

Representing Dutch Sovereignty: An Unknown Painting of a Meeting of the States General in 1608

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Abstract

This article introduces a painting that has recently come to light after having remained in private ownership for centuries. It depicts a meeting of the States General in the *Statenzaal* at the *Binnenhof* in The Hague. This is of historical significance because, until now, no detailed representations of the interior of the assembly hall of the highest governing body of the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century were known. Moreover, on the basis of the identification of the figures portrayed – among them stadholder and military commander Maurice of Nassau and all members of the delegation representing the United Provinces at the peace negotiations that would culminate in the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) – it can be established that the painting depicts a specific moment recorded in the resolutions of the States General. During the session of 4 February 1608, the assembly received news that the Spanish-Habsburg negotiators, led by Ambrogio Spinola, were willing to present themselves before the assembly. This visit, which took place the following day, could be interpreted as a performative confirmation of the Spanish-Habsburg recognition of Dutch sovereignty. The communicative event immortalised by an unidentified painter thus symbolised the emergence of the Netherlands as a sovereign state.

Keywords: history of diplomacy, Dutch Revolt, States General, sovereignty, representation, group portraiture

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In November 2023, my attention was drawn to a painting that was to be auctioned in Vienna (figs. 1 and 2).¹ This painting had been part of the private Rimpau-Langenstein collection, which was located at Langenstein Castle near Halberstadt in Germany. The painting was described in the auction catalogue as a seventeenth-century Dutch depiction of a council meeting in a guildhall, by an unknown artist. This interpretation seemed unlikely to me. There are very few known group portraits of city councils or other local government bodies in the Dutch Republic.² Moreover, city governments did not meet in guildhalls, nor did the space depicted strike me as a guildhall. I suspected that this was a depiction of another type of political assembly. It was only after having acquired the painting that I concluded that the assembly depicted must be the Dutch States General.³

¹ I would like to thank Jirsi Reinders for drawing my attention to the painting. I am also grateful to the editorial board of EMLC for the thorough editorial process. In addition to the colleagues mentioned elsewhere in the footnotes, I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers as well as Jan Bloemendal, Marion Boltén, Manuel Herrero Sanchez, Nina Lamal, Edwin Buijsen, Canan Çakırlar, Baukje Coenen, Brecht Cornelisse, Lieke van Deinsen, Alexander Dencher, Luc Duerloo, Marianne Eekhout, Marco van Egmond, Margriet van Eikema Hommes, Peter Geurts, Marissa Griffioen, Paula van der Heiden, Jan de Hond, Bram Hulshof, Maikki Kivinen, Peter van der Krogt, Weixuan Li, Fred van Lieburg, Dirk van Miert, Kiraz Oddens, Anna Orlando, Bart van Poelgeest, André Pohl, Judith Pollmann, Dries Raeymaekers, Vicky Rothe, Marie Luce Repetto, Bert Schepers, Eveline Sint Nicolaas, Ronald Sluijter, Diederik Smit, Laura Stagno, Ruben Vecht, and Enrico Zucchi for their help, critical feedback and answers to my many questions.

² Middelkoop, *Schutters*, 33; Oddens, 'Official Portraits', forthcoming.

³ At the time, I was the principal investigator of a project with the aim of making all resolutions (decisions) of the Dutch States General (1576-1796) accessible online and full-text searchable. The project *REPUBLIC* (Resolutions Published in a Computational Environment) was carried out between 2019 and 2024 at the Huygens Institute for the History and Culture of the Netherlands, with financial support of the Dutch Research Council (nwo). This article was written in the context of this project, and an image of the painting after restoration was used on the homepage of the web application resulting from the *REPUBLIC* project (<https://goetgevonden.nl>). The painting is currently on loan to the Hague Historical Museum, which is, at the time of writing, closed for renovation. When the museum reopens (scheduled for 2028), the painting is expected to be part of an exhibition about the history of the *Binnenhof*. I would like to express my gratitude to Lex van Tilborg for making this possible.



Fig. 1 Anonymous, Meeting of the States General in the Statenzaal at the Start of the Peace Negotiations between the United Provinces and Spain (4 February 1608), c. 1609, oil on canvas, 78 × 102 cm, The Hague, Hague Historical Museum, long-term loan from private collection of the author, photo by Ralph Kämena. State before restauration.

The States General were the permanent representative assembly of the Dutch Republic.⁴ In the seventeenth century, they met six days a week in the *Statenzaal* (States Hall), one of the rooms of the administrative complex at the *Binnenhof* (Inner Court) in The Hague. No detailed depictions of the *Statenzaal* in the seventeenth century were known to exist until today. Our knowledge of what the room looked like was limited to a few prints (showing stylised or very partial views) and the oft-cited remark, made by the Venetian ambassador Trevisano in his 1620 report, that it was a *povero luogo* (poor place).⁵

In this article, I set out how I arrived at my interpretation, drawing on the visual evidence that we do have and on the resolutions of the States General. I will then demonstrate that the painting does not depict an ordinary sitting. During the session of 4 February

⁴ The quintessential study about the States General is Thomassen, *Instrumenten*. For a broader perspective on political and artistic representation in the Dutch Republic: Oddens, Moorman, and Metlica, 'Representing Power'.

⁵ Trevisano, 'Relazione', 141; cited in Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 382; Tiethoff-Splithoff, 'Het kwartier', 102; Nijenhuis, 'Republikanische Repräsentation?', 148; Ebben, 'De Staten-Generaal', 48; Van der Heiden, *Interieurs*, 215.



Fig. 2 Anonymous, *Meeting of the States General in the Statenzaal at the Start of the Peace Negotiations between the United Provinces and Spain (4 February 1608)*, c. 1609, oil on canvas, 78 × 102 cm, *The Hague, Hague Historical Museum*, long-term loan from private collection of the author, photo by Ralph Kämena. State after the restauration by Marjan de Visser.

1608, the States General learned that the negotiators who had come to The Hague to conduct peace negotiations on behalf of the archdukes Albert and Isabella, sovereign rulers of the Southern Netherlands, and Philip III, King of Spain, were prepared to appear before the assembly. This important communicative event took place in the presence of several members of the House of Orange-Nassau, and of the men who would, during the same session, be charged with negotiating what would eventually become the Twelve Years' Truce in 1609.⁶

In the article I show that it was the resolution recording this event that inspired the scene depicted in the painting, and that the painting ought thus be given a new title: *Meeting of the States General in the Statenzaal at the Start of the Peace Negotiations between*

⁶ The hypothesis I present here is the result of an extensive process of formal peer review and informal exchanges with many colleagues. I have tried to be as open-minded as possible during this process (particularly given the unusual situation that I remain the owner of the painting). Thanks to all the feedback I received, I have been able to modify my initial interpretation on important points, but what I present here remains my hypothesis, for which I myself am responsible.

*the United Provinces and Spain (4 February 1608).*⁷ The painting was, I contend, first and foremost intended as a representation of the newly acquired Dutch sovereignty.

Representations of the States General

In the late sixteenth century, the *Binnenhof* in The Hague became the administrative centre of the United Provinces, accommodating the States General alongside the stadholder's court, the Council of State, the Treasury Chamber, the Court of Holland, and the States of Holland.⁸ The northeast wing of the *Binnenhof*, where the assembly hall of the States General was located, originally housed the living quarters of the count of Holland and his court. In the fifteenth century, the count's title passed successively to the Houses of Burgundy and Habsburg. Having hosted Emperor Charles V in the 1540s, this wing became known as the *Keizershof* (Imperial Court).⁹ After the provinces assembled in the States General had abjured Charles's successor Philip II as their legitimate sovereign, the rooms were renovated and furnished for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who had been appointed governor-general of the Netherlands in 1585.¹⁰ Leicester did not stay there long, as he decided to settle in Utrecht, and his governorship soon ended in failure.

Since the States General permanently established themselves in the northeast wing of the *Binnenhof* in 1588, various alterations and renovations have taken place there, including those in 1632-1633, 1696-1697, 1730, 1760, 1853, 1880-1881, and 1970-1982.¹¹ The *Statenzaal* underwent its most extensive refurbishment in the late seventeenth century under the direction of the architect Daniel Marot, who redecorated the room in Louis XIV style.¹² The buildings at the *Binnenhof* are currently undergoing renovation once more (fig. 3).¹³

Most known images of meetings of the States General date from the eighteenth century and the assembly hall depicted in these images is not the *Statenzaal*, but the room to the north of it. In the seventeenth century, the space where this room came to be located was occupied by two antechambers. In the year 1608, the larger of these two rooms, at the time known as the *grootte vertreckcamer* (great antechamber), was the venue of the first stage of the negotiations that were to result in the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621), which the United Provinces concluded with the sovereign rulers of the Southern Netherlands and the King of Spain (fig. 4). After this event, this room came to be known as the

7 In Dutch, this is *Bijeenkomst van de Staten-Generaal in de Statenzaal aan de vooravond van de vredesonderhandelingen tussen de Verenigde Provinciën en Spanje (4 februari 1608)*.

8 Knevel, 'Het Binnenhof', 73; Alberts, Habben Jansen and Smit, *Het Haagse Binnenhof*.

9 De Riemer, *Beschrijving*, 137; Ising, 'Het kwartier', 3-7; Peters, *De landsgebouwen*, 61.

10 *Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt ende Westvrieslandt*, vol. 1585, 817-818 (resolution of 17 December 1585); Calkoen, 'Het Binnenhof', 113.

11 On the renovations see Peters, *De landsgebouwen*; Bosch, 'De verbouw'; Calkoen, 'Het Binnenhof'; Goudeau, *Van Kwartier*; Smit, *Het belang*; Stenvert and Van Ginkel-Meester, *Algemene Zaken*.

12 Ozinga, *Daniel Marot*, 96-98; Goudeau, *Van Kwartier*, 74-83.

13 The *Trêveszaal* and the *Statenzaal* have been closed for renovation since early 2025.



Fig. 3 Photo of the Statenzaal, as situated in January 2026, with the author for scale. Courtesy of the Government of the Netherlands.

