Part I
Publishing
2. 1580-1610: Window of Opportunity

To understand the success of Dutch book production during the seventeenth century, cluster theory suggests we should go back to its roots. Cluster growth is generally attributed to the reproduction of sets of skills, routines, and specializations that take root in the early stages of development. How and why such sets develop in the first place tends to remain unexplained or it is attributed to chance, such as radical innovations, revolutions, wars, or general economic crises, or the arrival of exceptionally talented individuals. Such contingencies can disrupt industrial development, as they may attract entrepreneurs or, just the opposite, discourage them from setting up shop in certain locations. Other scholars have emphasized not all locations qualify equally for potential cluster development. Some places may simply be better suited for certain types of production or consumption than others.

The discussion on chance and preconditions links up to an ongoing debate in Dutch historiography on the roots of the Dutch Golden Age and the relative importance of exogenous and endogenous factors. The chance event here is The Eighty Years War (1568-1648), also known as the Dutch Revolt or the Dutch War of Independence. During the course of the Revolt against Spanish rule, and especially after the siege of Antwerp and the blockade of the Scheldt, many artisans and merchants left the Southern Netherlands for the northern provinces, importing commercial know-how, artisan skills, specific consumer preferences, and trade networks. In the ‘external shock’ interpretations, these events are considered key factors in explaining the rapid economic growth in the Dutch Republic.

While historians generally acknowledge the importance of immigration for the rise of the Republic during the seventeenth century, they do not fully agree on the extent and nature of this contribution. Several scholars have downplayed the impact of the Dutch Revolt in explaining the Republic’s economic expansion. Distinct social and economic characteristics crucial for commercial development were in place well before the end of the sixteenth century, such as peasant landownership and the absence of feudal structures, specialization and commercialization in agriculture, rise of wage labour, urbanization, increasing demand for consumption goods, and efficient markets. This view stresses the established competitive advantages of the northern provinces, and suggests that troubles and events during the Revolt merely facilitated potential commercial expansion.

In this chapter, we see how these endogenous and exogenous conditions played out on a local industrial level. To what extent were resources, latent
or obvious, already in place to underpin seventeenth-century Dutch book production, and which events or actors set the spark to the impressive growth and innovation patterns that characterize the Golden Age?

The Dutch Revolt, an external shock

The steep incline in Figure 2.1 suggests that the onset of the Revolt and the fall of Antwerp were of great importance to the development of the book trade in the northern provinces. In contrast to, for instance, the occupational group of merchants, book production had been only a small-scale activity before 1580. During the fifteenth century, the publishing industry in the Low Countries had been on the rise, but this had largely been limited to towns with an above average demand for reading material, fueled by the presence of a university (Leuven) or schools run by the Brethren of the Common Life (Zwolle and Deventer). A century later it had become increasingly tied to commerce, with Antwerp having become the centre of book production in the Low Countries. Booksellers in the northern provinces, by contrast, were mainly left producing for their own local markets and importing books from the south.

The tumultuous years after the onset of the Dutch Revolt dealt a serious blow to Antwerp’s publishing industry, and as publishers started seeking refuge elsewhere, the city soon lost its position as a centre of humanist printing. Just how dramatic the Revolt’s impact on Antwerp’s publishing was can be illustrated by a closer look at the largest printing firm in the
Low Countries during this period. In the sixteenth century, the so-called Officina Plantiniana in Antwerp, established by Christophe Plantin, had become the most famous printing house and centre of humanism and learning in Europe. In 1574, Plantin had fifty-six workmen operating as many as sixteen presses, but just two years later, only three of these were still in use. The downscaling of Plantin’s printing establishment was a direct result of Spanish troops’ sacking of Antwerp in three days of destruction, an event that came to be known as the ‘Spanish Fury’ (1576). In 1583 Plantin left Antwerp for Leiden where he established a new branch of his firm. He soon returned to Antwerp, which was by then once again in Spanish hands, but things were not quite back to normal yet in the printing business. Plantin had to deal with scarcities of paper and other materials, and the number of orders from the Northern Netherlands had dropped from over 600 in the period 1566-1570 to a mere 151 in the period 1586-1589, the year of Plantin’s death.

Plantin’s returning to Antwerp was unusual. Most migrants opted to remain in the Dutch Republic. It is estimated that over 150 booksellers and printers relocated from the Southern to the Northern Netherlands in the period 1570-1619. About half of these migrant-booksellers moved between 1570 and 1595, the other half between 1595 and 1619. Amsterdam and Leiden attracted roughly 40 per cent of the booksellers who migrated during the first stage. This share rose to about 50 per cent between 1600 and 1630, although many migrant-booksellers tried their luck in other (Dutch) towns before moving to Amsterdam after 1590. Of the nine Amsterdam-based publishers identified as active in 1585, two or possibly three were Amsterdam-born, and only one was born in the Southern Netherlands. By 1600, just a few of the twenty-nine publishers were native to Amsterdam and some ten came from the Southern Netherlands. More than half the immigrants from the Southern Netherlands who were working in Amsterdam had resided elsewhere before they set up shop there. Presumably, some had planned to return to Antwerp as soon as possible and had therefore lingered in towns closer to the borders, such as Middelburg and Dordrecht, while others had first tried to set up shop in London, Cologne, or other towns in the Dutch Republic.

Of course, the importance of immigrants was neither unique to the book trade nor restricted to Dutch towns. Nevertheless, the situation in the Low Countries during the final decades of the sixteenth century does differ from general early modern migration patterns in the sense that a large number of immigrants entered the labour market in a very short period of time. Just how dramatic the impact of the Dutch Revolt and the fall of Antwerp
on Dutch book production must have been can be appreciated by taking a closer look at its relative underdevelopment during the sixteenth century. Before the Revolt, Antwerp had been the place to be for publishers; it offered skilled labour, access to capital, and easy access to local and foreign markets. But by 1585 it could no longer offer the favourable conditions that had attracted publishers like Plantin around the middle of the sixteenth century. Many skilled producers and merchants went in search of an alternative location. Besides geographic proximity, the Dutch Republic offered cultural and socio-economic vicinity. After all, the provinces in the Low Countries had been subject to the same sovereign, operated within an interconnected economy, and shared a linguistic and cultural heritage. The strong pull exerted by the northern towns therefore need not surprise us, though it does raise the question why there were so few publishers in the first place.

