could not reinstate his good friend Van Thol in the existing correspondence. Van den Bergh answered that he would only consider Witte's request if he would do something in return: reinstate his own friend Arent de Raadt, former burgomaster of Haarlem, in the correspondence of Haarlem. As Witte said that this was not possible Van den Bergh reacted he could also not adhere to Witte's request. Cornelis Schrevelius, stated the pamphleteer, was not even mentioned (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17786, 1747, f. 20-22; also Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17785, 1747, wherein Schrevelius' claims are denounced as lies, solely intended to create new disturbances within the Leiden administration.)

For that reason Cornelis Schrevelius' expectations to obtain the lucrative office of sheriff seemed to be in vain. His assertions in 1747 do not seem to have been very convincing. Since 1722 he belonged to the minority in the council and its members were effectively barred from obtaining positions within the administration. It remains unclear whether or not Johan van den Bergh really made his promise to Schrevelius' cousin Roosenboom, but even if such a promise was made Schrevelius should not have attached great value to it. He should have

known that his chances of being accepted in the correspondence were very limited. His brother-in-law Jan van Teijlingen also missed out on the office of sheriff and only became a burgomaster (for the first time) in 1732 (Prak 1985: 45). The pamphlet strife of 1747 between Schrevelius and Van den Bergh was still firmly established on the existing practices of contracts of correspondence, seniority and rotation of office in order to ensure the stability of a city's administration. Neither Schrevelius nor Van den Bergh considered these practices to be unethical. Not observing a promise, however, could have serious consequences (although in this case study probably no actual promise was made). An upright magistrate should at least be trustworthy and respect his commitments. One of the main arguments of Van den Bergh was therefore that he could not have made a promise in 1727 to Schrevelius or his brother-in-law Van Teijlingen, because he had to take into account several other senior members of his correspondence.

For the benefit of the 'common good'

The conflict of 1747 between the Leiden factions can be placed in a 'Johnstonian' perspective. Johnston's approach on how political corruption is constructed gives us the opportunity to not only look at wrongful individual behaviour of two magistrates; it also offers us a view on broader processes of consent, influence and authority. In the same year as their strife, a French invasion and the ensuing unrest would lead to a declaration by the Leiden administration on the 30th of April 1747 in support of the speedy appointment of the Prince of Orange (from the Frisian branch of the dynasty) as the new stadtholder of Holland. On the 3rd of May the prince's appointment was a fact (papers regarding Leiden, 4-30-1747, 3-5-1747, RAL, LB 787). Discontent surfaced on a number of subjects, most notably concerning decades of economic decline and the exclusion of many from participation in government. The ruling magistrates were criticized, as they would bar stadtholder William IV from initiating redress. In 1748 the crisis continued, in part as a result of unrest in the towns of Holland against the suffocating taxes, the behaviour of those levying them and the patricians that profited most from them. For the first time questions were raised regarding the desirability of delegation of sovereignty to the ruling oligarchy and obedience to patrician authority (Schama 1987: 600-601). Reformers fuelled the discontent and the ensuing agitation. Moderate reformers criticized the ruling oligarchy, advocating an end to the abuses associated with the bestowal of office, the handing over to the state of the lucrative postal services and restoration of the rights of the guilds. Affluent burghers, excluded by the

oligarchy from participation in government, also demanded political influence. Radical representatives of the movement even advocated the entire removal of the old clique of magistrates (De Jongste 1980-1981b: 82-83). Often public opinion was manipulated in favour of consolidating the stadtholder's powers. The periodical press created an image of continual abuses within the oligarchy and accused the magistrates of nepotism and venality, all detrimental for the 'welfare and order' of the country. The fulfilment of an office should be directed towards the interests of the people and not be used for self-interests such as increase of personal wealth or power and advancement of family relations. The press therefore closely linked the decline of the Dutch state (politically and economically) to accusations of corruption, which were a standard topic in 18th century political discourse (Schama 1977: 47-48).