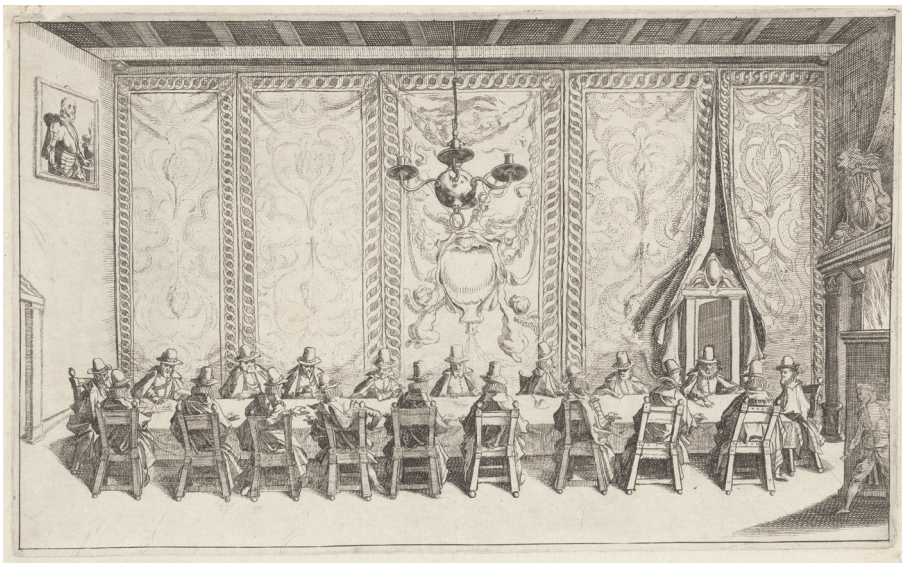


Fig. 4 Simon Frisius, The First Meeting of the Peace Conference in The Hague, 6 February 1608, 1608, etching, 15 x 25 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 5 Daniël Marot, The Great Audience Room (*Trêveszaal*) Where the States General Receive the Envoys and Hold Their Meetings, c. 1697, etching and engraving, 42 × 70 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Trêveskamer (Truce Room).¹⁴ During the renovation of 1696-1697, the two antechambers were merged to create the larger room we still know today as the *Trêveszaal*, where the Council of Ministers met until this part of the *Binnenhof* had to be vacated to allow for the present renovation.

After the renovations of the late seventeenth century, the States General met in both the *Statenzaal* and the *Trêveszaal*. The *Trêveszaal* henceforth served as audience hall, where the States General received foreign envoys. The *Statenzaal* became known as the 'old' or 'ordinary' assembly hall (*oude* or *ordinaris vergaderkamer*).¹⁵ There are several prints which show meetings of the States General in the *Trêveszaal* held after 1697 (fig. 5).

By contrast, little was until now known about the appearance of the *Statenzaal* in the seventeenth century.¹⁶ There is one anonymous French etching from 1639 that shows the delegates of the States General – or more precisely, the delegates of the provinces at the States General, *gedeputeerden ter Staten-Generaal* – around a meeting table in a cramped room (fig. 6). The proportions of the space this print depicts do not seem realistic, but I

¹⁴ The earliest mention of the name *Trêveskamer* (*trefues camere*) that I have been able to find was in resolutions concerning the declarations of workers who had been involved in the renovation of this room in 1633. The Hague National Archives (hereafter NA), States General Archives (hereafter SG) 3192, scan 0727, ordinary resolution of 2 December 1633; NA, SG 3192, scan 0756, ordinary resolution of 20 December 1633. All resolutions of the States General cited in this article were accessed through the web application *Goetgevonden* (<https://goetgevonden.nl>).

¹⁵ See for instance NA, SG 3338, scan 0098, ordinary resolution of 18 July 1698; NA, SG 3805, scan 0081, ordinary resolution of 4 February 1750.

¹⁶ As historians have repeatedly observed: Tiethoff-Splithoff, 'Het kwartier', 102; Nijenhuis, 'Republikanische Repräsentation?', 149; Ebben, 'De Staten-Generaal', 48.



Fig. 6 Anonymous, Meeting of the States General, 1639, etching, 26 × 19 cm, in: Puget de la Serre, *Histoire de l'entree*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 7 Theodor Matham after Jacob Toorenvliet, King Charles II of Great Britain addresses the Delegates of the States General, 1 June 1660, 1660, engraving, 36 × 47 cm, in: Wicquefort, *Verhael*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 8 Bartholomeus van Bassen and Anthonie Palamedesz, *The Great Assembly of 1651*, c. 1651, oil on panel and metal, 52 × 66 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

will show in this article that several details were in fact correct. Another print appeared in 1660, when Charles II, at that time King of Scotland, visited The Hague on his way to England to assume the throne, and appeared before the States General, assembled in the *Statenzaal* (fig. 7). This engraving does not show much of the room, but the published description of this visit by Abraham de Wicquefort, which is also the source of the print, suggests that what we do see is historically accurate.¹⁷

Moreover, there are a couple of extant images that represent seventeenth-century meetings of the States General outside of the *Statenzaal*. These images help us to identify iconographical elements that were used to characterise the States General. One of these paintings, attributed to Bartholomeus van Bassen and Anthony Palamedes, depicts a meeting of the Great Assembly of 1651 (fig. 8). This event, which took place between January and August 1651 in the *Grote Zaal* (Great Hall, now known as the *Ridderzaal*) in the former count's castle at the centre of the *Binnenhof*, was an extraordinary gathering of the States General and the members of the various Provincial States' colleges of the Dutch Republic.¹⁸ In 1618, the States General attended the opening of Synod of Dordrecht, which it had ordered the Dutch Reformed Church to organise. François Schillemans produced a detailed engraving of this event.¹⁹ In 1621, Pouwel Weyts completed a painting that loosely followed this print (figs. 9 and 10).

¹⁷ Wicquefort, *Verhael*, 103–104.

¹⁸ On the Great Assembly see Fockema Andreae, *De Nederlandse staat*, 18–19.

¹⁹ On the Synod see Van Lieburg, *Synodestad*.



Fig. 9 François Schillemans, Opening of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618, 1618-19, engraving, 45 × 41 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 10 Pouwels Weyts, The Opening of the National Synod in Dordrecht on 13 November 1618, 1621, oil on canvas, 196 × 172 cm, Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum.

When we compare these known seventeenth-century depictions with *Meeting of the States General*, several observations can be made. First of all, the States General convened at an elongated rectangular table covered with a green tablecloth; this is also confirmed by written sources.²⁰ This table appears both in the 1639 print and in the 1651 painting of

²⁰ See for instance: NA, SG 3178, scan 0315, ordinary resolution of 31 May 1619; *Hedendaagsche historie*, xi, 248. Brasset, 'Sommaire', 155-156, refers to a table with rounded ends; later (eighteenth-century) prints feature both rectangular and round tables.

the Great Assembly. In *Meeting of the States General*, the table likewise occupies a central position.²¹

We see a similar meeting table in the painting of the Synod, but it is reserved for the ecclesiastical scholars. The delegates of the States General present during the Synod are placed on the gallery in the upper left. Another notable feature of this painting is that the States General is shown accompanied by its secretary, who is depicted seated at a small writing desk next to the gallery.²² A similar writing desk appears in the 1639 print. The figure seated at the desk in that case is likely to represent the greffier of the States General. The same desk can be observed again in *Meeting of the States General* (figs. 11-13).



Fig. 11 The secretary's desk. Detail of fig. 10.



Fig. 12 The secretary's desk. Detail of fig. 6.



Fig. 13 The secretary's desk. Detail of fig. 2.

²¹ Brasset, 'Sommaire', 156-157, writes that once three tables were set up for an extraordinarily well-attended meeting in 1633. Wicquefort, *Verhael*, 103, writes that on the occasion of the equally well-attended visit of Charles II in 1660, there was a table that stretched across the entire length of the room. In 1647, the States General ordered a second long table to be placed in their assembly hall: NA, SG 3253, scan 0164, ordinary resolution of 13 March 1647.

²² The secretary of the States General at the Synod was Daniel Heinsius.

The *griffier* or greffier was the secretary of the States General and headed the secretarial office, the *griffie*. Together with the president, he drew up the agenda and, during sessions of the States General, was responsible for recording new resolutions in the resolution books.²³ It is known that in the later seventeenth century, the greffier sat at the meeting table with the delegates; the earliest mentions of this date back to 1646 and 1647, when he was sitting at the short western end of the table.²⁴ It is quite possible that he had been sitting there since 1645, when the meeting table was widened at the request of the States General.²⁵

Perhaps this change was related to the arrival of an additional official, the *commies* or adjunct greffier, in 1643.²⁶ A resolution from that year stipulated that the commies would attend the meetings of the States General in the absence of the greffier and would be authorised to record the resolutions in his place. In practice, the greffier and the commies may soon have both participated in the meetings, with the greffier being given a seat at the low end of the meeting table.²⁷

In the early seventeenth century, the greffier's desk seems to have been a distinctive feature of the States General. Apparently, such a writing desk was also present on occasions when the States General met outside its regular assembly hall, such as during the Synod of Dordrecht. This desk becomes a recognisable feature in visual representations of the States General. The motif of the desk was reinforced by the depiction of one or more resolution books on the desk. It was part of the greffier's duties to consult relevant retro-acta (previously passed resolutions) during the sessions of the States General. To perform this task, he would have to have had the resolution books he expected to need at hand.²⁸ We find such books in the representations of the Synod – a book was added to Weyts's painting while it had still been absent in the print – and the Great Assembly, as well as in *Meeting of the States General* (figs. 14–16). The books pictured resemble the real resolution books, which are currently in the National Archives in The Hague.

The Statenzaal in 1608

What do we know about the appearance and layout of the *Statenzaal* before the late seventeenth-century renovation? As far as we know, the room was the same size as it is now, approximately 13 by 8 metres. In 1696, the room was provided with a new roof

²³ Thomassen, *Instrumenten*, 260–263.

²⁴ 'Instructie voor den Griffier', 183, art. 3; Brasset, 'Sommaire', 164.

²⁵ NA, SG 3251, scan 0146, ordinary resolution of 24 March 1645.

²⁶ It is not known exactly when the first commies Johan Spronssen entered service. As early as 1637, the greffier was given permission to hire someone with a job description that matched the profile of the commies, but the earliest known reference indicating that Spronssen had been hired as a commies dates from 1643: Van Riemsdijk, *De griffie*, 11 and 28–29.

²⁷ This was certainly the situation when an official instruction for the commies was first drawn up in 1680, but it may well be that these instructions formalised a practice that had existed for much longer: 'Instructie voor den Commis', 201–202.

²⁸ Van Riemsdijk, *De griffie*, 18–19; Thomassen, *Instrumenten*, 260–261; Oddens, 'A Dynasty'.



Fig. 14 Resolution book. Detail of fig. 10.



Fig. 15 Resolution books. Detail of fig. 8.

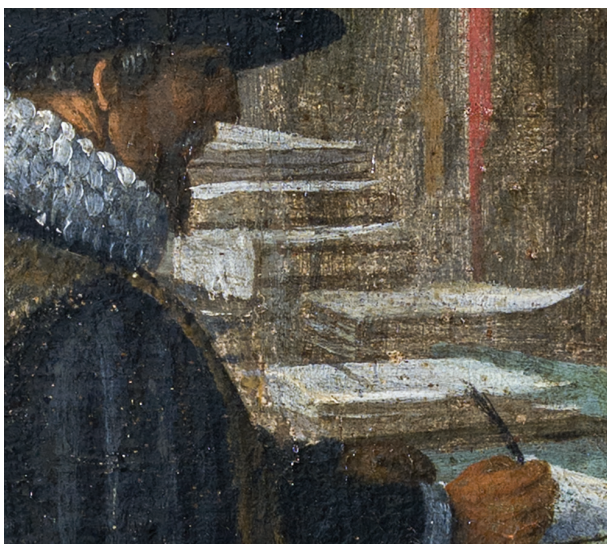


Fig. 16 Resolution books. Detail of fig. 2.