Even though there was no commercial hub that remotely resembled Antwerp, the provinces, like their Southern Netherlandish counterparts, offered a sophisticated labour market, a literate and urban population with some money to spend, and an established position in trade networks. The northern provinces were highly urbanized, with an urbanization rate of 27 per cent around 1525, when the average for Europe was only 9 per cent. The province of Holland, the most commercialized region in the north, even had a remarkable 45 per cent urbanization rate. Already during the sixteenth century, the occupational structure of the northern provinces was characterized by a high proportion of non-agricultural economic activities and wage labour, as well as a high degree of specialized labour, even in rural areas. Commercial activities were ubiquitous, and Dutch merchants and shipmasters were well positioned throughout trading networks, especially in the Baltic trade routes.

On the demand side, prospects were also favourable. Observations by contemporary visitors suggest that many Dutch men and women, in the cities as well as the countryside, were able to read and write, observations that are confirmed by estimates of Dutch literacy based on marriage registers. In fact, Holland had the highest literacy rates in sixteenth-century Europe. Its inhabitants, moreover, were able to spend some money on consumer goods. Estimates of GDP per capita and real wages are not dramatically different for the northern and southern provinces throughout the sixteenth century. The fact that no significant book production had developed in the northern towns during the sixteenth century suggests that these generally favourable conditions were not sufficient. This also means that even if spending power had improved during the seventeenth century,
independently of developments in the Southern Netherlands, there is no reason to assume that domestic book production would have expanded as substantially as it did. Moreover, as we will see in the next sections, it is inconceivable that any such expansion such as did occur would have transpired quite as quickly.

**New publishers, new markets**

In point of fact, socio-economic circumstances in the Northern Netherlands changed dramatically around the turn of the sixteenth century as is clearly visible in the dramatic increase in the total size of the population. Though we lack exact numbers, estimates are that on the whole the population of the northern provinces increased from 1.2 million to 1.3 million around 1550, to between 1.4 million and 1.6 million by around 1600, and to close to 2 million a half a century later. On the regional or urban level, growth rates were even more impressive; Holland and Friesland in particular showing an upsurge unparalleled in Europe at the time. GDP per capita also increased and wages tripled, a development that by and large took place between 1580 and 1620. Although the increase in real wages was more modest, it still comprised 20 to 40 per cent, depending on occupation and place of residence. Compared to other countries, wages were high and increasing, whilst an unparalleled share of the rapidly increasing population was able to read. Potential demand was large, to say the least.

In this period of economic growth, rapid population increase, rising purchasing power, and ongoing commercialization and professionalization, we should expect nothing less than an increase in demand for cultural products such as books. To some extent, the expansion of the publishing sector should indeed be attributed to the general increase in population size and the number of towns with a substantial number of publishers – both amounting to a potential absolute increase in demand (Table 2.1, Figure 2.2). Population size is an important determinant in predicting in which towns one or more publishers would be active in 1610, though it does not fully account for the exact geographic distribution of publishers. Soon after the onset of the Revolt, the number of towns in which publishers were located increased from 8 to 24. Typically, publishing was concentrated in towns and not in the countryside, yet in most urban areas the scale of book production was still fairly modest. Even in towns housing over 20,000 inhabitants, we typically find only a handful of booksellers.
In order to further explain the uneven distribution between towns, local characteristics have to be taken into account. By looking at the level and nature of local titles produced in the decade 1600-1609, the only towns where over 100 titles were produced were Leiden, Amsterdam, The Hague, Franeker, Middelburg, and Delft. When academic texts are excluded, the level of production in the university towns Leiden and Franeker drops
significantly. The Hague's high production levels can be easily explained by its function as the seat of government, a factor whose influence extended to the nearby town of Delft. After excluding the category of state publications, the shares of The Hague and Delft in book production lose much of their significance. Amsterdam and Middelburg, both highly commercial towns, scored a lot lower in the categories of academic and state publications and feature mainly as centres of commercial information production. Each of these towns had distinct competitive advantages in attracting (potential) publishers, and these functions would strongly determine the development of local specializations and new (sub)genres in the course of the seventeenth century. Amsterdam would turn into the country’s information hub and Leiden into its centre of academic printing, while The Hague became synonymous with political news, official state publications, and judicial printing.31

Patterns of specialization

Leiden was the first town in which book production took off at the end of the sixteenth century. The town had been an important centre of textile production throughout the fifteenth century, but during the sixteenth century its economy had not fared so well. This all changed after the Revolt when the textile industry recovered and Leiden became a centre of academic studies. Following the end of a Spanish siege in 1574, the leader of the Dutch Revolt, William I, Prince of Orange, rewarded the town for its sacrifices and endurance by establishing a university. Only one year later, this first university of the northern provinces welcomed its first students. Despite this, in the university’s early years, the local book trade scarcely existed, and printing jobs had to be filled by immigrant printers. In 1577, Willem Silvius, who had been active in Antwerp, was appointed as the academy’s first printer. When he died after a mere three years, famous humanist and classical scholar Justus Lipsius suggested Plantin as his successor, and so the famous Antwerp printer transferred part of his printing shop to Leiden. Through the joint efforts of the university and the local government, Leiden was able to attract the best possible printers and scholars and swiftly acquire pan-European fame.32

