



Muenster

# Reckoning the Revolt on *Rekenpenningen*: Old Testament Jetons of the Eighty Years' War

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From its inception, the Eighty Years' War, or the Dutch War of Independence from Spain (1568-1648), was conceived of and represented as a biblical drama. William of Orange (1533-1584), leader of the resistance against Spain, was hailed as Moses parting the Red Sea, as the weak David felling the towering Goliath, and as Joshua conquering city after city for the Israelites. Both the rebellious Northern insurgents, bent on lifting the yoke of Spanish oppression, and the Southern Spanish loyalists self-identified with the Israelites, God's beleaguered and chosen people. No surprise then, that in the thick of war, the astute political thinker Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert penned *Comedie van Israel* (1575), subtitled 'a clear mirror of our times'.<sup>1</sup> Mirror indeed: the rebels saw the Israelites staring back at them and recognized the features of ancient despotic leaders in their own 'tyrannical' rulers: the governor Fernando Álvarez de Toledo (1507-1582), Duke of Alba, and the sovereign Philip II (1527-1598).

Using the Old Testament to reflect the current situation was nothing new. From at least the fifteenth century, the Dutch had identified with the Israelites.<sup>2</sup> Scripture was malleable and could be moulded around any story of an oppressed people, and the Netherlandish people sought

solace and courage in overlaying the dramatics of Hebraic history on their present war. From plays to paintings to prints, stories from the Old Testament were tailored and cut to fit characters and episodes from the Revolt against Spain.

The interplay between the Old Testament and the Revolt, which Simon Schama aptly termed 'patriotic scripture', has been charted and discussed widely in the historical literature.<sup>3</sup> One medium, however, has been overlooked in this inquiry into the re-enactment of Hebraic imagery: *rekenpenningen*. These copper or silver casting counters, about three centimetres in diameter, had a practical purpose: they helped government officials count.<sup>4</sup> Jeton, the French word for *rekenpenning* – also used in English – derives from the verb 'jeter', which means 'to throw or cast'.<sup>5</sup> And that is exactly what deputies did: they cast the counters across boards to efficiently perform mathematical tasks.

Jetons, however, are also decorated with complex imagery: low relief sculpture depicting portraits, emblems, allegories, contemporary events and biblical scenes. The blossoming and inventiveness of jeton imagery coincided with the start of the Revolt in the Netherlands (1568) and lasted until the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-21), at which point jeton production in the



Inv. no. NG-VG-3-494-A (fig. 2)

Obverse: *NON PLACENT DNO MILITIS OCREÆ*

Reverse: *TIMENTI DOMINVM OIA COOPERANTVR IN BONVM* / 1576



Inv. no. NG-VG-3-515-B (fig. 4)

Obverse: *TV SOLVS DEVS ET MAGNA FACIS*

Reverse: *FIDE DOMINO ET IPSE EFFICIET* / 1578



Inv. no. NG-VG-3-879 (fig. 7)  
Obverse: VICTORIA A DEO PRECIBVS  
Reverse: CVI TRIBVTVM TRIBVTVM 1599



Inv. no. NG-VG-3-588 (fig. 10)  
Obverse: SIC TRANSFERT *Dom*INUS REGNA  
Reverse: CONFIRMA *Dom*INE OPVS TVVM / 1582

Northern provinces diminished.<sup>6</sup> This extraordinary concomitance of war imagery with counters was symbiotic and fruitful: thousands of counters were produced during these decades.

The Rijksmuseum's collection of jetons from the Northern and Southern Netherlands is one of the largest of its kind, with about sixteen hundred counters. More than half the collection hails from the Eighty Years' War.<sup>7</sup> Jetons have attracted the attention of numismatists and economic historians, but to date no art historical study has been published. Using counters from the Rijksmuseum's collection, this article examines how counters employed biblical analogies to represent and interpret the war. On jetons, the marriage of contemporary war and Old Testament episodes was transformed into erudite, visual-textual idioms: an image struck on the obverse related to one on the reverse, crystalized in Latin mottos. This article uses case studies to examine the visual sources that inspired the counters and explains the surprisingly learned commentary that arises from their imagery and text. With counters struck at mints across the provinces, local and state governments attempted to inspire and impress deputies and the general public with a sophisticated melding of theology and politics. Lastly, the article will address how the function of counting accentuates the persuasive effect of the counters: numerically and metaphorically accumulating support for the war.<sup>8</sup>