The Leiden magistrates would also not escape their share of the criticism. In a document from 1748 a comparison was made between some old charters and privileges of Leiden and the contemporary state of affairs of government. A writer asserted that if these writings would find imitation in other cities they could be of service to the stadtholder to redress the ingrained patterns of abuse within the oligarchy. For it would be an unbearable task for the stadtholder to research all particularities of the finances for the benefit of the inhabitants of every city. Magistrates that would forget their duty to appoint administrators that were useful, competent and sensible, that would not govern for the common good of the city and its citizens, were condemned. Lamentable were instances where senior local administrators (*Ministers*) were appointed not capable of writing a proper letter, formulate a document or deduction, or direct a treasury (papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 773 f. 7; also: Bijleveld 1908: 145-150). Why was an office (treasurer in the treasurer's office), with only a moderate reward until 1735, eventually given to a young man, related to the ruling oligarchy and hardly capable to fulfil the position? These abuses were linked to excessive awards and the limited practical relevance of many positions (papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 773 f. 24-25). Many offices in Leiden were also awarded to strangers and inhabitants of other cities of Holland, people hardly known in the city of Leiden but related to one of the burgomasters. As a result many respectable inhabitants of Leiden were ignored for these positions (papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 728 f. 13). Before the appointment or reinstatement of a magistrate it should therefore be necessary to investigate whether or not the candidate was sensible, honest, capable, friendly and devout. Senior local administrators should undergo an exam before their

appointment as well as show some written documents as proof of their capability.

Considerable or modest offices should only be awarded to those that were citizens of the city and that fulfilled the position in person (papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 773 f. 30-31). Complaints were uttered about the abuses related to 'composition', from which the sheriff profited immensely. This practice involved payment by a delinquent to a legal officer in order to avoid a criminal prosecution or sentence. The judicial office holder would receive a percentage of the paid amount. It was therefore not that strange that Cornelis Schrevelius wished to obtain this lucrative position. Fines as a result of the composition of criminal offenses were divided according to the following distributive code: one-third for the sheriff, one-third for the informer and one-third for the poor. The question was raised whether composition was beneficial to justice. The writer stated that this was not the case. Offenders' behaviour would only deteriorate in the future as long as they had the possibility to buy off a criminal prosecution. It would be better if an offender had to repent in public; the possible fear for scandal would deter anyone from committing crime. This would also be beneficial for the common good (i.e. the city of Leiden). In the current system only the sheriff really profited, who was additionally tempted to appropriate the proceeds of composition formally assigned to the poor (papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 773 f. 26). The civil unrest of 1748 against taxes also resulted in criticism of the Leiden administrators. The magistrates of Leiden were condemned for not paying taxes, shifting the burden to the citizens of Leiden. Although only minor offences, in a pamphlet from 1748 an extensive list was published of all the magistrates which had acquired large quantities of wheat and rye without paying any taxes. Johan van den Bergh was also implicated (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 18169, 1748, f. 5-6; Also papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 774)! In Leiden the call for change was immense, as an author proclaimed: "Reformation! Reformation! Because we perish." (papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 773 f. 8).

Therefore, as Johan van den Bergh and Cornelis Schrevelius were bickering in 1747 about whether or not the former had made a promise to Schrevelius to reinstate him as a member of the correspondence as well as to get him the office of sheriff, reform in the Leiden administration seemed to be much wanted. For the quarrelling magistrates a correspondence, rotation and everlasting calendars for the distribution of offices were self-evident. Yet in the same year new developments were at hand. One specific proposal for reform could be very useful to place the conflict between Cornelis Schrevelius and Johan van den Bergh in a

broader perspective: the public auctioning of offices for the benefit of the 'common good'¹, whereby the revenues would not fall into the pockets of the ruling magistrates. This would generate income for the treasury on a daily basis!