Court and government town The Hague, by contrast, attracted many civil servants, officers, ambassadors, as well as numerous diplomatic emissaries in need of printed texts, and this exerted a pull on both printers and booksellers.33 Given the presence of the court and the States General (Dutch parliamentary conclave) it is not surprising that many of The Hague's
publishers specialized in semi-official or specialist legal titles as well as in relatively cheap opinionating and informative works.34 Contrary to what might be expected in view of its relatively wealthy population, however, there was little or no luxury printing, and hardly any of the more popular mass products such as songbooks or almanacs originated in The Hague. Perhaps The Hague publishers and printers did not have the copy, the type, or the skills, or possibly they lacked the local basis to counter the risks of capital intensive and expensive works.35 It was, moreover, relatively easy for salesmen of books, maps, and prints from the city and from other towns to capture a slice of the book market in The Hague.36 In contrast to other towns and the city of The Hague itself, booksellers did not have to become members of the local guild in order to sell at the Inner Courtyard (Binnenhof), the meeting place of the States General and the court of the Prince of Orange.37

The development of Amsterdam as a centre of the book trade differed from both Leiden’s and The Hague’s. The expansion of its local book production industry only started after 1585 and was fueled by the pulling force of commerce rather than by government initiative. Already by the sixteenth century, Amsterdam, as a commercial satellite of Antwerp, had managed to expand its role in international trade. It held a dominant position in the import of Baltic grain and iron, and within Holland it became the major gateway to overseas trade owing to its well-developed transport connections
with the hinterland and a deep harbour in the IJ River. Its location, trading relations, and frequency of shipping also made Amsterdam one of the most important hubs in the flow of international information. Not only for merchants but also for publishers, this was a crucial local resource, and it is no coincidence that Amsterdam was strong in the publication of books relating to commercial know-how. On that front it took over Antwerp's lead in cartography and nautical works, and it became the first international newspaper centre. Although Amsterdam would develop a strong reputation for publishing commercial information, its production was more varied than either Leiden's or The Hague's and was characterized by a relatively small share of cheap prints, broadsheets, and pamphlets, also known as ephemeral titles.

New markets, new products

From 1580 onwards, the book production industry expanded rapidly. The number of titles annually produced in the Dutch Republic increased from c.70 in 1580 to c.360 in 1610. At the same time, there were also significant changes in terms of style and content. In the interplay between expanding potential demand, differentiation of demand, and competitive entrepreneurial strategies of publishers, new products were created. A comparison of genres of titles published in Amsterdam during the decades 1580-1589 and 1600-1609 shows that relatively novel genres became more prominent. Although traditional genres such as theology (c.25 per cent) and history (c.35 per cent) remained prominent, modern subjects such as geography increased from 5 to 12 per cent, Dutch literature from 5 to 10 per cent, and poetry from 8 to 13 per cent of all local publications.

Within popular genres such as vernacular songbooks as well as more luxurious genres such as travelogues, new subgenres emerged to target new market segments. In 1601, publisher Hans Matthysz published Daniel Heinsius’ Quaeris quid sit amor, the first romantic poetry and emblem book in Dutch. Besides being the first of its kind ever written in Dutch (contrary to what the Latin title suggests), it was also innovative in terms of typography: published in quarto oblong, with a spacious type page, various fonts, and artistic emblem prints. Quarto refers to a sheet folded twice to produce four leaves (or eight pages), and oblong is what we would now call ‘landscape’ layout – where the horizontal axis is longer than the vertical axis. A year later Matthysz launched a new type of songbook, Den nieuwen lust-hof (1602), which introduced a further upgrade to the
conventional genre by adding new lyrics to familiar melodies, using a variety of fonts, illustrations, and again the large format of quarto oblong. With this expensive deluxe songbook, Matthysz targeted a specific group of clients: wealthy youngsters or jeunesse dorée. This costly collection of songbooks was soon revised and reprinted, and it became the leading template for publications of its kind in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

Similar developments occurred in the production of travelogues. While travel accounts had already been in demand in Europe throughout the sixteenth century, Amsterdam publisher Cornelis Claesz further popularized the genre by differentiating his publications from the typical travel books, starting with the heroic story recorded by Gerrit de Veer on the suffering and endurance of Willem Barentsz’ crew on Nova Zembla. Although his strategies, for instance the combination of copperplate engravings with letterpress type, were not altogether new – Claesz would have certainly used Plantin as a model here – the way he applied it to the travel genre was unique at the time. He included more illustrations and had engravers expand the compositions. Moreover, he also used the quarto oblong format as opposed to the traditional standard atlas in folio size. With folio the original paper sheet was only folded once, whereas in the case of quarto, the sheet was folded twice, producing a smaller book format. The oblong quarto format, gothic typeface, and use of the vernacular suggest that Claesz aimed for the broadest possible Dutch audience, albeit a relatively wealthy one. In addition, he also published these books in Latin and French in a Roman typeface and vertical folio to cater to international audiences.

Through these novel genres as well as through novel use of copy, fonts, format, images, and language, publishers such as Claesz and Matthysz tried to tap into traditional markets as well as the new markets that were forming as a result of economic (income) growth. Between the expensive, scholarly work for the international elite and cheap print work for the masses, new markets were opening up. Publishers exploited the new niche markets, catering to wealthy merchants and ship owners as well as to the middle classes interested in the exploits of Dutch explorers. Because the new products were intended for a different and specific market niche, they did not replace the old, simpler songbooks but rather formed an additional subgenre. The number of titles further expanded and diversified as a result of the reciprocal relationships between copy production, demand for certain types of information and texts, and the availability of printing and publishing skills.
Notwithstanding their entrepreneurship, these achievements were not solo endeavours. In the production phase, publishers required copy, paper, type, ink, and – depending on the type of book – print designs, printcuts, translations, and editing. Publishers functioned as general contractors, as booksellers, and sometimes also as printers; authors functioned as suppliers of texts; paper dealers as providers of the essential primary ingredient; engravers as illustrators; scholars as translators and correctors; and finally, type founders and punchcutters were crucial in shaping the appearance of books. These activities are clear-cut examples of what Michael Porter labelled ‘related and supporting industries’, which are of particular importance for cultural industries in which the production of goods is a collaborative enterprise such as book production. In order to understand just how important the interplay between publishers and related or supporting industries was for the development and sustainment of an innovative and expanding book industry, we may take a closer look at the three main supporting industries: production and trade in type, paper, and copy.