### History and Use

Early jetons were struck in medieval Europe, where royal courts and the nobility began using them for arithmetic.<sup>9</sup> Arabic numbers were popularized in Europe through Leonardo Fibonacci's book *Liber Abaci* (1202) although, as Jaco Zuijderduijn has recently argued, officials continued to add with Roman numerals using their jetons into the

seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> In the Low Countries the earliest known counters can be dated to the end of the thirteenth century, and Philip the Good (1396-1467), Duke of Burgundy, used jetons to commemorate the successful actions of his government.<sup>11</sup>

Jetons were used with counting boards, marked with four horizontal lines representing thousands, hundreds, tens, and ones. To add or subtract, a person would lay out their casting counters on the grid, separated by a vertical line, and then compute each horizontal line to make totals.<sup>12</sup> A mathematician lining up his counters can be seen in the foreground of Harmen Jansz Muller's engraving *The Planet Mercury and His Children* (1566-70; fig. 1). He has sixteen jetons in front of him. Individuals needed dozens of counters for computation, storing them in small silver containers.<sup>13</sup>

During the Eighty Years' War, several bodies, including the States General, the Council of State, provinces and individuals, commissioned jetons from official mints.<sup>14</sup> Counters bear the mark of their mint of manufacture in the border, a symbol often related to heraldry and politics: for Dordrecht jetons this was a rose, for Leeuwarden a lion rampant, and for Middelburg a tower.<sup>15</sup> The Dordrecht Mint was the centre for rebel propaganda.

The general process of the commissioning, design and distribution of counters can be reconstructed from archival records. For instance, on 4 April 1578, the Treasurer-General of the States General and President of the Chamber of Accounts (*Rekenkamer*), Joris de Bie (?-1626), reviewed design proposals and chose his favourite to be struck on a new set of counters.<sup>16</sup> An engraver of the dies – a die-sinker – such as Gerard van Bylaer (c. 1540-1617), who worked in both Dordrecht (1577-1617) and Zeeland (1586-1601),<sup>17</sup> then used an intaglio process to cut the design into



Fig. 1  
HARMEN JANSZ  
MULLER, after  
MAARTEN VAN  
HEEMSKERCK, *The  
Planet Mercury and  
His Children*, 1566-70.  
Engraving,  
211 x 247 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
RP-P-1891-A-16487.

an upper and lower die – an upper die for the obverse and a lower die for the reverse. A blank of softer metal would be placed between the two dies. Hammering the upper and lower dies would impress the designs of the obverse and reverse on the copper blank simultaneously.<sup>18</sup> Special deputies would then disperse the counters to officials.<sup>19</sup> Although various levels of the Northern government ordered the jetons, their aims seemed to be consistent: visuals to drum up support for the war. Counters made of gold and silver were presented to government officials as New Year gifts.<sup>20</sup>

Until the twentieth century, literature about counters was simply des-

criptive. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Cornelis van Alkemade (1654-1737) managed the onerous task of sorting jetons into six types: counting counters, those with an exhorting text, those that promoted justice and Christian duties, those depicting moralizing stories from the Bible, those meant for propaganda and lastly those commemorating important events.<sup>21</sup> His separation into categories is artificial, however, for most counters fulfilled multiple roles, especially in spreading propaganda.

In the eighteenth century, Gerard van Loon (1683-1758), the father of Dutch numismatics, combined Alkemade's categories into one long,

multi-volume narrative of Dutch history: he organized the jetons chronologically with accompanying historical descriptions to explain the subject matter and its connection to the contemporary events of the Eighty Years' War.<sup>22</sup> Quite remarkably, Van Loon's books largely remained the authority on deciphering the meaning of the jetons, but in 2009 Margreet Tas published a catalogue of counters from the Low Countries that has corrected and updated Gerard van Loon's analyses.<sup>23</sup>

While no art historical study has ever been published on counters, economic historians and numismatists have been at odds over the function of jetons. Since the twentieth century, scholars have argued that the Dutch Revolt brought about a change in the function of jetons: that they were no longer used for counting, but instead were purely propagandistic medals with no practical function.<sup>24</sup> In 2011 Jaco Zuijderduijn put forward the argument that jetons continued to be used as aids in counting during the Revolt, and that the change in imagery reflected the government's new ideology.<sup>25</sup> His argument rests on his findings from archives of the Holland Chamber of Accounts (*Hollandse Rekenkamer*), where records indicate that the deputies continued to commission a large number of copper, as opposed to silver and bronze, counters during the first decades of the Revolt.<sup>26</sup> Made of a baser material, copper counters would not have been given as gifts, but used for computation. Zuijderduijn's argument is convincing, and the

fact that numerous surviving copper counters – not silver – bear the marks of heavy usage provides further evidence that the jetons were still being pushed across counting boards during the Revolt (e.g. fig. 2).<sup>27</sup> Of course, jetons were also celebrated for their propaganda value, which is why the practical function and imagery of counters must be considered in tandem.