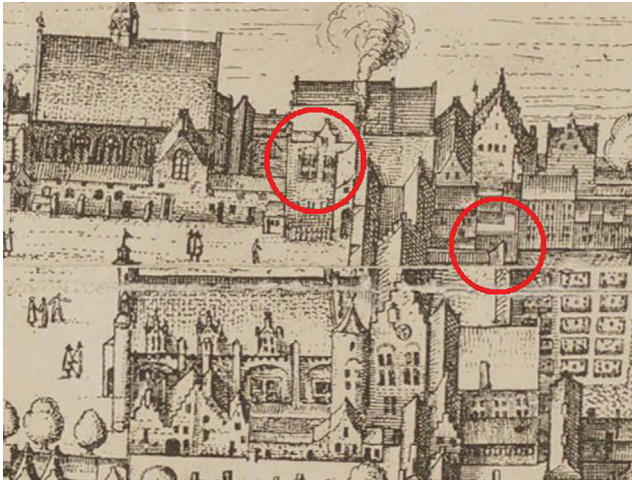


Fig. 17 Cornelis Jansz. Visscher, *Hagae-comitis celeberrimi totius Europae municipij typus (detail)*, 1616 [lithographic reprint, 1919], 105 × 125 cm, The Hague, City Archives. View of the northeastern wing of the Binnenhof, seen from the Binnenhof side, as situated in 1616. The left circle indicates the Statenzaal with two cross-windows. The right circle indicates the entrance used to access the Statenzaal until 1622.

and a decorative ceiling, and the height of the space was altered.²⁹ The original height is unknown. It is likely that earlier in the seventeenth century the room featured an exposed beamed ceiling with principal beams and secondary joists, as depicted in *Meeting of the States General*.³⁰

The current *Statenzaal* has four windows on the *Binnenhof* side. In the eighteenth century, there were three sliding windows, which must have been created in the 1696-1697 works.³¹ In most seventeenth-century prints depicting the buildings of the *Binnenhof* from the outside, the façade of the building housing the *Statenzaal* is obscured by the former count's castle which sits in the middle of the court. However, the exterior of the room can be distinguished on a map of The Hague dating from 1616; this map shows only two cross windows (fig. 17).³² In the 1660 depiction of the visit of Charles II, a window is visible on the left. This must be the same window as the one depicted in *Meeting of the States General*. The place of the window in both images indicates that the meeting table was placed in the southwestern corner of the room (fig. 18). Given the probable length of the meeting table (approximately 8 meters), the window that is visible can only be the easternmost window of the two.³³ It seems, therefore, that the western window is hidden from view by the

²⁹ NA, SG 3334, scan 0306, ordinary resolution of 13 October 1696; NA, SG 3338, scan 0495, ordinary resolution of 7 November 1698; Thomassen, *Instrumenten*, 29.

³⁰ A ceiling with similar console-shaped beam ends can be seen on older depictions of the *Rolzaal* in the former count's castle, which at the time housed the Court of Holland: François van Bleyswijck, *The Plea Roll of the Court of Holland*, c. 1700, collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: <https://id.rijksmuseum.nl/200243642>. The rooms beneath the *Statenzaal* also had a comparable beamed floor: Bosch, 'De verbouw', 285.

³¹ Goudeau, *Van Kwartier*, 46-47.

³² This map was said to have been 'measured and charted with great diligence': Goudeau, *Van Kwartier*, 46.

³³ In the painting, the shutter that we see in the detail of the 1616 map is closed, leaving only the upper part of the window visible.

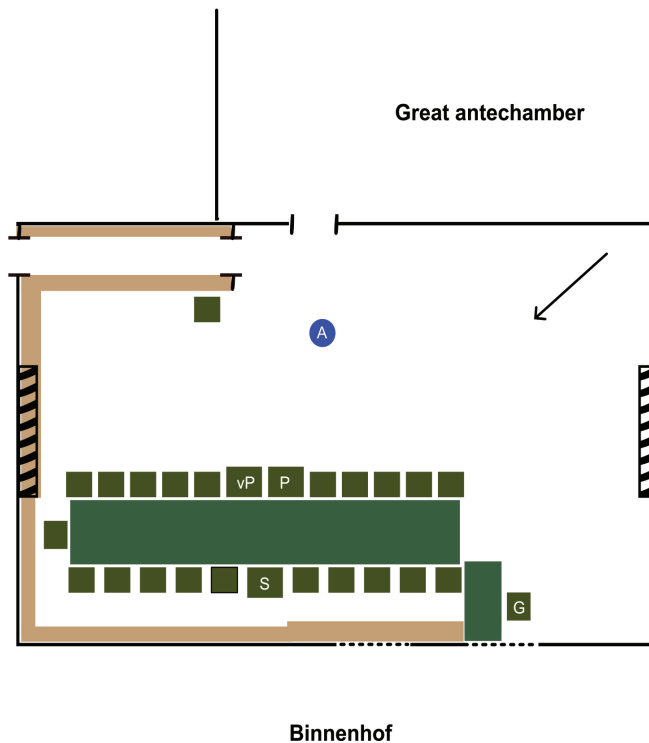


Fig. 18 Floor plan of the Statenzaal as represented in Meeting of the States General, made by the author.

protruding panelling that starts to the right of the eastern window. This panelling, which continues to the east side of the room but protrudes more where the window must have been located, was possibly installed to protect this part of the room from the cold.

The panelling seems to be lined with tapestries and finished with a cornice. On the right, one of the tapestries is partially lifted. In December 1590, the States General decided to purchase some tapestries ‘for the decoration of the chamber of the States’.³⁴ We do not know what was depicted on these tapestries.³⁵ The prints from 1639 and 1660 feature tapestries with forest landscapes. The background of the 1639 print shows a wild boar hunt. It is likely that the same series already hung there in the early seventeenth century, as a wild boar can be recognised on the first tapestry from the left (figs. 19 and 20). Tapestries with hunting scenes were a popular decorative theme in the sixteenth and

³⁴ NA, SG 3124, scan 0547, ordinary resolution of 19 December 1590: ‘tot verchieringe van camere vande heeren Staten’. The States General bought as many tapestries as were needed to ‘upholster and hang’ their assembly hall (‘te stofferen ende behangen’): NA, SG 3126, scan 0329, ordinary resolution of 9 October 1591. The choice fell on a series of eight tapestries from the workshop of François Spiering in Delft: NA, SG 3124, scan 0549, ordinary resolution of 27 December 1590; NA, SG 3126, scan 0135, ordinary resolution of 19 April 1591. A year later, it was reported that the tapestries were hanging in the Statenzaal and had been paid for: NA, SG 3128, scan 0055, ordinary resolution of 7 April 1592; Ysselsteyn, *Geschiedenis*, 1, 69.

³⁵ In the eighteenth century, a series of tapestries depicting the story of Antony and Cleopatra hung in the Statenzaal, but in 1643 these tapestries were still hanging in the small antechamber: *Hedendaagsche historie*, xvi, 35; NA, SG 3249, scan 0061, ordinary resolution of 19 January 1643. In 1698, tapestries that had previously hung in the Statenzaal were sold: NA, SG 3338, scan 0098, ordinary resolution of 18 July 1698.



Fig. 19 Boar hunt as represented on a tapestry in the Statenzaal, 1639. Detail of fig. 6.



Fig. 20 Wild boar as represented on a tapestry in the Statenzaal, c. 1608-9. Detail of fig. 2.

seventeenth centuries. Moreover, hunting was associated with sovereign rights, so it is imaginable that the States General chose this theme once they had assumed the role of sovereign.³⁶

The tapestries appear to have been covered with maps and paintings or possibly prints. Along the south wall a large wall map in portrait orientation can be recognised: this must be the first edition of Joost Jansz Beeldsnijder's map of northern Holland from 1575 (figs. 21 and 22). The Beeldsnijder map is mounted with a decorative border, which seems to consist of city- and seascapes.³⁷ To the left and right of it, we see five smaller objects in various sizes – their rollers suggest that they are also maps – and

³⁶ The States General effectively exercised hunting rights in the territories conquered by the States' army, known as 'Generality Lands'; the earliest areas to which this applied were parts of States' Flanders, captured in the 1580s: Thomassen, *Instrumenten*, 214-215.

³⁷ Joost Jansz Beeldsnijder, *Caerte van Noorthollant beghinende van Noortendt, Zuytwards up tot om Leyden toe* [...] (1575). Of the Beeldsnijder version of the first map – one of the first large wall maps to have been produced in the Netherlands – no extant copies are known, so identification is based on the second edition by Herman Allertsz. van Warmenhuizen (1608); minor deviations in comparison with this version suggest that the version depicted in the painting is the one from 1575. I am grateful to Paula van Gestel-van het Schip, who identified this map for me.



Fig. 21 Joost Jansz Beeldsnijder, Map of North Holland, 1575, with decorative border, as represented in the Statenzaal, c. 1608-9. Detail of fig. 2.

below a series of four small objects that are likely to be paintings. The rest of the southern and western walls seem to be mostly covered with maps as well.³⁸

The *Statenzaal* currently has mantelpieces on both short sides of the room. In 1656 the States General requested that, in addition to the chimney on the eastern side of the room, a second chimney (*'schoorsteen'*) be installed on the western side before the start of the winter.³⁹ The painting shows that there was already a hearth with a smoke channel, so this must have meant that they wanted a chimneypiece with an open fire instead of the brazier that we can see.

Next to the hearth there was a door leading to a corridor that ran in the direction of the *Hofkapel* (Court Chapel).⁴⁰ The painting shows that it is concealed behind a wooden draught screen thus forming a small lobby which is enclosed by a second door. In the northern wall there was a door connecting the *Statenzaal* with the great antechamber, which is not visible on the painting; the standing figure on the right must have entered the room from there.⁴¹ In the early seventeenth century, the delegates reached their assembly

³⁸ In 1590, the States General asked the States of Holland for 'some geographical maps' (*'eenighe caerten van Landschappen'*): NA, SG 3124, scan 0470, ordinary resolution of 11 October 1590.

³⁹ NA, SG 3264, scan 0724, ordinary resolution of 20 October 1656; Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 382.

⁴⁰ Calkoen, *'Het Binnenhof'*, 135.

⁴¹ After 1697 the *Statenzaal* and the *Trêveszaal* were connected by double doors. The 1608 print of the great antechamber (fig. 3) suggests that at that time there was a passage consisting of a single door, positioned further to the west.