Type

Den nieuwe lust-hof, the songbook published by Leiden publisher Matthysz, drew on a variety of fonts, whereby Matthysz broke with the style of sixteenth-century Dutch books whose pages were dark, crowded, with medieval-style decoration. At the end of the sixteenth century, Southern Netherlandish printers introduced the more elegant French style, characterized by balanced pages, a structure of chapters and paragraphs, the use of notes and references, different fonts, and ornate and decorative letters. To achieve these effects, printers needed type in multiple sets and in various sizes. The three main types in use during this period were roman (basic upright), italic, and gothic (blackletter). Printers could buy up old type, order new type from type founders who used existing matrices, or they could have their own typeface designed and cut for them. This, of course, required investment. Once punches and matrices were bought, they required little further expenditure, but stocks of printing type could become quite a burden for early modern firms. Expenditure on stocks of type came third after paper and labour in terms of the production cost of books, and it was the most expensive part of the firm’s fixed capital.

Prior to the Revolt, printers in the northern provinces had procured their type in the south where Hendrik van den Keere, who was Plantin’s
sole supplier after 1570, had a virtual monopoly. In 1577, when the city council of Leiden set up a printing press, type still had to be ordered in the Southern Netherlands, but gradually several typecutters such as the Van den Keere family and their former foreman Thomas de Vechter started to arrive in the Republic, bringing with them tools and matrices. Even the last remaining famous punchcutter in the Southern Netherlands, Geeraert van Wolscharen, was also almost lured north, as it is known that in 1609, a Dutch town, perhaps Leiden or Amsterdam, had offered him favourable settlement conditions. After Plantin’s death in 1589, the enormous collection of typographic material he had built up was divided between his sons-in-law Jan Moretus in Antwerp and Franciscus Raphelengius in Leiden. During this period of early growth in the book industry, Dutch printers were still content to rely on Southern Netherlandish type and type founders, with the type and associates of Van den Keere linking the sixteenth- and the seventeenth-century styles. Few new types seem to have been cut in the Dutch Republic, with the exception of a few specialized series commissioned by Raphelengius such as Arabic, Ethiopian, and Samaritan, as well as the cutting of a Hebrew typeface tentatively attributed to Jodocus Hondius. This was not limited to the Northern Netherlands; it has been observed that throughout Europe the profusion of high-quality typecutters in the third quarter of the sixteenth century was followed by half a century of relative inactivity, after which type founders started to innovate once more.

**Book illustrations**

Along with the use of various fonts in the newly produced books such as *Den nieuwen lust-hof* and Claesz’s travelogues, the inclusion of illustrations was another innovative feature. As soon as illustrations were involved, the production of books became much more complex and expensive. The printer had to decide whether to reuse old plates, order new plates, or perhaps even use new designs, and if so, order, produce, or otherwise get access to engraved or etched copperplates or woodcuts. This required not only an investment; it also involved a more complex production process, as collaboration was called for with engravers and artists. During this period there was no clear-cut occupational differentiation: some large publishers employed artists and engravers; artists also etched and engraved; while still other engravers published their own work.

Like printing, the activities of print publishing and engraving had also been concentrated in Antwerp during most of the sixteenth century. Until
1578, Harmen Jansz Muller had been the only print publisher in Amsterdam, but soon after 1580 both the number and output of engravers and designers increased.62 As with type, this did not immediately result in an abundance of new book illustrations. Demand for illustrations was partly met by reusing old plates. Cornelis Claesz, for instance, who was quickly becoming the largest map and book publisher in the Republic of his time, based virtually all his artistic prints on existing impressions or plates originally published by others.63 He owned hundreds of plates made by contemporaries such as Jan Saenredam and almost the entire production of Jacob II de Gheyn.64

Another way in which old images could be reused was by designing and engraving new plates after older impressions. This is not to say that such reprints were always carbon copies. The adaptation of older series could also be creative acts, resulting in the production of a new artistic product. Arguably the best-known print designers and publishers from this period, Hendrick Goltzius and Jacob II de Gheyn, both made many reproductions while also developing distinct personal styles. Although new and original designs were becoming more widespread around the turn of the seventeenth century, it was only in the next phase, the Golden Age of Dutch book illustration, that a new generation would en masse produce new designs.

Paper

Like their Southern Netherlandish counterparts, Dutch book producers active between 1580 and 1610 had to import printing paper because it was not yet produced in the Dutch Republic on any significant scale. Attempts at setting up paper mills were made, but early mill owners complained about the dearth of the necessary know-how in the Dutch labour market.65 The development of a domestic paper industry was inhibited not only by a lack of skills, but also by geographic conditions.66 Unfortunately, we have very few figures on the import of paper and even when they are combined, they merely confirm that significant amounts were brought into the country.67 Before the Revolt, Dutch printers had mainly used Troyes paper from northern France which was imported through Antwerp, but the Dutch Revolt disturbed trade, making imports irregular and causing costs to soar.68 Soon, many of Antwerp’s merchants, including those involved in paper, moved to the Northern Netherlands where they invested in new trade routes.69

Several Dutch merchants and booksellers, including mapmaker Jodocus Hondius and later his widow Colette van den Keere, were closely involved
in financing paper imports. When, around 1580, Basel papermakers were having trouble competing with German and French paper production, the newly founded Dutch Compagnie van Duitsche papieren, set up by the first major Dutch paper dealer, Amsterdam merchant Cornelis van Lockhorst, soon revived the faltering Swiss paper production. Just how intertwined paper trade and book production were is evident in the procedures following the death of the largest bookseller in the Republic, Cornelis Claesz, in 1609. The execution of his estate took place in the house of Van Lockhorst, and shortly after Claesz’s widow had proposed to pay off her brother-in-law’s claim on the inheritance for the total sum of f25,000, Van Lockhorst took over this debt. The dependence went both ways: men like Van Lockhorst supplied paper and allowed publishers to pay in instalments, while the large printers expedited the paper trade.