### Old Testament Imagery

Much ink has been expended on how writers and artists mired in the events of the Revolt turned to the Old Testament for a cast of godly prophets to compare to their own Dutch leaders. The desire to draw parallels was rooted in the notion of 'contemporary epistemology' – that the world was unchanging, that events and outcomes would be repeated. Finding comparisons with past events consequently ensured knowable outcomes.<sup>28</sup> In closely studying the Bible, the faithful realized that God had a hand in determining the future and fate of his people. The depiction of past and present events on counters allowed viewers – and officially the government – to make connections between the scenes and predict a favourable outcome in the face of the unknowable. In fact, jetons were a particularly effective medium for making such comparisons because counters are comparative by nature, with their obverse and reverse sides. An official laying out his jetons to count could place one counter with its obverse up, and another of the same series with the reverse up. Viewing both sides simultaneously, the official could then make sense of the visual and metaphorical relationship between the sides. If the imagery was particularly striking, the viewer might pick up the jeton, tip it towards a good light source to best make out the low relief scenes, finger the faces of the counter and consider the learned

Fig. 2

ANONYMOUS,  
*Miraculous Change  
for Dutch Affairs,  
Counter of the  
Conquest of the  
Zeeland Islands by  
the Insurgents*, 1576.  
Copper, d. 30 mm  
(actual size, see  
also p. 124).  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
NG-VG-3-494-A.



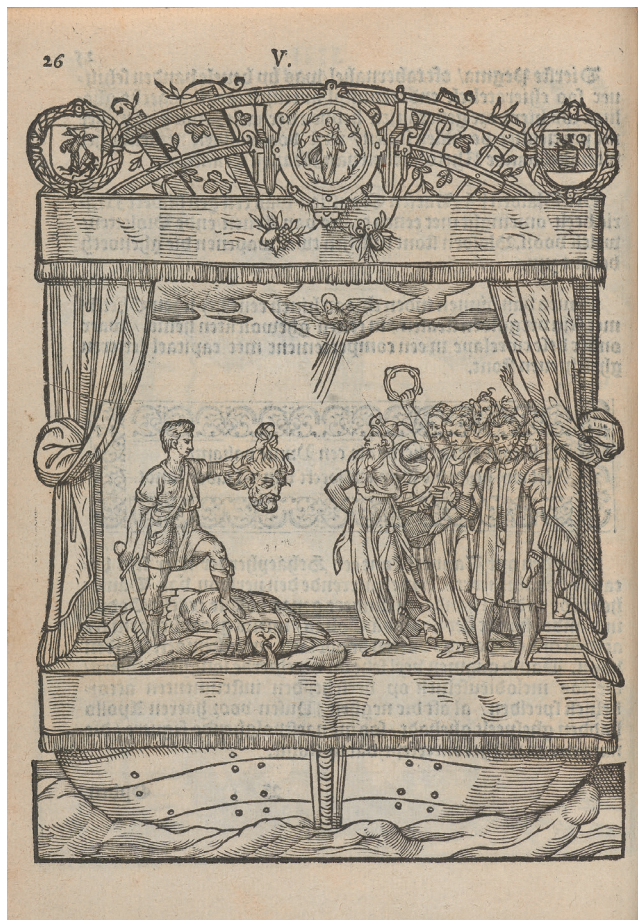


Fig. 3

ANTONI VAN LEEST,  
*The Performance of  
 The Crown of Mary  
 (Het Mariacransken):  
 David with the Head  
 of Goliath, 1577.*  
 Woodcut, 117 x 150 mm.  
 Amsterdam,  
 Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
 BI-1937-210-05.

visual record,<sup>30</sup> very few of their counters showed Old Testament scenes.<sup>31</sup> The exclusivity of Hebraic rebel counters is indicative of the burgeoning Calvinist culture with its expansive reading and interpretation of the Old Testament.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Striking David versus Goliath*

The most recurrent Old Testament episode to grace the sides of jetons is David and Goliath, an appealing story of the weak triumphing over the mighty against all odds, and chameleon-like in its adaptability to moments of the Revolt. Four adaptations of this narrative were designed and duly struck at the mints of Dordrecht, Antwerp and Leeuwarden in a two-year period, from 1578 to 1580.<sup>33</sup> This brief moment of popularity must have been inspired by the theatrics of William of Orange's entry into Brussels in 1577. The young leader had been greeted there with a performance by the Chamber of Rhetoric on barges outside the city.<sup>34</sup> A tableau vivant on one boat presented a re-creation of David's courageous and victorious fight against Goliath, illustrated in a pamphlet by Anthonie van Leest (fig. 3). On another boat, William was serenaded with the song *Wilhelmus*, an anthem that celebrated the stadholder's shared characteristics with David.<sup>35</sup> Quite simply: David, the innocent prophet of the God of Israel, represented William, while Goliath, the lumbering Philistine, was a stand-in for the Spanish.

commentary produced by reading the sides together.