Where did this proposal originate? It is useful to look at certain social-economical and political developments. In the Dutch Republic citizens were subject to a high burden of taxation, sometimes malicious levying of these taxes and rising costs of living. In 1747 and 1748, these issues became the main causes for general popular dissatisfaction and protest facing the government or ruling (city) elites (Israel 1998: 1069, 1073-1078). In 1747 supporters of the stadtholder proposed to publicly auction the city offices for the benefit of the 'common good'. The proceeds would fall to the common means instead of the already affluent magistrates. For the ruling oligarchy these proposals would mean nothing less than an intentional attack on their position. During their conflict in the same year, Schrevelius and Van den Bergh still took the practice of correspondence and rotation of office for granted. Yet what seemed to be self-evident was suddenly questioned. At the end of September 1747 Rotterdam supporters of the stadtholder submitted a petition to their city council with the sole request to publicly auction the city offices. These petitioners had also played an important role in the elevation of the Prince of Orange to the office of stadtholder and they had close contacts with the court. The court tried to use the petitioners to contain the movement for redress within acceptable boundaries (De Jongste 1980-1981b: 77-78). Similar proposals were made in a pamphlet (from 1748) concerning the city of Leiden. The pamphleteer hoped that the proceeds of offices would generate considerable sums for the benefit of the common good (in this case most likely the city of Leiden). He also widened the scope of the common good to include the entire province of Holland when calling upon every city in the province of Holland to adopt the new proposals. The burgomasters of Amsterdam were taken as an example why the practices surrounding the bestowal of office should change. These affluent burgomasters enjoyed generous incomes of 60.000 or 70.000 guilders a year from the lucrative postal services and other positions, apart from the interests the magistrates received from their considerable fortunes. If the postal services and offices would be employed for the benefit of the common good, the Province's debts could finally be paid (Knuttel, 1978: mf.

¹ The 'common good' in this meaning usually referred to the wellbeing of the city or the province and almost never the Republic as a whole, probably because a decentralized form of government existed in the Dutch Republic.

18169, 1748, f. 29-31)! By way of a special commission William IV reacted to the proposals of the petitioners. The stadtholder was not averse to possible convenient arrangements, but he would not accept a system entailing the public auctioning of city offices. The prince's negative reaction to the latter proposal led to the failure of similar initiatives in other cities such as Haarlem and Gouda. The turmoil of the autumn of 1747 did however put pressure on the magistrates. On the 11th of November the States of Holland agreed on a provisional arrangement regarding the problems surrounding office: fulfilment of an office in person, a prohibition on any payment by an office holder from his salary to his predecessor, and the obligation for city councils to exactly state the existing offices in a city as well as their related incomes. The system of the rotation of offices was therefore not affected, but its rules became stricter. Yet in practice most magistrates used every possibility to circumvent the restrictions, for instance regarding the compilation of the list of a city's offices. Often city councils regarded the imposed restrictions as an unacceptable interference with local city affairs. In the summer of 1748 only the city of Purmerend had complied with the demands set forth in the imposed regulations (De Jongste 1980-1981b: 78; also: papers regarding Leiden, 11-11-1747, RAL, LB 787).

In the end most of the proposals of the reformers failed. The contradictions within the movement were considerable, resulting in bickering and strife. Secondly, it proved to be a wrong decision for the reformers to put their trust in the new stadtholder. The stadtholder's troops eventually suppressed the insurrections in Leiden and Rotterdam. The desired purge of the regents, as advocated by the reformists, did not occur. In Amsterdam those that were removed from office were often replaced by like-minded persons, with similar social backgrounds (Schama 1977: 53). The stadtholder had too much regard for the established order, leading to only minor changes to the system. Any plan for 'revolutionary' change would be torpedoed (De Jongste 1980-1981b: 84). Next to the failure of the demands for reform we need to wonder if there had been a readiness within the Leiden citizenry for a radical break with the incumbent administration.

Early modern political corruption and public values in a 'Johnstonian' perspective

The conflict between Schrevelius and Van den Bergh as well as the calls for reform of 1747 tell us a lot about the contextual meaning of political corruption in the early modern Dutch Republic. Crises and corruption scandals are very useful in making visible the implicit values

underlying political corruption. They show the importance of context for research into political corruption, and the period around 1747 is no exception. The year 1747 shows the existence of multiple coexisting, and sometimes conflicting, standards of correct ethical conduct. Especially interesting are the conflicting values on the bestowal of office while comparing the conflict between Schrevelius and Van den Bergh (with a focus on wrongful individual behaviour) on the one hand and the reform movement of the same year (with a broader notion of political corruption and a focus on the political system) on the other hand. Different groups apparently had very different perceptions of political corruption.