Copy

In addition to choosing paper, type, and illustrations, publishers also had to decide on the content of books. They could use old texts – in translation, as adaptation, or direct copy – or new texts, either produced on their own initiative or submitted by authors. The rise of Amsterdam as an information hub and Leiden as an academic centre, as well as cultural transformations, all stimulated copy production. But in order to turn information and copy into marketable goods, publishers had to take the initiative, as is visible in the examples of cartography and poetry.

Before 1580, Dutch merchants would have obtained their charts abroad, in Antwerp or Portugal, but subsequently, an independent production and trade developed rapidly, fuelled by the need for new and accurate information, by the immigration of cartographers and publishers, and by the new flow of information into towns. Local governments and merchants were interested in capturing new trade routes, contributing to the boom of voyages of discovery in the 1590s. The amount and intensity of Dutch overseas traffic had already increased in the sixteenth century, but only within a limited area circumscribed by the Baltic, England, and the Canary Islands. By 1585, direct trading links were established between the Republic and Africa, America, and Asia, and Dutch publishers responded quickly to information flowing in as a result of these new sea voyages.

The increasing flows of information may be considered one of the most important drivers of Dutch book production as they formed a unique selling point, improving its international competitiveness. In domestic markets,
increasing political and cultural self-awareness following the Revolt provided an impulse for the production of literature in the vernacular, though the question of whether the Dutch language was at all suitable for poetry was far from answered.\(^\text{77}\) During the phase of emergence, the rhetoricians (\textit{rederijkers}) dominated public literary life. Between the Amsterdam and Leiden chambers, people like Hendrick Laurensz Spieghel, Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert, Roemer Visscher, and Jan van Hout stimulated the use of the Dutch language, forging the link between older sixteenth-century traditions and newer seventeenth-century Dutch poetry. These poems were, however, often distributed in private networks, and it was up to the publishers to turn them into commodities.\(^\text{78}\) Through individual business acumen and intricate relations, Dutch publishers did so, setting off a period of expansion and product differentiation in the book trade.

**Business structure and strategy**

Compared to later periods, the most distinctive feature of the early years of Dutch book production was the degree of concentration of production in just a handful of firms. The Hague’s high level of title production but relatively small number of publishers can be attributed to the presence of one particular printer, Hillebrant Jacobsz van Wouw I. When the government moved to The Hague in 1588, the Van Wouws followed and became responsible for all official printing on behalf of the States General such as placards and ordinances. Between 1600 and 1609, the firm produced almost half of all publications in The Hague. In the same period, Jan Jacobsz Paets alone produced three quarters of all titles published in Leiden. Book production in Amsterdam was less concentrated, but here too several individuals dominated most notably Cornelis Claesz. In order to gain a better understanding of the importance of individual publishers and day-to-day practices during the first decades of the Dutch publishing industry, we zoom in on industrial and firm structure in Amsterdam.

Table 2.2 shows the distribution of names found on imprints published in Amsterdam between 1585 and 1589 and 1600 and 1604, respectively.\(^\text{79}\) Cornelis Claesz clearly was the linchpin around which much production revolved; his name can be found on almost half of all editions in the former period. Claesz’s prominence is also visible when the output per individual career of the eight publishers active in 1585 is compared. During his career, he published more than the rest combined: 303 titles, followed by Laurens Jacobsz with 88, and Harmen Jansz Muller with 82.\(^\text{80}\) In other words, during
the early years, more than half of the Amsterdam output was concentrated in one firm. By 1600, this had changed. When production during the entire careers of the 25 book producers active in 1600 is considered, we find that Claesz is still the largest with his 303 titles, followed closely by Jan Evertsz Cloppenburgh with 226 titles, and that there remains a considerable gap between these two and the rest.81

Claesz, who was not only the largest producer of books but, at least in 1585, also the wealthiest, will be the central figure in the rest of the chapter.82 This is not because he was a typical Amsterdam publisher around the turn of the century, but because he was a crucial agent in the take-off of Dutch book production, and his business dealings reveal the specificities of this early period. Other prominent firms such as the native Amsterdam publishers Muller and Adriaan Barentsz (Hartogvelt) were both established family-run firms that would last for over a century, but they would not be remembered as the pioneering firms that would put the Amsterdam book trade on the European map.83

Table 2.2 Distribution of names found on imprints published or printed in Amsterdam, 1585-1589 and 1600-1604

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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Others (N &lt;5 editions)*</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other towns (11 towns)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>Other towns (15 towns)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total hits editions</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total hits editions</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>N total hits names</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td>N total hits names</td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Thesaurus; STCN accessed 5 July 2011; * =17 persons.

Cornelis Claesz

Cornelis Claesz has received much attention in book-historical and cartographic literature, but little is known about his personal life.84 It is assumed that Claesz was born in the middle of the sixteenth century in the
Southern Netherlands, probably in Leuven. In 1572, he moved from Emden to Cologne, while in 1578 he can be traced to Enkhuizen, a port town on the Zuiderzee northeast of Amsterdam, and home to cartographers such as Lucas Jansz Waghenaer. Almost immediately after Amsterdam sided with the anti-Spanish rebels in 1578, Claesz moved to Amsterdam, where he joined Harmen Jansz Muller and would kick-start local book production. A closer look at what Claesz produced and sold during the early decades of Dutch book production, as well as the networks in which he operated, reveals the business strategies of one of the key figures in Dutch book history.

**Specialization**

A distinction should be made between Claesz’s own publications – his publishing list – and what he sold from his shop – his stock. Although Claesz is best known for his cartographic work, he did not immediately start publishing in this genre. Between 1582 and 1587, he published works on various topics, ranging from bookkeeping to state publications, as well as the *Deux Aes* and *Liesvelt* Bible editions. In 1587 Claesz issued his first geographical publications, but his career in geographical printing only really took off after 1589 when he started to publish all of Lucas Jansz Waghenaer’s work, including the *Spieghel der Zeevaerdt*, originally published in 1584 by Plantin, the first editions of the *Thresoor der Zeevaert* in 1592, and, in 1598 his real hit: Gerrit de Veer’s account of the 1594-1597 expeditions to explore the elusive northern Anián passage to the Indies.