The Rijksmuseum's collection of Eighty Years' War jetons includes seven different episodes from the Old Testament, all minted by Northern insurgents during the first half of the Revolt:<sup>29</sup> David and Goliath (q.v.), Daniel in the lion's den, Gideon and the fleece, the prophet Elijah receiving bread from an angel; the more unusual scenes include Jonathan and his armour-bearer scaling a mountain to surprise the Philistines, Moses with his arms upraised to protect the Israelites (q.v.), and the meeting of Ahijah the Shilonite and Jeroboam (q.v.). It is notable that despite the fact that the Spanish loyalists identified with the Israelites in the textual and





Fig. 4  
GERARD VAN BYLAER,  
*Success in the Fight  
against Spain, 1578.*  
Copper, d. 30 mm  
(actual size, see also  
p. 124).  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
NG-VG-3-515-B.

The year after William of Orange's grand entrance, a copper jeton was issued by the Dordrecht mint: David teeters on his left foot with his slingshot in hand, while a towering Goliath, whose head breaches the legend, beckons him forward (fig. 4).<sup>36</sup> It is the moment before the action, the moment of uncertainty, the moment when God intervenes to direct David's aim. The viewer knows the outcome: God will guide David's pebble straight to Goliath's forehead; David will triumph. The message is simple and

direct: in the face of formidable giants, God will ensure that his chosen people will prevail. David's very own lyrical words distil the sanguine story: 'You alone are God and do marvellous deeds' (Psalm 86:10).<sup>37</sup> The scene of optimism is reinforced with the composition on the reverse, where a Dutch lion has just sunk its teeth into the neck of the Spanish boar. Reimagined as animals, David now appears as a lion – a representation of the Netherlands and also the symbol of David's rule over Judah – and Goliath as a boar.<sup>38</sup> Anthropomorphizing the Revolt had been done since the beginning of the conflict<sup>39</sup> and here again the world of animals satirizes and lays bare the essential optimistic truth: God will ensure that good triumphs over evil. Proverbs 20:22: 'Wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee' surrounds the animal brawl, and anyone seeing the

Fig. 5  
ANONYMOUS, after  
MAARTEN VAN  
HEEMSKERCK, *David  
Confronted with  
Goliath, 1555-1633.*  
Engraving,  
201 x 248 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
RP-P-1904-3352.





Fig. 6a  
 ANONYMOUS,  
*Stop Rooting in  
 My Garden*, 1578-80.  
 Etching, 235 x 293 mm.  
 Amsterdam,  
 Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
 RP-P-OB-77.682.

jeton understands that David, the lion and the rebel soldiers, with trust in God, will prevail over their enemy.<sup>40</sup>

In composing the scene, die-sinker Gerard van Bylaer did not just follow the lead of the Chamber of Rhetoric's tableaux vivant but also turned to prints for inspiration. The composition and narrative moment of the square-off between the two parties is loosely inspired by an engraving after Maarten van Heemskerck, *David and Goliath* (1555-1633; fig. 5). Arrayed in armour and plumed helmet, Goliath struts on the left, while a contorted David on the right prepares to fling his stone. Even more persuasive, however, is a possible source for the Spanish boar: an anonymous print *Stop Rooting in my Garden* (1578-80), in which a Netherlandish lion fights a legion of belligerent pigs (fig. 6a). Part of the propaganda machine of the Northern provinces, the etching parodies the war as a boar attack on a single lion, defended by a wattle

fence hung with the coats of arms of the towns of Holland. Upon closer examination, the boar on the jeton shares the anatomy and position of the pig attempting to breach the lion's fence (fig. 6b). With hooves raised and

Fig. 6b  
 Detail from *Stop  
 Rooting in My  
 Garden* (fig. 6a).



mouth open, it charges aggressively, only to be attacked by the lion. Not only does the comparison show the vitality and usefulness of the David and Goliath story, it also suggests that die-sinkers looked to Old Testament prints as well as contemporary Revolt propaganda to formulate their compositions and figures. In other words, counters were in conversation with politically-charged materials, and they inflected contemporary Old Testament prints with new political meanings.