Fig. 22 Herman Allertsz. van Warmenhuizen, Map of North Holland, 1608 (second edition of Beeldsnijder's map of 1575), 93 × 69 cm without border, with a decorative border including a print series by Claes Jansz. Visscher, 1608 (not the border represented in the painting), Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam, University Library.

hall by a staircase originating in a stair tower to the northeast of the gallery that linked this part of the *Binnenhof* complex to the former count's castle. The staircase led onto a corridor that provided access to this antechamber. They then entered the assembly hall through this door.⁴²

A third door, now located in the east wall of the room, probably did not exist in the early decades of the seventeenth century. This door provides access to the gallery that leads to the *Ridderzaal*. The door possibly dates from 1622, when a new entrance was made in the

⁴² Heijenbrok and Steenmeijer, 'Een kwestie', 240.

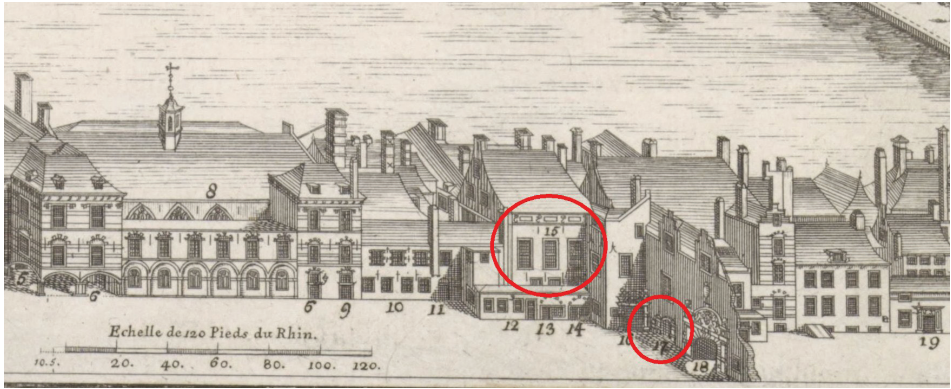


Fig. 23 Pierre-Antoine de Saint Hilaire Mallet, *Gezicht op het Buitenhof en het Binnenhof (detail)*, 1752, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum. View of the northeastern quarter of the Binnenhof, seen from the Binnenhof side, as situated in 1752. The left circle indicates the Statenzaal, now with three windows. The right circle indicates the entrance used to access the Statenzaal after 1622.

western wall of the gallery on the ground floor. From that moment on, the shorter route to the *Statenzaal* for delegates and visitors was via this entrance and a new staircase that led to the gallery and the door in the eastern wall of the assembly hall (fig. 23).⁴³ High-level diplomatic visitors were led to the assembly hall via the Great Hall and the great ante-chamber, and thus still entered via the northern entrance.⁴⁴

The stadholder and the presidium

We must now focus our attention on the twenty-four men around the meeting table. Most of the men are dressed in long black cloaks with Spanish ruffs and high black hats. This attire was customary for the political and ecclesiastical elite of the Dutch Republic in the first quarter of the seventeenth century; we see, for example, similar attire in the 1621 depiction of the Synod of Dordrecht, both among the delegates of the States General and other attendees.

The artist has paid close attention to the details of the clothing worn by the sitters in *Meeting of the States General*. Fabrics, buttons, and hats are particularly distinctive in the figures on the left-hand side of the painting. The most conspicuously dressed, however, is the figure seated centrally at the long end of the table on the *Binnenhof* side. He wears a fashionable lower hat, a French ruff and a green costume. This suggests that it is a portrait of Maurice of Nassau (1567-1625), stadholder of Holland and Zeeland (since 1585), Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel (since 1590), and captain-general (commander-in-chief) of the Union (since 1588).⁴⁵

⁴³ Heijenbrok and Steenmeijer, 'Een kwestie', 236-237, 241; Stenvert and Van Ginkel-Meester, *Algemene Zaken*, 28.

⁴⁴ Wicquefort, *Verhael*, 103.

⁴⁵ On Maurice see Van Deursen, *Maurits*; on the office of stadholder see Kiesow, *The Office*.

We know the likeness of the later Maurice mainly from his official portrait painted by Michiel van Mierevelt around 1607. This portrait was frequently reproduced (fig. 24).⁴⁶ The portrait of the figure at the meeting table cannot be traced back to Van Mierevelt's version, but it is nevertheless very likely that Maurice is depicted here, and his clothing would also have made him easily recognisable to contemporaries.⁴⁷

Maurice's living quarters were in the northwest wing of the *Binnenhof* complex. In his capacity as stadholder of Holland and captain-general, he regularly attended the sessions of the States General. In *Meeting of the States General*, Maurice's portrait rises slightly above the other figures along his side of the meeting table, suggesting that he is seated on a higher chair (fig. 25). In 1590, the States General requested that the States of Holland provide it with twenty-four armless chairs as well as three 'large Spanish chairs'.⁴⁸ Since then, the stadholder, when present, has occupied one of the large chairs.

Over the years, the stadholder appears to have sat in various places.⁴⁹ At the end of 1647, the French embassy secretary Henri Brasset reported that he sat at the end of the table near the fireplace and the entrance, so the short eastern end of the meeting table.⁵⁰ At that time, this may have been considered the high end of the table because it was closest to the fireplace, the primary source of heat in the room. Later, possibly from the accession of William III in 1672, the stadholder was seated at the short west side of the table.⁵¹ By that time, both short sides had a fireplace, and the table was positioned closer to the fireplace on the west side. Moreover, this spot faced the entrance on the east side, and protocol demanded that during audiences, the person with the highest rank present be placed opposite the entrance, so it is probable that the west end was now considered the high end.⁵²

In the early seventeenth century, delegates and visitors entered through the northern entrance, and the long south side of the meeting table was therefore the side opposite the entrance. It is therefore understandable that, when the stadholder attended the meeting, he would have been seated at the centre of the long south side of the table. Maurice sat in this place in *Meeting of the States General*, and his successor Frederick Henry apparently still sat there in 1639: in the print from that year, the figure seated centrally on the long side can be identified as the stadholder on the basis of the diagonal commander's sash, sitting there on a larger chair with armrests (fig. 26). Perhaps the widening of the meeting table in 1645 marks the moment when not only the greffier but also the stadholder was repositioned.⁵³

⁴⁶ Ekkart, *De Oranjeportretten*; Verhave and Jansen, 'De portretten'. It should be noted that in prints we also find many portraits of Maurice that cannot be traced back to Van Mierevelt's portrait: De Snoo, 'Maurits bespot'.

⁴⁷ I would like to thank Marieke de Winkel for discussing this point with me.

⁴⁸ NA, SG 3124, scan 0470, ordinary resolution of 11 October 1590.

⁴⁹ For previous attempts to understand the seating order, see Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 381-382; Schöffer, 'Naar consolidatie', 80; Liesker, 'De Staten', 52-54; Gabriëls, *De heren*, 305-306 and 460; Van Vree, *Nederland*, 134-135; Nijenhuis, 'Republikanische Repräsentation?', 150.

⁵⁰ 'Au bout de la table qui est vers la cheminée, laquelle est proche de la porte par où on entre dans la chambre': Brasset, 'Sommaire', 159. On Brasset see Van Blanken, *Diplomatic Propaganda*.

⁵¹ De Riemer, *Beschryving*, 134; Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 382.

⁵² Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 381, 156.

⁵³ See footnote 25.



Fig. 24 Michiel Jansz van Mierevelt, Portrait of Maurice of Nassau, 1607, oil on panel, 110 × 82 cm, Delft, Museum Prinsenhof, photo by Tom Haartsen.



Fig. 25 Sitter identified as Stadholder Maurice of Nassau seated on a higher chair, c. 1608-9. Detail of fig. 2.

Brasset wrote at the end of 1647 that monarchs were also offered the seat at the centre of the long south side when they attended a meeting. He gives the example of Frederick V, the King of Bohemia in exile, who visited in 1632.⁵⁴ The same seat was offered to Charles II in 1660, a year that falls within the First Stadholderless Period (1650-1672). By that time, this place of honour was the usual position of the president of the assembly, who on this occasion took the seat opposite Charles, on the north side of the table.⁵⁵

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the north side of the table was still the usual position of the president.⁵⁶ The role of president was performed by a different delegate every week, rotating between the seven provinces. At the meeting table, two chairs were

⁵⁴ Brasset, 'Sommaire', 159.

⁵⁵ Wicquefort, *Verhael*, 104.

⁵⁶ Brasset, 'Sommaire', 155.



Fig. 26 Stadholder Frederick Henry of Orange seated on a higher armchair, 1639. Detail of fig. 6.



Fig. 27 The president and vice-president of the States General seated on higher chairs, c. 1608-9. Detail of fig. 2.

reserved for the presidium: the president of the week and a vice-president who represented the same province.⁵⁷ The other two larger chairs that were ordered in 1590 must have been for them.⁵⁸ In *Meeting of the States General* we indeed see two chairs that are higher than the rest in the place where we would expect to see this presidium, opposite Maurice (fig. 27).

The session of 4 February 1608

The depictions of political or ecclesiastical gatherings that were made in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic generally represented specific historical events that deserved commemoration. This applies to the aforementioned representations of the Great Assembly of 1651 and the opening of the 1618 Synod. It also applies to Gerard Ter Borch's depiction of the ratification of the Treaty of Munster between Spain and the Dutch Republic in 1648 in the *Ratskamer* of Munster City Hall, or Henri Gascar's representation of the signing of the peace between France and Spain in Nijmegen in 1678 (figs. 28 and 29).⁵⁹

I argue that *Meeting of the States General* likewise depicts a historical event, which we should situate in the year 1608. Between February and August 1608, The Hague was the scene of a peace conference. A delegation from the United Provinces entered into negotiations with a delegation acting on behalf of the archdukes Albert and Isabella, the sovereign rulers of the Southern Netherlands, and the Spanish-Habsburg king Philip III. The negotiations were also attended by envoys of several other major and minor powers, who participated as mediators and advisers to the negotiating parties. These constituted the first serious negotiations since the Netherlands had rebelled against their ruler, at that time Philip II, four decades earlier.⁶⁰

From 1606, attempts at rapprochement between the warring parties had secretly taken place. The driving force behind this was Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), the Holland *landsadvocaat* (first minister) and at the time the most talented and influential Dutch statesman (fig. 30). On the Spanish Habsburg side, the army commander Ambrogio Spinola (1569-1630), a Genoese nobleman, had convinced Philip III that to continue the war was unaffordable. Philip III authorised the archdukes to negotiate peace on his behalf. In August 1608, it became clear that a lasting peace was unattainable. The best

⁵⁷ *Hedendaagsche historie*, XI, 249-250.