From this point onwards, Claesz became the ‘stimulator and driving force of Dutch cartography’, a description that, whilst grand, hardly overstates his role. According to the STCN, 121 titles were published in the subject ‘geography’ between 1570 and 1609, 82 of which in Amsterdam. Claesz was responsible for 72 of these – almost 90 per cent of all geographic titles published in Amsterdam and 60 per cent of those published in the Republic. A comparison with other publishers’ lists reveals strategies of specialization. Table 2.3 shows the genre distribution in titles published by the firms of Claesz, and Harmen Jansz Muller and Laurens Jacobsz – two other major Amsterdam publishers active in the same period. Claesz focused mainly on the subjects of history and geography, Claesz’s pupil, friend, and neighbour Jacobsz on theological publications, and Muller on poetry.
Table 2.3  Genre distribution Cornelis Claesz (1582-1609), Harmen Jansz Muller (1572-1617), and Laurens Jacobsz (1588-1603)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Harmen Jansz Muller</th>
<th>Cornelis Claesz</th>
<th>Laurens Jacobsz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>History</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>127</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch literature (poetry)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin literature (poetry)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public and social</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almanacs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political science</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: STCN, accessed 5 July 2011

Although Claesz dominated the field of travel accounts and cartographic works, his publishing list was still varied. Ephemeral printing made up a large part of his work; Bert van Selm has estimated the share of pamphlets in Claesz’s total output at 20 per cent, and he also published news information, prognostications (astrological predictions), prophecies, and almanacs for a broad audience. Such steady-selling publications required fewer investments, offered quick returns, and served as counterweights to expensive publications. They could also be used to finance works requiring more considerable investments, such as Wagenaer’s *Thresoor der zee-vaert* and Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s *Itinario, voyage ofte schipvaert* (Image 2.1); the world atlases under the name of *Caert-thresoor*; and the *Atlas Minor* by Gerard Mercator, which he published in collaboration with Jodocus Hondius and Johannes Janssonius.

**Wholesale and internationalization**

Like most other booksellers, Claesz did not only produce his own works; he also purchased books published by others to sell in his shop. The items listed in the 1610 inventory catalogue, drawn up after Claesz’s death, indicate that he sold much more than just the maps and travel accounts for which he...
is now well known. There was a significant difference between what was offered in Claesz’s shop and what he published, both in terms of language and genre. By publishing, trading, and buying books, but also by bidding at auctions and even collecting redundant books from the town library in 1580, he would eventually build up an extensive, international, and varied stock.

Image 2.1 Title page of Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s *Itinerario, voyage ofte schipvaert, naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien inhoudende een corte beschryvinghe der selver landen ende zee-custen, 1596, published by Cornelis Claesz in Amsterdam*
The records of the *Officina Plantinina* show that Claesz was their largest Dutch buyer; he expanded his stock by buying books from the Antwerp-based firm on as many as twelve occasions in 1578. Increasing internationalization is also evident in Claesz’s activities at the biannual Frankfurt book fair, the undisputed centre of international book trade at the time. Claesz was the first Dutch publisher to be represented at the fair in the post-Revolt years where he became particularly active after 1602, soon joined by other Dutch publishers. At the fair, Claesz did not buy haphazardly; the choices he made at the fairs reflected the distinct preferences of his Amsterdam book-buying base. Claesz’s role in the distribution of imported specialist Latin books further reveals that he not only tied foreign production to Dutch readers, but that he also acted as a wholesaler to fellow booksellers. His 1609 *'Const ende Caert-Register'*, a publishing list with advertised prices in which he only included the prints and maps for which he himself possessed the copperplates, encouraged buyers to purchase in bulk, which suggests that Claesz must have targeted fellow sellers of books and prints, and possibly other wholesaling merchants.

Claesz served as a major intermediary between foreign publications and local readers through both his shop and his own publications. As soon as Claesz took up publishing in addition to simply selling books, his trading position in the exchange system must have improved. His foray into the geography niche provided Claesz with a crucial selling point and enabled him to move into the international book trade. Claesz did not hesitate to translate, for example, Van Linschoten’s *Itinario* into different languages, and conversely he had German, French, and English travel journals translated into Dutch.

**Collaboration**

The importance of Claesz’s ability to collaborate and build up networks outside the book trade and in specific intellectual and cultural milieus is evident in the production of his travel accounts. The Dutch economy was booming, Amsterdam merchants were conquering overseas trade, Haarlem artists were developing a unique northern mannerist style, and Leiden University attracted scholars and printers. The specialization of the three towns came together in Claesz’s business, where merchants, cartographers, seafarers, professors, designers, and engravers, each with different skills, were all set to work. Peter Sutton’s assertion that Claesz’s *modus operandi* was collaboration does not seem too bold a statement. A closer look at his network neatly underlines the interconnection of publishers in a structure
of both related and supporting industries and inter-firm relations that surpassed local boundaries.

Claesz could draw on a number of resources to make his products successful. He had access to skilled engravers, often students or imitators of Haarlem mannerists, humanist scholars in Leiden, merchants and skippers in Amsterdam, and cartographers in Enkhuizen, Hoorn, and Amsterdam.99 The listings of prints advertised in Claesz’s Const ende Caert Register of 1609 highlight the connections between Claesz and the major engravers and publishers of Antwerp and Haarlem working in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. He had direct and indirect links to Jacques de Gheyn, Hendrick Goltzius, and Karel van Mander, while most engravers of Claesz’s travel book illustrations were students of Haarlem mannerists.100 His cartographic connections, partly based on his years in Enkhuizen, were intensified during the 1580s through contacts with the Van Doetecum family, Jodocus Hondius, and Petrus Plancius who was one of Claesz’s major business partners. Through his contacts, Claesz could also tap into Leiden intellectual circles, inhabited by scholars who were also highly interested in voyages of discovery.101