*Mint of Middelburg:  
Moses and Jeroboam*

As opposed to the well-known episode struck in Dordrecht, Antwerp and Leeuwarden, the Mint of Middelburg produced esoteric Old Testament scenes. These obscure Hebraic narratives were not employed in other media, remaining an idiosyncrasy of jetons. Vernacular scripture certainly encouraged innovative and personal analysis, and these skills were realized on counters: a medium that constantly needed to be revitalized encouraged exploration. Traditional associations were dropped in favour of new interpretations to recast the events of the war in 'patriotic scripture.'

In 1599 the Mint issued a jeton with Moses's arms raised to God on the obverse and the coat of arms of Zeeland on the reverse (fig. 7).<sup>41</sup> Derived from Exodus 17, the jeton depicts the battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites. To help his people win, Moses climbed to the top of a hill and lifted his arms to God. 'And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand,

that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.'<sup>42</sup> Moses's limbs soon grew heavy with the exertion, however, so Aaron and Hur sat him on a stone and then helped hold his arms up in supplication to God.

On the counter Moses sits on a rock, flanked by Aaron and Hur, who extend his arms. Below them the armies clash. This tableau is on a far larger scale than the warring armies below, so the eye is immediately drawn to the mountaintop and Moses's upraised limbs, which all but touch the rays of light issuing from the Tetragrammaton. The inscription reads: 'The victory of God is received through prayer', and thereby credits Moses for saving his people.<sup>43</sup>

In looking to the notable events of the war in 1599, Gerard van Loon compares this victorious scene of Moses to the Siege of Zaltbommel.<sup>44</sup> Francisco de Mendoza (1546-1623), the newly appointed commander of the Spanish armies, laid siege to Zaltbommel, a strategically important city located on the River Waal. His takeover failed, however, because Prince Maurice (1567-1625) ordered a pontoon bridge to be placed over the river, obstructing the siege and allowing outside access to the town.<sup>45</sup> Whether the scene directly refers to the Gelderland victory, as Van Loon suggests, or to a more general notion of Spanish defeat, the jeton nonetheless aligns the rebels with the Old Testament prophet.

Moses's praying pose echoes the position he took when holding the tablets of the Old Law. For centuries, Moses's outstretched arms have been interpreted as a prefiguration for Christ's position on the cross. The pose shows the effectiveness of prayer: for Moses in defeating the Amalekites and for Maurice in retaking Zaltbommel. William of Orange had been called Moses in text and image – Hendrick Goltzius

Fig. 7  
ANONYMOUS, *Allegory of the Defence of the Bommeler and Tielerwaard by Maurice, Count of Nassau, 1599.* Copper, d. 31 mm (actual size, see also p. 125). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. NG-VG-3-879.





Fig. 8a  
HENDRICK  
GOLTZIUS, *Portrait  
of William of  
Orange*, 1581.  
Engraving,  
265 x 181 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
RP-P-1940-257.

compared him to Moses holding the tablets of the law in the lower left cartouche of his portrait engraving (figs. 8a, b).<sup>46</sup> On the jeton, Maurice inherits the iconography of his father, with a more pointed reference to the effectiveness of steadfast prayer. Inspired by the connection and the imagery, the scene of Moses with Hur and Aaron was again resurrected for a Revolt print in 1631, commemorating the States' victory at the Battle of the Slaak. Daniël van den Bremden's engraving records the defeat of the Spanish fleet in the central oval, with Moses in benediction on the left and the victory of the Israelites on the right (fig. 9).

The reverse of the counter evinces the governmental function of jetons. The shield of Zeeland is circumscribed by the legend 'Tribute to whom tribute is due', which paraphrases Romans 13:7: 'Render therefore to all their dues:



Fig. 8b  
Detail from  
*Portrait of William  
of Orange* (fig. 8a).



Fig. 9  
DANIËL VAN DEN  
BREMDEN, after LE  
PRESTRE, *Allegory  
of the Victory of  
Slaak*, 1631.  
Engraving,  
450 x 640 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.  
RP-P-OB-81.608.

tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.<sup>47</sup> From a religious perspective, the scripture supports Moses's, and by extension Maurice's, prayers to God for salvation; but the scripture also focuses on the collection of taxes. Tax collectors would have brought their sets of counters with them when they visited town halls and estates. Perhaps on these occasions the taxed might have glimpsed the imagery on the jetons being moved on the counting table to calculate the amount of money they owed the government.<sup>48</sup> The motto, then, persuasively conflates financial support for the Revolt with the heroics of Moses.