⁵⁸ Ambassadors and monarchs were also offered an armchair: Brasset, 'Sommaire', 159; De Riemer, *Beschryving*, 135. It appears to have been customary to bring in this chair for the occasion: *Dagverhaal*, IV, 214. In 1648, eight armchairs were ordered for the stadholder and the first delegate of each province: NA, SG 3254, scan 0245, ordinary resolution of 24 June 1648. In 1698 the States General received a bill for twenty ordinary chairs and four armchairs for the *Trêveszaal*: NA, SG inv. no. 3337, scan 0489, ordinary resolution of 30 April 1698.

⁵⁹ About this painting see Gudlaugsson, *Geraert ter Borch*, 51-70; McNeil Kettering, *Gerard Ter Borch*. The painting was probably made with the intention to turn it into a print.

⁶⁰ For the events leading to the Twelve Years' Truce see De Pater, *Maurits*; Eysinga, *De wording*; Den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, II, 550-677; Groenveld, *Het Twaalfjarig Bestand*; Van der Lem, *De Opstand*, 165-173.



Fig. 28 Gerard ter Borch, *The Ratification of the Treaty of Munster*, 1648, oil on copper, 45 × 59 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (on loan from the National Gallery in London).



Fig. 29 Henri Gascar, *The Signing of the Peace between France and Spain*, 17 September 1678, 1679, oil on canvas, 161 × 275 cm, Nijmegen, Valkhof Museum.



Fig. 30 (Workshop of) Michiel Jansz van Mierevelt, Portrait of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, c. 1616, oil on panel, 63 × 49 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

possible result was a twelve-year truce which would take effect a year later and held until 1621.

Regardless of whether a lasting peace would prove feasible, the willingness of the Spanish Habsburg camp to enter into negotiations could be understood as a *de facto* recognition of the sovereignty of the emerging Dutch Republic under international law. In 1607 the archdukes had provisionally recognised Dutch sovereignty for the duration of the ceasefire, and this recognition was reconfirmed in 1609 for the duration of the truce. Philip III only conditionally accepted this recognition, but the Dutch camp understandably chose to place the emphasis on the king's acceptance and not on his conditions.⁶¹ Other foreign powers did the same: shortly after the conclusion of the truce, the Dutch Republic established official diplomatic relations with several states.⁶²

The peace negotiations were regarded as a major event. This was due not only to what was at stake, but also to the iconic status of Ambrogio Spinola, the chief negotiator on the Spanish Habsburg side. Since his sudden rise and capture of Ostend in 1604, the Genoese nobleman had become a celebrity whose every movement was closely followed.⁶³ Spinola was respected even in the Dutch camp. His rivalry with Maurice captured the imagination

⁶¹ Groenveld, *Het Twaalfjarig Bestand*, 38–41, 59–60.

⁶² Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, chapters 7 and 8; Helmers and Lamal, 'Dutch Diplomacy'.

⁶³ See Colomer, 'Ambrogio Spinola'; De Groof, 'A Noble Courtier'; Lamal and Arblaster, 'Spinola's Fame'.

of the population, which turned out in large numbers wherever the Spanish Habsburg delegation passed by on its way to The Hague. Like Maurice, Spinola was portrayed by Michiel van Mierevelt (fig. 31).

On the morning of Friday 1 February 1608, Spinola and his fellow negotiators arrived in Rijswijk, close to The Hague, where they were welcomed by a delegation that included Maurice, his cousin Willem Lodewijk of Nassau-Dillenburg, the stadholder of Friesland and Groningen, Maurice's younger half-brother Frederick Henry, Willem Lodewijk's younger brother Ernst Casimir, and diplomatic representatives of France and England (fig. 32). Both delegations then travelled to The Hague together.⁶⁴ The next day, a number of representatives from the States General visited the Spanish Habsburg negotiators.⁶⁵ Other than Spinola, the latter included Jean Richardot, president of the Secret Council in Brussels, Juan de Mancicidor, member of the Brussels Council of State, Jan Neyen, commissioner-general of the order of the Franciscans in the Netherlands, and Lodewijk Verreyken, one of the principal officials of the archducal administration.

During the session on Monday, 4 February, the States General instructed their agent Robrecht Valckenburch to invite the Spanish Habsburg negotiators to an audience.⁶⁶ In the early seventeenth century, the agent ('*agent*' in Dutch) was, after the greffier, the highest-ranking official of the States General. Among other duties, he acted as an intermediary between the States General and foreign envoys, and served as an introducer.⁶⁷ On the same day, Valckenburch conveyed the Spanish Habsburg delegation's acceptance of the invitation. Subsequently, it was decided that the audience would take place the following day at ten o'clock; the States General would meet an hour earlier to establish the protocol.⁶⁸ The agent was dispatched once more to convey this message.⁶⁹

The audience granted to the Spanish Habsburg negotiators was no mere courtesy visit, but a historical moment of great symbolic value. Until the conclusion of the Twelve Years' Truce, the United Provinces had no official diplomatic status.⁷⁰ The provisional recognition of Dutch sovereignty in 1607 made it possible for the Spanish Habsburg envoys to accept the invitation to an audience. Their decision to do so, and their actual appearance before the States General, could be interpreted as a performative confirmation of that recognition. At the time, audiences took place in the *Statenzaal*, although this room was not particularly suitable for this purpose: the States General would only acquire a proper audience hall in 1697, but as early as 1619 they had requested that the States of Holland provide an appropriate space for audiences.⁷¹

64 Van Meteren, *Belgische ofte Nederlandsche Oorlogen*, fol. 268.

65 NA, SG 3160, scan 0087, ordinary resolution of 2 February 1608.

66 NA, SG 4561, scan 0016, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

67 Van Riemsdijk, *De griffie*, 37-39; Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 379.

68 NA, SG 4561, scan 0016, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

69 NA, SG 4561, scan 0017, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

70 Helmers and Lamal, 'Dutch Diplomacy', 223. The States General did grant audiences to envoys before that moment.

71 Calkoen, 'Het Binnenhof', 112.



Fig. 31 Michiel Jansz van Mierevelt, Portrait of Ambrogio Spinola, 1609, oil on canvas, 119 × 88 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 32 Simon Frisius, Arrival of the Spanish Habsburg Envoys in Rijswijk, February 1608, 1608, etching, 15 × 25 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

On the morning of 5 February, the audience took place as planned. Shortly beforehand, the decision had been taken that the Spanish Habsburg delegates would be escorted in by three delegates of the States General.⁷² In 1611, the historian Emanuel van Meteren wrote that Maurice and other delegates joined these three commissioners, in what appears to have been a last-minute decision, and waited for Spinola and his delegation outside before the audience. Spinola is said to have shown great respect to Maurice at that moment and to have insisted that Maurice enter the assembly hall first.⁷³ During the audience, Spinola spoke a few words to the States General, but it was mainly Richardot who spoke.⁷⁴ He thanked the States General and the stadholder for the warm welcome they had received a few days earlier and indicated that Spinola and the other negotiators had considered it their duty to honour the States General with a counter-visit. After the meeting, Spinola and Maurice left together and were to share a meal with several others that day.⁷⁵

I argue that *Meeting of the States General* is a representation of the resolution from 4 February which describes the moment when agent Valckenburch enters the assembly hall to bring the news that Spinola and the rest of the Spanish-Habsburg delegation have accepted the invitation for an audience in the *Statenzaal* the next morning.⁷⁶ There is a seventeenth-century precedent for a painting to take such an announcement as its subject. The only known group portrait of the college of burgomasters of Amsterdam, painted by Thomas de Keyser as a design for a print by Jonas Suyderhoef, represents the moment when Maria de' Medici's arrival at the city Hall is announced to the burgomasters by Cornelis Davelaer, the captain of the honorary escort, in 1638 (figs. 33 and 34).⁷⁷ This moment too was followed by an encounter between the two parties.

The two moments are, of course, different in nature, but there are important parallels. The French queen-mother Maria de' Medici (1575-1642), living in exile after falling out with her son, the French king, had travelled to the Dutch Republic at the invitation of the States General. Her visit, culminating in a ceremonial entry into Amsterdam, was promoted as the international recognition of a state in *statu nascendi*.⁷⁸ In both cases, a meeting with a high-ranking foreign visitor supported an unparalleled claim to power: in 1638, this was the claim that the city of Amsterdam could measure itself against monarchs; in 1608, it was the claim that the Dutch Republic was an equal negotiating partner of a

72 NA, SG 4561, scan 0018, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

73 Van Meteren, *Belgische ofte Nederlandsche Oorlogen*, fol. 269; Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid*, 450.

74 Van Oldenbarnevelt, 'Notulen', 175-176.

75 Van Meteren, *Belgische ofte Nederlandsche Oorlogen*, fol. 269; Van Oldenbarnevelt, 'Notulen', 177.

76 'Den Agent Valckenburch heeft aenden Heer President gerapporteert, dat hij den Heer President Richardot, volgende den last, hem gegeven, hadde gesproocken, ende dat deselve hem voor antwoord verclaert heeft, dat de Heeren Gedepten. vande Ertschertogen [...] aldewijle haer Mo: E. hen die eere hadden gedaen, van hen te comen begroeten, ende verwellicommen, dat sij [...] van gelijcken begeren te doen, bereet wesende op morgen inde besoeigne te treden': NA, SG 4561, scan 0016, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

77 About Maria de' Medici's entry into Amsterdam see Snoep, *Praal*, 39-76; Blocksom, 'Procession'; Van de Meerendonk, *Public Displays*, 77-132.

78 Middelkoop, *Schutters*, 27.

sovereign monarchical state. In both cases, this claim also reflected on the officials who embodied it and were depicted as such.

The fact that the audience with Spinola and his fellow negotiators was considered a moment of the utmost importance is underlined by the fact that on the day of the audience, approximately 130 people were present in the *Statenzaal*.⁷⁹ The session was undoubtedly one of the most well-attended sessions in the history of the States General. Usually, meetings had no more than a few dozen delegates attending.⁸⁰ Many *extraordinaris* delegates from the various provinces must have travelled to The Hague for the peace conference, just as they would for the visit of Charles II in 1660.⁸¹

On 4 February, ninety-four people were already present.⁸² Not all of them are depicted in the painting, which should in this respect be regarded as performative rather than realistic. In other seventeenth-century representations of historical events, the depiction of historical actors was likewise staged to some extent in order to achieve a particular effect. For instance, although the setting of Ter Borch's *Ratification* of 1648 corresponds to the historical situation in every detail, the Dutch and Spanish negotiators did not swear the oath simultaneously, as this painting suggests, but successively.⁸³

Most of the attendees who are portrayed in *Meeting of the States General* can be identified based on a source that, like the painting itself, shows how exceptional the peace negotiations were in the eyes of contemporaries. By the early seventeenth century, the United Provinces had become a centre of print production. An important player in this market was Hendrick Hondius, who worked in The Hague as a printer and publisher. Hondius had received a privilege in 1599 from the States General for all his publications. He was not an official state printer, but in practice his business functioned as such.⁸⁴ In 1608, Hondius published a series of thirty-nine engraved portraits of his own design, depicting the monarchs and envoys involved in the peace negotiations.⁸⁵

This series was innovative in several ways. Similar portrait series had appeared before – Hondius himself had for instance published series of portraits of Reformers and artists – but this was the first time a series had appeared with portraits of the protagonists of an ongoing event.⁸⁶ The portraits were offered for sale as individual prints which could be bound with a title page on which the title – *Truthful Depictions of the Peace Makers of*

79 NA, SG 4561, scan 0018, secret resolution of 4 February 1608. The fact that 100 to 120 delegates were present in the room at a meeting in 1633 was so exceptional that Brasset considered it worthy of mention in 1647: 'Sommaire', 156-157.