Claesz did not only seek out collaborations outside the book trade. Expensive folios that involved a lot of plate work, for instance, were often published in collaboration with others, as was the case with the Atlas Minor mentioned above.102 Moreover, many books published in Amsterdam were printed elsewhere.103 When Claesz’s practices are compared to those of other significant Amsterdam publishers who had started before 1600, we find that Claesz outsourced most of his printing, often to printers located outside of Amsterdam. He used as many as 24 different printing firms for the 46 publications that specified the name of other printers, and only four of these were located in Amsterdam.104 Moreover, 23 of the titles in Dijstelberge’s sample show a form of collaboration between Claesz and other publishers such as Franciscus Raphelengius in Leiden and Jan van Waesbergh in Rotterdam, and 164 imprints bear only his name.105 In comparison, his neighbour and friend Laurens Jacobsz published 39 titles on his own account and collaborated with only one other publisher – Cornelis Claesz himself – on eight occasions. He did, however, have his printing done by as many as fifteen different printers in Alkmaar, Delft, Dordrecht, Franeker, Haarlem, and Leiden.106 Other publishers such as Zacharias Heyns and Jan Evertsz Cloppenburgh also had many titles printed outside of Amsterdam, in Haarlem, Leiden, Utrecht, Franeker, and Kampen for instance.

Apparently, it was common practice to outsource printing, but Claesz was the only one whose collaborations were so extensive. His geographic network covered as many as seventeen towns, mostly Dutch, but also
Antwerp, Calais, and Edinburgh. That Amsterdam publishers, Claesz in particular, outsourced much of their print work to other towns may be partly explained by lower wages in other provinces. Although wages outside the province of Holland were indeed somewhat lower, this cannot explain the fact that often competitors in other towns such as Leiden or Haarlem were favoured over local Amsterdam printers. An additional explanation may be that the necessary skills were simply not sufficiently available in Amsterdam in the early decades of book production.

University towns such as Leiden and Franeker appear to have attracted high-quality printers from the Southern Netherlands like Franciscus Raphelengius and Gillis van den Rade. Port towns such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam attracted entrepreneurs more involved in bookselling and publishing. In 1585 the only local printer of significance had been Harmen Jansz Muller. Fifteen years later, at least eight printers were active, and within Amsterdam, Nicolaas III Biestkens and Herman de Buck were the popular choices. The delayed establishment of printers may also explain why the volume of production in the Republic was initially relatively low compared to the number of booksellers.

Conclusion

In the case of Dutch publishing, the Dutch Revolt is a perfect example of chance events setting off local growth trajectories. In a relatively short time span, immigrant publishers from the Southern Netherlands boosted the underdeveloped Dutch market for books. Favourable conditions on both the demand and supply sides as well as individual entrepreneurial strategies further reinforced and shaped the rapid expansion of Dutch book production. In this early phase of market expansion, immigrants were important in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Some of them, most notably Franciscus Raphelengius in Leiden and Cornelis Claesz in Amsterdam, played a crucial role in expanding and opening up markets, in increasing the volume of production, and in training and providing business models for aspiring printers and booksellers. They managed to develop their new companies into strong players, while more traditional players jumped on the bandwagon and increased their range and scale of production.

The example of Claesz demonstrates the importance of key entrepreneurs in the early decades of Dutch book production after the Revolt. He single-handedly doubled Amsterdam output, established international contacts, developed the specialization of cartographic publishing, trained the future
generation, and enabled new start-ups to set up shop. His publications and business strategies also demonstrate that successful entrepreneurs did not operate in a vacuum. Relationships between actors in related and supporting industries, local and inter-local, were of crucial importance for the market expansion through product differentiation that characterized the early stages of Golden Age book production. At the close of the sixteenth century, however, Dutch competitiveness in the related and supported industries was still a long way off. In terms of paper, Dutch sellers depended on imports through Antwerp. Type was ordered abroad, and the local artistic community was too small to provide substantial numbers of new illustrations. When it came to copy, however, local competitive advantages were emerging which further encouraged patterns of specialization.

The Revolt thus triggered a series of events that changed industrial trajectories in the northern and southern provinces, while specific local conditions shaped and strengthened the effects of this external shock. The fall of Antwerp in particular presented opportunities for other centres of book production to emerge, and Dutch towns were particularly well positioned to take up this challenge. Although the number of towns harbouring publishers expanded across the Republic, several towns showed above average growth rates. Leiden, The Hague, and Amsterdam possessed distinct competitive advantages that made for a stronger pull on publishers. These advantages were linked to specific urban specializations: Leiden as a university town, The Hague as a government town, and Amsterdam as a centre of commerce. At this local level, within the mutual dependence between producers, customers, related industries, and favourable trading conditions, publishers such as Claesz could capitalize on the window of opportunity created by chance.

Notes

1. Martin and Sunley, ‘The Place of Path Dependence’.
3. On the Dutch Revolt see for example Parker, Dutch Revolt.
4. Israel, Dutch Primacy; Briels, ‘Zuidnederlandse immigratie’; Fruin, Tien jaren.
10. The seminal work on the *Officina Plantiniana* is Voet, *Golden Compasses*. The following section is based on vol. I, pp. 84-113.
11. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
15. Cf. Ibid. Especially before 1594, the immigrants were independent masters and shopkeepers. 1570-1600: N=93; 1600-1630: N=75.
16. Prosopography 1585. Hendrick Pietersz, Adriaan Barentsz and possibly Barent Adriaensz were born in Amsterdam. See appendix I.
17. Prosopography 1600. Amsterdam’s share is probably underestimated in Briels’s figures, due to the fact that he only considered first place of settlement. See appendix I.
21. Consider the attempts by Moretus to find appropriate apprentices for his printshop and bookshop in, for instance, Den Bosch at the end of the sixteenth century. Van Oord, *Twee eeuwen Bosch’ boekbedrijf*, pp. 266-268.
23. Urbanization rates from ibid., pp. 52-71.
29. Faber et al., ‘Population Changes’, p. 110. They estimate the population of the Netherlands within its modern borders.
32. Hofwijzer, ‘Metropolis’; Bouwman et al., eds., Stad van boeken; Cruz, Paradox of Prosperity.
33. On the emergence of The Hague as a centre of printed works: Keblusek, Boeken in de hofstad; Kossmann, De boekhandel.
34. Keblusek, Boeken in de hofstad, p. 66.
35. Ibid., pp. 73-74.
38. On the role of Amsterdam in the spatial economy of the Low Countries see Lesger, The Rise.
39. Ibid., pp. 214-257.
42. STCN, accessed February 2009. Note that titles can fit in multiple genres.
43. Breugelmans, ‘Quaeris’.
46. On songbooks see Veldhorst, Zingend door het leven; Veldhorst, ‘Pharmacy for the Body and Soul’. On the new type of songbook in particular see Keersmaekers, Wandelend; Keersmaekers, ‘Drie Amsterdamse liedboeken’.
48. A series of diagrams on the size of books can be found in Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography, pp. 87-107.
53. Ibid., pp. 82-89, 126. Plantin’s accounts, for instance, point to fairly conservative amounts per set, depending on the size and the type, but a total investment of as much as f20,000.
56. The request by Antwerp printers can be found in Briels, Zuidnederlandse boekverkopers, pp. 565-566.
58. Ibid., p. 77.