Finally, one earlier example from the Middelburg mint proves the most complex metaphorical relationship forged between contemporary Revolt subjects and Old Testament scenes. Taken from 1 Kings, a 1582 counter depicts the artistically rare episode of the meeting between Ahijah the Shilonite, a Levite prophet of the ancient Samaritan city of Shiloh, and Jeroboam, King Solomon's super-

intendent (fig. 10).<sup>49</sup> On the obverse, the prophet Ahijah has removed his garment, holds it spread out and is beginning to tear it into pieces. According to scripture, while reading his cloak, Ahijah prophesied to Jeroboam the coming of a revolution: 'Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee ... and [thou] shalt be king over Israel.'<sup>50</sup> Ahijah's words foretell Jeroboam's revolt against King Solomon and subsequent reign over the ten tribes of Israel. The jeton shows the moment of the ripping of the cloth, or the symbolic breaking of the kingdom of Israel into twelve tribes, ten of which would fall under Jeroboam's jurisdiction. The revolt is further foretold by the legend that runs along the border: 'so God transfers Kingdoms.'<sup>51</sup>

Taken together, both word and image make a rather extraordinary allusion to the Revolt in the Netherlands. In 1581 – the year prior to the counter's making – provinces in the Netherlands declared independence from Spain in the Act of Abjuration: they listed their grievances against



Fig. 10  
GILLIS GORGU (?),  
William, Prince of  
Orange-Nassau,  
Known as Sovereign  
of Holland, Friesland,  
and Zeeland, 1582.  
Copper, d. 30 mm  
(actual size, see also  
p. 125).  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. NG-VG-3-588.

Philip II, which delegitimized his sovereignty over the Low Countries.<sup>52</sup> In effect, they rent their political relationship with Philip asunder. The pieces of cloth allude to the provinces that tore themselves from the King's rule. These 'ten tribes' sought a new leader, and William of Orange was deemed their 'sovereign and supreme head'.

As noted by Van Loon, William of Orange's sovereignty is implied on the reverse: God's hand reaches down through the clouds to graft three branches on to the trunk of a tree. No longer imagined as strips of clothing but now as cut branches from Spanish rule, these scions have been grafted on to the Stadholder's tree.<sup>53</sup> The tree and its new grafts represent

the promising future of the Revolt under the care of William of Orange and literally God's hand, with the legend proclaiming, 'strengthen the work of thy Lord'.<sup>54</sup> Thus, while the coat is ripped on the obverse because of the uprising, the tears are repaired and made whole again through grafting on the reverse under the protection of William of Orange. Furthermore, the two scenes are connected through their compositions: the tree fills the space on the reverse where the cloth of the coat is held stretched between the two Old Testament figures.

There is little visual precedence for the meeting of Ahijah and Jeroboam. Hans Collaert I's depiction of the scene from 1579 is one of the few examples (fig. 11). While there is congruence in Jeroboam and Ahijah standing before one another, Collaert shows the cloth already cut into pieces. The rarity of the counter's scene suggests that the designer did not look to any visual sources in engraving this image: this is an original composition. While Old Testament allusions to the Revolt were common, this one was new, unprecedented and remarkably rich

Fig. 11  
HANS COLLAERT I,  
after AMBROSIUS  
FRANCKEN I,  
Jeroboam and the  
Prophet Ahijah, from  
*Thesaurus sacrarum  
historiarum veteris  
Testamenti ...*, 1579  
and/or 1585.  
Engraving,  
208 x 293 mm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. RP-P-1963-10.



with allusions. The Mint of Middelburg's production of little-known biblical stories is difficult to fully explain, but it certainly reflected the objectives of the commissioners, and more specifically, the personalized interpretation of the designers. In the case of the Ahijah and Jeroboam counter, it is instructive to note that the Zeeland Council of Deputies (*Gecommitteerde Raden*) had one of its own members, Jacob Valcke (c. 1540-1623), compose the legend for the scene.<sup>55</sup> Valcke had established his reputation as a rebel in pressing for Zeeland to join the Union of Utrecht (1579).<sup>56</sup> The interpretation of the counter lay in his personal and complex reading of the episode from 1 Kings: the ripping of the cloth as a prefiguration for the provinces' declaration of independence. Of course, the visual designers of the scene, who may have been mint master Jeronimus Bruynzeels (1546-1597) and his employee Gillis Gorgu, also contributed to the counter's erudite message.<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