In his infamous pamphlet Schrevelius claimed that Van den Bergh had broken his oath to him as well as his brother-in-law Van Teylingen, because on the 10th of November 1727 their fellow magistrate Van der Mark was appointed the new sheriff. Schrevelius stated that he had never seen such a rogue and such horrible actions. He had never witnessed a comparable feat by any man with an 'honest drop of blood in his veins'. According to Schrevelius it almost seemed as if Van den Bergh did not expect a punishment for his behaviour in the afterlife (Knuttel, 1978: mf. 17783, 1747, f. 8)! It is interesting to see what Schrevelius and Van den Bergh considered unethical in this conflict. Schrevelius mainly agitated against the fact that the promises of reinstatement as a member of the correspondence and the prospect of becoming the new sheriff had not been adhered to. Both magistrates' modes of thought were still firmly ingrained in the existing value system on the bestowal of office. Administration, according to this value system, should be carried out by those most suitable for the position, i.e. preferably those whose ancestors or relations already had been members of the administration. For Schrevelius and Van den Bergh contracts of correspondence and rotation of offices were still the cornerstones of everyday administration. When an oath or promise was made, it should be respected. Not honouring such a promise was what was considered unethical and unwanted by Schrevelius. An upright magistrate should be trustworthy and at least respect his commitments. Johan van den Bergh used similar arguments. According to him he simply could not have made a promise to Schrevelius or his brother-in-law Van Teijlingen, because in 1727 there had also been six other, more senior members of the correspondence that had to be taken into consideration. He therefore agreed with Schrevelius on the question whether promises should be honoured.

As discussed earlier, the practices concerning the appointment of magistrates ultimately remained intact after 1748. Rules regarding rank and seniority again prevailed and plans for

the rotation of offices showed much regularity until 1780 (Prak 1985: 100). In 1747 Johan van den Bergh's and Cornelis Schrevelius' ideas and values on the proper way to govern were seemingly not yet outdated. Yet in the year 1747 it would also become clear that the sovereignty of the magistrates and obedience to patrician authority were not entirely unchallenged anymore. Calls for reform could be found within the periodical press, which intentionally created an image of continual abuses within the oligarchy to further the interests of the newly appointed stadtholder.

According to Maarten Prak the complaints which were uttered against the regents were mainly aimed at their transgressions, whereas the foundations of the system were not really affected. He also states that although indignation existed concerning the magistrates as they used their positions for pecuniary gain, these complaints were precisely an argument for a government of the affluent as only an impoverished regent would be tempted towards corruption (Prak 1985: 94; also papers regarding Leiden, 1748, RAL, LB 774 7, 9). A nuance seems desirable here. A failure of reforms does not imply we cannot speak of changing or shifting values. While using a 'Johnstonian' perspective it is important to note that attitudes and assumptions concerning administration or an official's desirable conduct, qualities and characteristics do not change overnight. Although everyday practice concerning the bestowal of office did not change for several decades, ideas that these practices were no longer tenable did arise from 1747 onwards. In the second half of the eighteenth century similar calls for reform would resurface, gain further influence and continuously re-enter the political debate. One needs only to be reminded of the (failed) Patriot Revolution of 1787 and the (successful) Batavian Revolution of 1795. In 1747 for more radical reformers it truly was *the system* through which offices were allocated that was not acceptable or ethical anymore. The 'neo-classical' discourse and the 'Johnstonian' framework including the scandals concerning political corruption therefore seem to be useful in providing material that substantiates, complements or corrects abstract and general notions of political corruption and the underlying public values.

How did things eventually turn out for the two quarrelling magistrates? Johan van den Bergh, already an old man, eventually resigned as a result of the 1748 tax revolt. Yet *he* could look back upon a long and successful career (Prak 1985: 95). Cornelis Schrevelius was regarded as a problem. In 1747 he had written his infamous pamphlet against Van den Bergh. Schrevelius, as a member of the minority in the council, was even considered as one of the possible

agitators of the tax riots of 1748. By (possibly) doing so he actually not only attempted to overthrow the incumbent administration of which he so longed to become a respected member; he also unconsciously undermined his own views on the proper way to govern, as his mode of thought was still firmly ingrained in the existing value system on the desirable way to administer. Eventually a plan was devised to get rid of him. His son could become a member of the council if Schrevelius would renounce his own seat. His second son was also offered an office in one of the city seigniories (*stadsheerlijkheid*). Schrevelius, sidetracked and already 72 years old, wisely accepted (Prak 1985: 102-103).

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