62. The following is based on Orenstein et al., ‘Print Publishers’. On print publishing, including book illustration see also Orenstein, *Hendrick Hondius*, p. 96.


64. Ibid., pp. 182-183; Orenstein, *Hendrick Hondius*, p. 96; Orenstein, ‘Marketing Prints’.


66. On domestic paper production see ibid.; Voorn, *De papiermolens*, vol. II; De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, pp. 311-315.


70. The following is based largely on Voorn, *Uit de oudste geschiedenis*. Part of the firm’s archive can be found in Utrechts Archief (UA), inv. 76, Archief van het Huis Zuilen 1385-1951. See also Van Dillen, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis*, n. 1160. A concept of the 1613 revised deed can be found in ibid., n. 714, ‘Akte van oprichting van een handelscompagnie [etc]’.


74. Davids, *Zeeuwsch en wetenschap*, pp. 43-44.


76. On Amsterdam as a centre of information exchange consult Lesger, *The Rise*.

77. A good discussion can be found in Porteman and Smits-Veldt, *Nieuw vaderland*. For an English language discussion of Dutch literature see Meijer, *Literature*; Frijhoff and Spies, *Dutch Culture*, pp. 531-594.


79. The recurrence of names is higher than the number of editions used for the count, which can be explained by the fact that on some imprints, two or more names appear. This is the case, for example, when a book is sold or published in Amsterdam, but printed in Haarlem or Leiden.

80. The others produced 47, 14, 12, 5 and 1 title, respectively. Median production in 1585 was 30.5 titles including Cornelis Claesz and 14 titles excluding Claesz (average 69 and 36).

81. Willem Jansz Blaeu is listed with 326 titles, but around 1600 he was working as an instrument maker and not as a publisher. He only features in the STCN from 1608 onwards and is therefore excluded here.
82. In the Imposition, 2939 people were taxed: this is 40 per cent of all households, assuming an average household size of four. Van Dillen, *Amsterdam*. For a discussion see Dudok van Heel, ‘Waar waren de katholieken’. Jan Commelin is also listed with the high sum of f36, but is not included in this table as he only started publishing in 1594 (in 1585, he was active as a merchant). Van Dillen, *Amsterdam*: Cornelis Claesz: f12, Willem Buys f5, Jacob Pietersz Paets f4, Gerrit Claesz f4, Adriaen Barentsz f3, Harmen Jansz Muller f2, Barent Adriaensz (binder) f2.

83. The four individuals making up the Amsterdam-born sample in 1600 belonged to two families: Muller and Hartoghvelt.


85. In 1582, Claesz’s first dated publication year, he published nine works, among which we find copies of letters exchanged between foreign rulers, such as a letter by the Turkish emperor to the German emperor, and other ‘period documents’.

86. Schilder, *Cornelis Claesz*.


90. Ibid., pp. 180-182, 246-252. Claesz’s publishing list shows that 83 per cent was in Dutch, whereas of the titles in the stock catalogues between 1608 and 1610, 58 per cent was in Latin, 14 in Dutch, 30 in French, and 12 in German.

91. Ibid., pp. 182-183, note 179 in particular; Voet, *Golden Compasses*, vol. II, pp. 482-490. For more on Claesz’s relations with the Officina Plantiniana see Schilder, *Cornelis Claesz*.


93. Ibid., p. 217.

94. Ibid., p. 253.

95. This section is based on Sutton, ‘Economics’, pp. 106-171, and Sutton, ‘To Inform and Delight’.

99. On Claesz's collaboration with author Lucas Jansz Waghenaeer see Bos-Rietdijk, ‘Werk’. On his collaboration with Jan Huygen van Linschoten see Van Dillen, Bronnen tot de geschiedenis, n. 1160.
100. Sutton, 'Economics', pp. 133-143.
101. Ibid., pp. 143-154.
102. Based on Dijstelberge, De beer is los, appendix 2; STCN, accessed 10-03-2010.
103. Ibid.
104. STCN, accessed 10-03-2010. He collaborated with Amsterdam colleagues Johannes Hondius, Laurens Jacobsz and Desiderius de la Tombe; with Abraham Canin in Dordrecht; Jan van Waesberghe in Rotterdam; Franciscus Raphelengius in Leiden; Gilles Elzevier in The Hague; Jacob Jansz in Leeuwarden; and Johannes Janssonius in Arnhem.
105. Van Selm, Een menigte treffelijcke boecken, pp. 251-252 cites collaborative activities by Claesz.
106. Muller, on the other hand, who was a printer and engraver, printed 57 titles in his own name and only had one work printed by others (Raphelengius in Leiden).
109. Dijstelberge, De beer is los, pp. 31-32. Dijstelberge has observed that the differences in quality of printwork of printers from different areas were not very large, but that the quality of printing was somewhat better in university towns.
110. Nicolaas III Bistkens, Herman de Buck, Barent Adriaensz, W.J. van Campen, Peeter Geevaerts, Aert Meuris, Ewout Cornelisz Muller, and Jacob Pietersz Paets.