80 Van Deursen, 'Staatsinstellingen', 352; Gabriëls, *De heren*, 306.

81 Wicquefort, *Verhael*, 104. On the difference between *ordinaris* and *extraordinaris* delegates, see Gabriëls, *De heren*, 311.

82 NA, SG 4561, scan 0015, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

83 McNeil Kettering, *Gerard Ter Borch*, 18-19.

84 Orenstein, *Hendrick Hondius*, 93.

85 Hondius, *Belgiæ pacificatorum vera delineatio*; Orenstein and Luijten (eds.), *The New Hollstein*, 106-122, nos. 116-155.

86 Orenstein, *Hendrick Hondius*, 34; Orenstein and Luijten (eds.), *The New Hollstein*, 123-145, nos. 156-207. On the phenomenon of printed portrait series, see Tolsma, *Van Icones*, chapter 2.



Fig. 33 Thomas de Keyser, *The Four Burgomasters of Amsterdam Learning of the Arrival of Maria de' Medici on 1 September 1638, 1638*, oil on panel, 29 x 38 cm, *The Hague, Mauritshuis*.



Fig. 34 Jonas Suyderhoef after Thomas de Keyser, *The Four Burgomasters of Amsterdam Awaiting News of Maria de' Medici's Arrival, 1638*, engraving, 32 x 38 cm, *Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum*.

the Netherlands – was printed in three languages (Latin, French, Dutch) (fig. 35).⁸⁷ This strategy made the series ideally suited for the international market, as it allowed buyers to compile their own subsets. Another reason for offering the prints in this way was that they were not in a fixed order, as this would have been perceived as an order of precedence, which would certainly have led to discontent.⁸⁸

The reference to ‘peace makers’ in the title suggests that Hondius’s portrait series appeared soon after the negotiations began, at the very least before August, when peace between the belligerent parties was no longer being seen as an attainable end goal. Hondius’s series is not the only publication that saw the light of day on the occasion of the peace negotiations and the conclusion of the truce; other publications include, for instance, several newsprints by Simon Frisius and Abraham Verhoeven. What makes the *Peace Makers* series stand out is that it draws attention to the international nature of the peace conference: it features portraits of the negotiators in a strict sense, but also of the envoys of other powers present as mediators and of the princes of states involved in the conflict. The portraits and their captions present diplomatic envoys as VIPs at par with kings, thus underlining the importance of the diplomatic event.

On 4 February, the day before the audience of the Spanish Habsburg delegation, the States General also appointed the members of the delegation that were to negotiate on behalf of the United Provinces. Of the seven provinces, Holland had secured the exclusive right to provide two negotiators.⁸⁹ Van Oldenbarnevelt, who as representative of the knighthood presided over Holland’s delegates in the States General, became the first delegate on behalf of this province and also the political leader of the delegation.⁹⁰ He fulfilled this role alongside Willem Lodewijk, the stadholder of Friesland and Groningen, who was appointed as its ceremonial leader. Maurice had declined the request to take on the role of ceremonial leader and representative of the States General, and had put forward his cousin Willem Lodewijk for this position.⁹¹ To ensure that the States General was still strongly represented alongside the individual provinces, it was decided that the second delegate from Holland, Walraven III van Brederode, would not formally represent that province, but he would represent the States General together with Willem Lodewijk.⁹²

The other delegates, one per province, were Cornelis van Gent (Gelderland), Gellius Hillema (Friesland), Jacob van Malderé (Zeeland), Niklaas van Berk (Utrecht), Johan Sloet (Overijssel), and Abel Coenders van Helpen (Groningen). All these negotiators are portrayed in Hondius’s series, and it is on this basis that they can also be identified around the meeting table in *Meeting of the States General*. Eleven figures are seated on the long southern side of the meeting table. They can be recognised from left to right as Van Oldenbarnevelt, Brederode, Van Gent, Willem Lodewijk, Hillema, Maurice, unidentified,

⁸⁷ Orenstein and Luijten (eds.), *The New Hollstein*, 106.

⁸⁸ See Dethlefs, ‘Die Friedensstifter’, 124–125.

⁸⁹ NA, SG 4561, scan 0016, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

⁹⁰ Van Oldenbarnevelt, ‘Notulen’, 12n. On Van Oldenbarnevelt see Den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*; on the office of *landsadvocaat* (later called *raadpensionaris*) see De Haan, *De eerste minister*.

⁹¹ NA, SG 4561, scan 0018, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

⁹² NA, SG 4561, scan 0020, secret resolution of 4 February 1608.

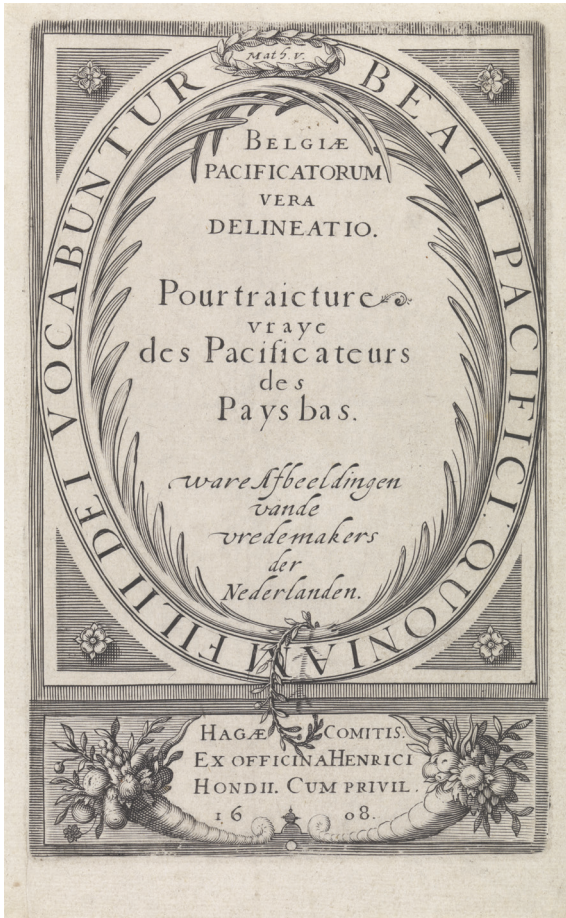


Fig. 35 Hendrick Hondius, *Belgiæ pacificatorum vera delineatio* (title page), 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Van Malderé, Van Berk, Sloet and unidentified (figs. 36 and 36a-36i). The two unidentified portraits possibly represent delegates of the States General who, not being part of the delegation, were not included in Hondius's series.⁹³ On the other side of the table, the second figure from the left is identifiable as Coenders van Helpen. The figure to his left has the features of Frederick Henry, at the time the highest military leader of the States'

⁹³ The attendance register of the secret resolutions of 4 February lists as present 'all the ordinarius and extraordinarius delegates of the provinces, Doornick and Ittersum': NA, SG 4561, scan 0015, secret resolution of 4 February 1608. Anthony van Doornick and Ernst van Ittersum tot Nijenhuis were both *ordinarius* delegates for the province of Overijssel in 1608. I do not know why they were explicitly mentioned in the register. It is quite possible that they are the two unidentified sitters; the figure to Maurice's left does seem to resemble a portrait of Van Ittersum: <https://www.dboverijssel.nl/archieven/4782> (p. 11).

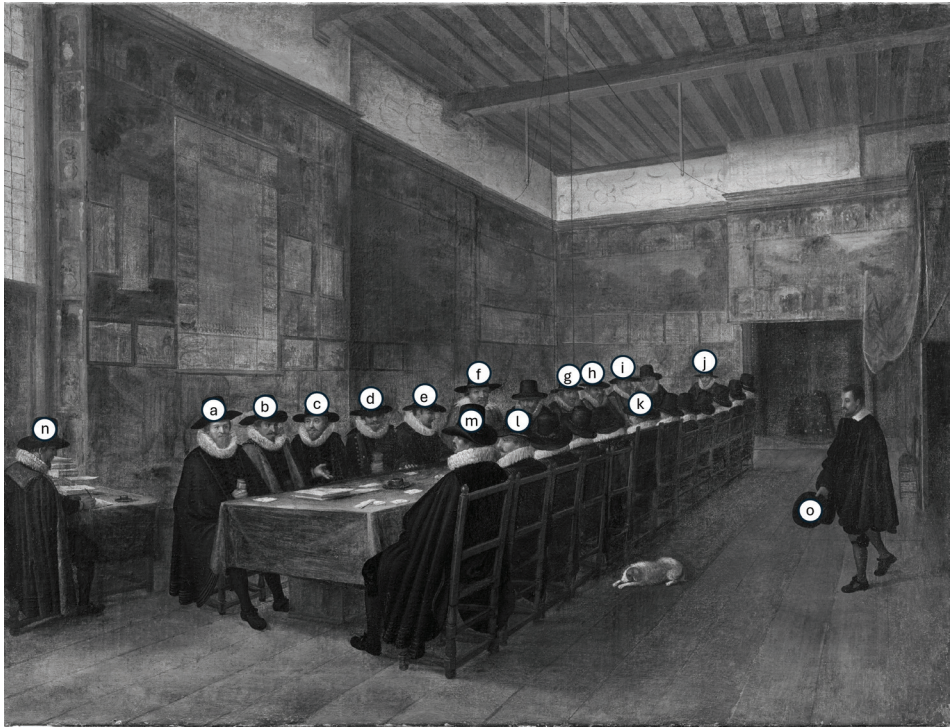


Fig. 36 *The sitters.*

army after Maurice and Willem Lodewijk, who also appears in Hondius's series (figs. 36l and 36m).

Identification based on the comparison of portraits is an oft-used method, but caution is warranted, particularly when it concerns engraved portraits, in which physiognomic features were often simplified or stylized. In this case, the similarities between individual portraits in the painting and the Hondius series may not always suffice to justify positive identification, but the overall correspondence between the two series is so striking that it cannot be attributed to mere chance. It is also noteworthy that both delegation leaders, Van Oldenbarnevelt and Willem Lodewijk, are depicted holding a pair of gloves, an attribute which seems to allude to their respective leading roles.⁹⁴

There are other figures in the painting that have recognisable features, but they are not included as portraits in the series by Hondius. Between 1584 and 1623, the greffier of the

⁹⁴ The attribute of the glove as a symbol of leadership can also be encountered in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century civic guard portraits. See, for example, Norbert Middelkoop's catalogue of Amsterdam civic guard paintings, nos. S. 25, S. 34, S. 74, S. 81 and S. 84.