It is difficult to estimate how many people saw or used jetons on a regular basis – not to mention whether the viewers had the Latinate background and biblical and emblematic knowledge to decode and appreciate the message of counters. Marianne Eekhout suggests civil servants would have always been present with the counters, ready to explain their message to the less educated.<sup>58</sup> In the 1979 catalogue on medals during the Revolt, Frank Pietersen argues that jetons were circulated as abundantly as propaganda prints.<sup>59</sup> His statement implies that everyday Northerners would have had the chance to encounter a counter. New archival research by Katie Heyning indicates that even schoolchildren were given jetons to learn how to count.<sup>60</sup> Without question, govern-

ment officials – ranging from provincial to state level – received sets of jetons for their calculations, as did individuals working as toll and tax collectors. Scenes of battles won, emblems urging trust in the government and stories from the Old Testament must have sparked solidarity and conviction in viewers. Zuijderduijn notes that in 1572 Spanish-leaning members of the Dordrecht Chamber of Accounts and the Court of Holland had to flee the Sea Beggars. With their positions filled by new appointees, the counters were another way to indoctrinate or persuade new government leaders of the urgency of the rebels' cause.<sup>61</sup> The emblazoned message of God's redeeming power and support of the rebels brought a new level of legitimization to the practical function of calculation, especially of taxes to fund the wars. Acquiring collections of jetons was obtaining visual proof of wartime success that could then be added and multiplied on the counting board. What distinguishes counters from other media caught up with the Revolt is their more liberal and extensive usage of biblical stories. All in all, the obscure Old Testament counters proved an esoteric assembly of God's loyalty and the astute work of the designer, thoughtfully reading the Bible with an eye for forging connections between the Old Testament and the reality of the Eighty Years' War. Struck with and by Old Testament prophecy, the jetons reckoned that God would support the rebels' cause.

This article examines the Rijksmuseum's collection of *rekenpenningen* (jetons or casting counters) from the Eighty Years' War that were struck with Old Testament imagery. Practical in function, jetons were used by government officials to aid in counting, such as with the computation of taxes. They also served as an effective propaganda medium, as they regularly depicted and allegorized events of the first half of the Revolt (c. 1570-1609). On jetons the marriage of contemporary war and biblical episodes was transformed into erudite, visual-textual idioms: a struck image on the obverse interrelated to one on the reverse, crystalized by circumscribing Latin legends. With three case studies, this article examines the visual sources that inspired the counters and explains the surprisingly learned commentary that arises from the biblical analogies and text. The function of counting accentuates the persuasive effect of the counters: numerically and metaphorically accumulating support for the war. The Rijksmuseum's collection of jetons is one of the most notable in the Netherlands and has not been studied from an art historical perspective before.

\* The research presented here will also be included in my forthcoming dissertation in 2020. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Gijs van der Ham (Senior Curator in the Department of History at the Rijksmuseum) for his advice and mentoring over the duration of this project.

1 Although Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert wrote the drama in 1575, it was not published until 1590. Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, *Comedie van Israel: Vertonende Israels zonden, straffinghe, belydinghe, ghebedt, beteringhe ende verlossinghe uyt het thiende capit. Judicum: Als een klare spieghel der teghenwoordighen tyden*, Gouda 1590.

2 See the late fifteenth-century Frisian *Gesta*-cycle: *Historia frisiae, Gesta fresonum, Gesta frisiorum, Old freesche cronike, and Ald frysk kronykje*. I am grateful to Merel Groentjes for directing me to this source. Justine Smithuis, 'The Imagined Community of Friesland in the Late Middle Ages', in Robert Stein and Judith Pollmann (eds.), *Networks, Regions and Nations: Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300-1650*, Leiden 2010 (*Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions*, vol. 149), pp. 73-90, esp. pp. 78-88.

3 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, New York 1997, pp. 93-125. A sample: Henri van de Waal, *Drie eeuwen vaderlandsche geschied-uitbeelding 1500-1800: Een iconologische studie*, 's-Gravenhage 1952; G. Groenhuis,