Fig. 36a Sitter identified as Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), negotiator on behalf of Holland, delegation leader. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36a1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of *Hondius, Belgiae pacificatorum*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36b Sitter identified as Walraven III, Lord of Brederode (1547-1614), negotiator on behalf of the States General. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36b1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Walraven van Brederode, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of *Hondius, Belgiae pacificatorum*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36c Sitter identified as Cornelis van Gent, Lord of Loenen and Meinerswijk (c. 1550-1614), negotiator on behalf of Gelderland. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36c1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Cornelis van Gent, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of *Hondius, Belgiae pacificatorum*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36d Sitter identified as Willem Lodewijk, Count of Nassau-Dillenburg (1560-1620), stadholder of Friesland and Groningen, negotiator on behalf of the States General, delegation leader. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36d1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Willem Lodewijk of Nassau-Dillenburg, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, *Belgiae pacificatorum*, The Hague, RKD.



Fig. 36e Sitter identified as Gellius Hillema (1563-1626), negotiator on behalf of Friesland. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36e1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Gellius Hillema, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, *Belgiae pacificatorum*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36f Sitter identified as Maurice, Count of Nassau (1567-1625), stadholder of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel, captain general of the Union. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36f1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Maurice of Nassau, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, *Belgiae pacificatorum*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36g Sitter identified as Jacob van Malderé (d. 1617), negotiator on behalf of Zeeland. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36g1 Portrait of Jacob van Malderé, 1608, engraving, 20 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, Belgiae pacificatorum, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36h Sitter identified as Niklaas van Berk (d. 1620), negotiator on behalf of Utrecht. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36h1 Portrait of Niklaas van Berk, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, Belgiae pacificatorum, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36i Sitter identified as Johan Sloet (1550-1611), negotiator on behalf of Overijssel. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36i1 Portrait of Johan Sloet, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, Belgiae pacificatorum, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

States General was Cornelis van Aerssen. There is a portrait of him by Michiel van Mierevelt from 1597 (fig. 36n). Comparing both portraits, it is quite conceivable that the greffier in the painting represents the same individual eleven years later.

There is also a figure sitting at the short western end of the meeting table. His countenance reveals notable similarities with an engraved portrait of the Utrecht nobleman Gerard van Renesse, lord of the Aa. This portrait was not included in the Hondius series, but appeared in an anonymous print featuring eighteen portraits of negotiators which was published in or after 1609 (fig. 36j). Renesse had joined the Dutch delegation in 1609, when the negotiations moved to Antwerp. He replaced the Utrecht negotiator Van Berk.⁹⁵ An infrared photograph of the painting shows that this figure was not added to the painting at a later date. If the figure does indeed represent Van Renesse, this means that the painting was not completed until 1609 at the earliest.

My hypothesis that the figure entering the room on the right with his hat in his hand represents the agent of the States General, Robrecht Valckenburch (fig. 36o), is based on the identity of the figures around the meeting table and the intermediary role that Valckenburch, as second-highest ranking official after the equally depicted greffier, played in the contacts between the States General and the Spanish Habsburg delegation. Unfortunately, no portrait of Valckenburch has been identified for comparison.

There is an extant individual portrait of the Frisian delegate Ernst van Aylva, who was the president of the States General in the week of the audience. In *Meeting of the States General*, however, the president does not seem to have been depicted as a recognisable portrait, or it is no longer recognisable (fig. 36k). In any event, like the delegates to his left and right, whose faces remain entirely invisible, he represents the States General as an abstract body politic.

A possible commissioner

What can we say about the way in which the sitters in *Meeting of the States General* are positioned around the meeting table? We do not know whether the delegates of the States General sat in a fixed seating order in the early seventeenth century. The earliest mention of the existence of such an order relates to the eighteenth century. Jan Wagenaar wrote in 1739 that twenty-four chairs around the table were reserved for delegates, with each province being allocated a fixed number: six chairs for Holland on the left side of the presidium, three chairs for Friesland and two for Groningen on the right side. On the opposite side, from left to right, there were six chairs for Gelderland, three for Zeeland, two for Utrecht and two for Overijssel. If a provincial delegation was larger than the number of chairs available, the surplus delegates attended the session standing up.⁹⁶ Whether this order was strictly adhered to in the eighteenth century is uncertain.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ NA, SG 4561, scan 0213, secret resolution of 22 March 1609.

⁹⁶ *Hedendaagsche historie*, xi, 249–250. Jan Wagenaar was the author of this volume.

⁹⁷ For example, when the States General once received a group of civil servants for the purpose of administering their oath of office, they sat down ‘insofar as there were chairs available in the chamber’ (‘soo veel als er stoelen in de kamer waren’): NA, SG 3780, scan 0425, ordinary resolution of 4 October 1725. Also see Gabriëls, *De heren*, 306n.



Fig. 36j Sitter, possibly Gerard van Renesse, Lord of the Aa (d. 1610), negotiator on behalf of Utrecht from 1609. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36j1 Portrait of Gerard van Renesse, detail of Anonymus, True Representation of the Lords Ambassadors and Delegates of the Truce, c. 1616, engraving, 26 × 34 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36k Sitter representing Ernst van Aylva (1548-1627), president of the States General. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36k1 Detail of Anonymus, Portrait of Ernst van Aylva, 1576, oil on panel, 104 × 81 cm, current whereabouts unknown, image The Hague, RKD.



Fig. 36l Sitter identified as Abel Coenders van Helpen (1564-1629), negotiator on behalf of Groningen. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36l1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Abel Coenders van Helpen, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, Belgiae pacificatorum, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 36m Sitter identified as Frederick Henry, Count of Nassau (1584-1647), military leader. Detail of fig. 2.



*Fig. 36m1 Hendrick Hondius, Portrait of Frederick Henry of Nassau, 1608, engraving, 19 × 12 cm, part of Hondius, *Belgiae pacificatorum*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.*



Fig. 36n Sitter representing Cornelis van Aerssen (1543-1627), greffier of the States General. Detail of fig. 2.



Fig. 36n1 Michiel Jansz. van Mierevelt, Portrait of Cornelis van Aerssen, 1597, oil on panel, 72 × 60 cm, The Hague, Mauritshuis.



Fig. 36o Sitter representing Robrecht Valckenburch, agent of the States General. Detail of fig. 2.

In 1647, the French embassy secretary Brasset wrote that each delegate was seated 'according to his rank'.⁹⁸ This wording seems to suggest that, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the seating arrangement was still determined by the rank of individual delegates, who often held noble or seigneurial titles. Thus, among the sitters in the painting, Van Oldenbarnevelt was lord of Groenevelt, Zuidwind, Stormpolder, Hoogland, De Tempel, Stoutenburg, Luttekeweede, and Berkel en Rodenrijs; Walraven van Brederode was lord of Brederode, Vianen, Ameide, and Kloetinge; Cornelis van Gent was lord of Loenen and Meinerswijk, et cetera. This would imply a more dynamic seating order, as the composition of the provincial delegations changed regularly. It should be noted that the States General ordered twenty-four armless chairs in 1590, the number also mentioned by Wagenaar in the eighteenth century, but this may indicate that the number of chairs allocated to each province was already fixed, but the seating order was not.⁹⁹

As mentioned, the session of 4 February 1608 was attended by more people than we see depicted in the painting. It is possible that the men sitting around the meeting table in the painting were indeed those who were seated that day, but we cannot be sure of this. Nor do we know whether they were really seated in this order: in seventeenth-century group portraits that feature sitters around a table, such as civic guard banquet pieces and group portraits of the boards of governors of charitable institutions, the seating order is a symbolic representation of the internal hierarchy within these institutions, which is determined by factors such as military rank, seniority, and social status, but also depends on who took the initiative for the painting and on their intentions for doing so.¹⁰⁰

In seated group portraits, the most prominent sitter was often seated in the foreground on the side from which the light enters the painting.¹⁰¹ In *Meeting of the States General*, the sitter in this position is Van Oldenbarnevelt; he is also the only sitter depicted both frontally and full-length. Willem Lodewijk, the ceremonial leader of the delegation, is not seated next to Van Oldenbarnevelt, but there are two people between them: Walraven van Brederode, the second negotiator from Holland, and Cornelis van Gent, the delegation member from Gelderland. The Frisian stadholder is depicted with his hat covering his eyes, as if the painter wanted to underline his minimal significance in the negotiation process. Taking this into account, it appears that the way in which the sitters are arranged around the table is determined not so much by provincial order or noble rank as by what the commissioner of the painting wished to express.

Who might this commissioner have been? He must have been someone who recognised Holland's primacy in the negotiation process and who belonged to the camp that welcomed the negotiations, unlike Maurice and Willem Lodewijk, both of whom harboured serious reservations about it.¹⁰² These parameters are evidently met by the two Holland negotiators

⁹⁸ Brasset, 'Sommaire', 156: 'chacun selon son rang'.

⁹⁹ NA, SG 3124, scan 0470, ordinary resolution of 11 October 1590.

¹⁰⁰ Oddens, *The Visible Hand*, chapter 6; Ruiter and Oddens, 'Holding the Key'.

¹⁰¹ Middelkoop, *Schutters*, chapter 4, esp. 229-230; Ruiter and Oddens, 'Holding the Key'.

¹⁰² De Pater, *Maurits*; Fick, 'Een belangrijk dokument', 200; Eysinga, *De wording*, 78, 102. The same goes for the negotiator from Zeeland, Jacob van Malderé.

themselves, but also by the negotiator from Gelderland. Cornelis van Gent was a confidant of Van Oldenbarnevelt.¹⁰³ Like Van Oldenbarnevelt, he was a supporter of peace.¹⁰⁴ The fact that Van Oldenbarnevelt was appointed head of the delegation also indicates that Van Gent regarded him as his superior. It was customary for committees and delegations appointed by the States General to be chaired by the delegate from (the former duchy of) Gelderland, who was entitled to this position on the basis of the hierarchical order between the various provinces. An earlier committee that had dealt with the issue in 1607 was likewise chaired by Van Gent.¹⁰⁵ Four decades later, the Dutch delegation that concluded the peace of Munster was to be headed by Van Gent's son Barthold.¹⁰⁶

The figure I have identified as Van Gent is, as noted, seated directly next to the two delegates from Holland, in a prominent position one would indeed expect if he were the commissioner. There is also a further indication. As I have argued elsewhere, commissioners or initiators of seventeenth-century group portraits were often depicted with 'active' hand gestures that signalled their agency; other examples discussed in this article include the works by De Keyser and Gascar (figs. 37 and 38).¹⁰⁷ In *Meeting of the States General*, Van Gent is the only portrayed figure who makes such a gesture. Additional evidence will be required to establish the commissioner's identity conclusively, but for the time being I consider Van Gent to be the most plausible candidate.

Provenance

The provenance of *Meeting of the States General* can currently be traced back to the late nineteenth century, when it was listed in the collection of the Rimpau family held at Langenstein castle near Halberstadt. At present little can be said with certainty about the provenance before 1893, when the collection was inventoried.¹⁰⁸ The family had acquired Langenstein castle, along with its collection of paintings, in 1855. In 1900, the owner at the time, Wilhelm Rimpau (1842-1903), published a study of Langenstein's first owner, Maria Antonia Pessina de Branconi (1746-1793), who had the castle

¹⁰³ Van Gent maintained a correspondence with Van Oldenbarnevelt in which he kept him informed of the enemy's movements in Gelderland: Regt, 'Gendt (Cornelis van)', 559. Also see Fick, 'Een belangrijk dokument', 200.

¹⁰⁴ Fick, 'Een belangrijk dokument', 200-201.

¹⁰⁵ Fick, 'Een belangrijk dokument'.

¹⁰⁶ Barthold van Gent is the central figure reading the oath form in Ter Borch's *Ratification*: McNeil Kettering, *Gerard Ter Borch*, 13. The Van Gent family was thus the only one directly involved in both phases of the negotiations.

¹⁰⁷ Oddens, *The Visible Hand*, chapter 6 and passim. The other two examples also merit discussion, but this is not the place for it.

¹⁰⁸ In 1946 the Rimpau family had to leave Langenstein castle, which was in the Soviet Occupation Zone, and the art collection was transferred to the municipal archive of Halberstadt. In 1964, *Meeting of the States General* was added to the collection of the Städtisches Museum Halberstadt, where it received the inventory number K 115 and was known under the title *Zusammenkunft von Ratsmitgliedern in einer Zunfthalle*. Between 1993 and c. 2005 the painting was on loan to the Ministry of the Interior of Sachsen Anhalt, and in 2005 it was restituted to the Rimpau family. I would like to thank Claudia Brandt for this information.



Figs. 37 Example of sitter making active hand gesture. Detail of fig. 33.



Fig. 38 Example of sitter making active hand gesture. Detail of fig. 29.

built between 1777 and 1783. In this work, Rimpau reports to have heard that the Langenstein collection consisted of ‘a number’ of paintings in 1828, when Pessina de Branconi’s son sold the castle to Johann Heinrich Reinicke (1791-1854), but that ‘the largest part’ of the collection was collected by Reinicke himself, probably together with his wife Francisca Reinicke (1790-1867).¹⁰⁹

The paintings of the Rimpau-Langenstein collection have number tags on their frames; *Meeting of the States General* has number 92. These numbers were used but probably not assigned during the inventory that took place in 1893; it seems likely that they were added as paintings entered the collection. As 92 is a relatively high number in the collection, this may suggest that the painting was collected at a later moment, which would mean that it was acquired by the Reinickes rather than by Branconi.

Heinrich Reinicke began his career at a young age as secretary of the *canton-mairie* (district administration) in Allersheim, a village that was then part of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Westphalia. In 1812, he married Francisca Hausmann, the daughter of the *canton-maire* Ernst Heinrich Hausmann, a local notable with a long administrative career.¹¹⁰ Francisca was Hausmann’s only child, and when he died in 1823, Reinicke acquired his father-in-law’s office, which had since been renamed *Amtmann*. The Reinickes were able to acquire the Langenstein castle a few years later.¹¹¹

Little is known about the Reinickes’s art collecting. Some of the paintings they owned originated in the collection of the dukes of Brunswick at Salzdahlum, who had collected a large number of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings during the reign of Anton Ulrich (1633-1714).¹¹² Some of these paintings were returned to the ducal collection in Braunschweig following Francisca von Reinicke’s death in 1867.¹¹³ Consequently these paintings did not remain in Langenstein when the castle was bought by the Rimpaus in 1855.

Wilhelm Rimpau assumed in 1900 that part or all of the collection of paintings brought to Langenstein by Maria von Branconi also originated in the ducal collection, as they were supposedly given to her by Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand (1735-1806) – she had been his official mistress between 1766 and 1777, when he was hereditary prince of Brunswick. However, there is no evidence for this, and *Meeting of the States General* does not appear in the inventories of the collection of the dukes of Brunswick at Salzdahlum that were drawn up in 1744 and 1776.¹¹⁴ At the moment, therefore, the most

109 Rimpau, *Frau von Branconi*, 85.

110 Familiendatenbank Stadt Holzminden, ‘Johann Heinrich von Reineke’; ‘Anna Magdalena Francisca Hausmann’; ‘Ernst Heinrich Hausmann’ (through <https://www.online-ofb.de/holzminden/>, consulted 30 March 2026).

111 Wernigerode, Landesarchiv Sachsen Anhalt, H 137 Gutsarchiv Langenstein, 1203-2020, no. 626, Abrechnung für den Amtmann Heinrich Reinicke in Allersheim als neuen Besitzer des Ritterguts Langenstein, c. 1828.

112 Jonckheere, “Was ich aus Brabant”.

113 Höltge, ‘Das Herzogliche Museum’, 241-243.

114 Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Altregistratur, H 5, Antoine Frederic Harms, *Designation derer künstlichen und kostbaren Gemälden welche in denen Gallerien und Cabinetter des Fürstlichen Lust-Schlusses Salzhthalen sich befinden*, 1744, <https://doi.org/10.24355/dbbs.084-200608170200-0>, consulted 30 March 2026; Eberlein, *Verzeichniß*. I would like to thank Silke Gatenbröcker for discussing this point with me.

likely scenario seems that Heinrich and Francisca Reinicke acquired the painting from another source.¹¹⁵

If the painting did indeed enter the Langenstein Castle collection with the Reinickes, the meaning of the depiction was probably no longer recognised by that time. The 1893 inventory was carried out by the German art historian Wilhelm Bode (1845-1929), director of the *Königlichen Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin and a close relation of the Rimpaus.¹¹⁶ In his inventory, Bode described the painting as a Dutch painting dating from around 1620 that showed a meeting of a Saint Luke's guild ('*Versammlung der Lukasgilde*'). It seems unlikely that he arrived at this interpretation himself, as there is little in the painting that would lead an art historian to suspect that it depicts a company of artists. It is therefore more likely that he adopted an interpretation that circulated within the family. It is quite conceivable that the painting was purchased on these grounds. For social climbers such as the (Von) Reinickes – in 1840, Reinicke was ennobled by the king of Prussia – it was perhaps more appealing to set themselves apart through a painting referring to the golden age of Dutch painting than through a representation of a political event from the distant past.

The identity of the artist remains unknown, as it was already in 1893. The painter must have resided in The Hague at least temporarily, yet comparison with painters active in The Hague in the early seventeenth century has thus far yielded no convincing stylistic match. Nor has it been possible to identify a painter from Gelderland who might plausibly have been engaged by the possible commissioner of the painting, Van Gent. By bringing the painting to wider attention, this article will hopefully help advance the search for the painter's identity.

Conclusion

The work that was the focus of this article is an early seventeenth-century painted representation of a meeting of the States General in their assembly hall. The discovery of this painting is significant for several reasons.

Most previously known depictions of the States General in session are eighteenth-century images showing the assembly in the *Trêveszaal*, which had been fitted out as an audience hall at the end of the seventeenth century. To know what the ordinary assembly hall of the States General looked like, we had to rely on a few prints from the late seventeenth century which were not intended to provide a realistic representation of the room's interior. While several elements in those prints have proved to be accurate, they can only be established as so through comparison with *Meeting of the States General*. We can also conclude that the interior of the assembly hall changed over time: for instance, in the early seventeenth century, the walls were covered with maps which were later replaced by portraits of the

¹¹⁵ In this context, it is worth noting that Cornelis van Gent's great-granddaughter Maria, who inherited the seigneurial title of Loenen, married a member of the German noble family Quadt zu Wickrath, in whose hands the associated castle of Loenen (to the north of Arnhem) remained until 1834.

¹¹⁶ Bode, *Beschreibung der Gemälde im Schloss in Langenstein*; Jochens, *Wilhelm von Bode*.



Fig. 39 Anonymous, *The Somerset House Conference*, c. 1604, oil on canvas, 206 × 268 cm, London, National Portrait Gallery.

stadtholders. The painting also provides us with new information about the seating order of the States General and suggests that evidence from late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century sources cannot simply be retro-actively applied to the situation in the early seventeenth century.

Those known painted representations in which the States General appears were intended as depictions of significant historical events. Individual delegates are not recognisably depicted in these paintings. More generally, the literature has regularly pointed to the small number of group portraits of political meetings that have survived from the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Examples of such portraits do exist, yet, in light of the flourishing production of institutional group portraits of, among others, civic guard officers and governors of charitable institutions, it has been deemed remarkable that there are not more of them, and that bodies such as the States General never had themselves portrayed.

In this study, a painting has been identified that represents a meeting of the States General and contains recognisable portraits, while also depicting a historical event that, in the eyes of contemporaries, directly touched on the foundational narrative of the Dutch Republic. This suggests that there was no ideological or religious objection to depicting

group portraits of political institutions such as the States General – as has sometimes been thought – but rather that the considerations underlying the production (and possible commissioning) of such paintings were of a different nature than those underlying institutional group portraits.

It should be stressed that *Meeting of the States General* depicts a meeting that took place in 1608 and was most likely also painted around that time. All other paintings with which the work in this article has been compared are of a later date, and the same applies to the first institutional group portraits of governors of charitable institutions and the rare extant examples of group portraits of local governing bodies. The frame of reference we now use to interpret this painting was absent at the time of its production; this is another reason why this painting is important.

Outside the Dutch Republic, there are likewise few precedents, but one painting that comes to mind is *The Somerset House Conference*, a commemorative group portrait of the English and Spanish Habsburg delegations that concluded the Treaty of London (1604) in a room at Somerset House in Westminster (fig. 39). One of the negotiators portrayed in this painting was Jean Richardot, who a few years later would also play a leading role in the peace negotiations in The Hague.

The Somerset House Conference is an early example of an European tradition of representations of peace treaties featuring portraits of negotiators from both sides. The main difference with *Meeting of the States General* is that while the latter painting was produced in the context of peace negotiations, only one of the delegations is depicted. One possible explanation for this may be that the Spanish Habsburg delegation was not willing to be portrayed. However, it is more likely that this painting was not intended to commemorate the conclusion of the Twelve Years' Truce, but rather the recognition of Dutch sovereignty and the role that the negotiators had played in achieving it. This explains why the setting chosen was the assembly hall of the political body that represented Dutch sovereignty on the international stage, and why the moment depicted reflects a resolution that most succinctly expressed this recognition. The painting should therefore be regarded as a conscious attempt to capture the birth of the Netherlands as a sovereign state in a single image.

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