'Calvinism and National Consciousness: The Dutch Republic as the New Israel', in A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse (eds.), *Church and State Since the Reformation*, The Hague 1981 (*Britain and the Netherlands*, vol. 7), pp. 118-33; Paul Regan, 'Calvinism and the Dutch Israel Thesis', in Bruce Gordan (ed.), *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, Aldershot/Brookfield 1996 (*St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History*, vol. 2), pp. 91-106; Graeme Murdock, 'The Importance of Being Josiah: An Image of Calvinist Identity', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29 (1998), no. 4, pp. 1043-59; Theodor Dunkelgrün, "'Neerlands Israel': Political Theology, Christian Hebraism, Biblical Antiquarianism, and Historical Myth', in Laura Cruz and Willem Frijhoff (eds.), *Myth in History, History in Myth: Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Society for Netherlandic History (New York, June 5-6, 2006)*, Leiden/Boston 2009 (*Brill's Studies in Intellectual History*, vol. 182), pp. 201-36; Miriam Bodian, 'The Biblical "Jewish Republic" and the Dutch "New Israel" in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Thought', *Hebraic Political Studies* 1 (2006), no. 2, pp. 186-202; Ilja M. Veldman, 'Maurice as the Nimrod of his Age: Political Propaganda Prints by Jan Saenredam', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 58 (2010), no. 2, pp. 128-37.

4 Bert van Beek, 'Jetons: Their Use and History', *Perspectives in Numismatics: Studies Presented to the Chicago Coin Club* (1986), pp. 195-220, esp. pp. 195-99;



- Jaco Zuijderduijn, 'Schuiven, schenken, strooien of sparen? Het gebruik van rekenpenningen in de 16de eeuw', *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift* 43 (2011), pp. 24-36, esp. p. 27.
- 5 The etymology is enlarged upon in Francis Pierrepont Barnard's *The Casting-Counter and the Counting-Board: A Chapter in the History of Numismatics and Early Arithmetic*, Oxford 1916, pp. 26-27.
  - 6 *Triomfpenningen*, or triumph medals, overtook jetons. The Northern Netherlands struck their last functional jeton in 1671. See Margareet Tas, *Rekenpenningen: 540 rekenpenningen van de zestiende en eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw*, s.l. 2009, p. 4. For the development of the Northern Netherlandish triumph medal see Michel P. van Maarseveen, 'Penningen uit de tweede helft van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog', in Michel P. van Maarseveen et al. (eds.), *Beelden van een strijd: Oorlog en kunst voor de Vrede van Munster, 1621-1648*, exh. cat. Delft (Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof) 1998, pp. 55-69, esp. p. 57. In the Southern Netherlands, however, jeton production continued, see Michael Mitchiner, *Jetons, Medalets, and Tokens, Volume 2: The Low Countries and France*, London 1991, pp. 851-900.
  - 7 Teylers Museum, De Nederlandsche Bank (collection formerly held at the Geldmuseum), and the Royal Library of Belgium also have substantial collections.
  - 8 For a catalogue of Old and New Testament counters assembled by Joseph Jacquot, see 'Des légendes de médailles et de jetons: empruntées à l'Ancien et au Nouveau Testament de la Renaissance au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (1903-2015)* 135 (July, August, September 1989), pp. 391-402. Old Testament jetons were also struck in Nuremberg, see O.P. Eklund, 'The Counters of Nuremberg', *The Numismatist* 39 (1926), reprinted Oakdale/New York 1978, p. 7, no. 39.
  - 9 For further history see Van Beek 1986 (note 4), pp. 199-201.
  - 10 Zuijderduijn 2011 (note 4), pp. 27-30.
  - 11 Van Beek 1986 (note 4), p. 202. Van Beek argues that these counters were praised more for their portraits of the royals than for their actual use as a calculating instrument.
  - 12 For examples, *ibid.*, pp. 210-14.
  - 13 Gerard van Loon, *Contemporary Numismatics ...*, Leiden 1995 (trans. Robert Turfboer and James O. Sweeny, original 1734), pp. 146-47. Some commissions included the silver container.
  - 14 George Sanders, *Het present van Staat: De gouden ketens, kettingen en medailles verleend door de Staten-Generaal, 1588-1795*, Hilversum 2013, pp. 37, 129, note 70. J. van Kuyk, 'Jetons van de Nederlandse Rekenkamers in het Koninklijk Penningkabinet: II. De Zestiende Eeuw', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Munt- en Penningkunde* (1949), pp. 35-71. Bert van Beek, 'Rekenpenningen', in Peter Jan Margry et al. (eds.), *Van Camere vander Rekeninghen tot Algemene Rekenkamer: Zes eeuwen Rekenkamer. Gedenkboek bij het 175-jarig bestaan van de Algemene Rekenkamer*, 's-Gravenhage 1989, pp. 57-66, esp. p. 66.
  - 15 For a full list of mints, see Mitchiner 1991 (note 6), p. 757.
  - 16 'De Bye' in *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, 6th Part, Leiden 1924, p. 247. See also Paul Knevel, *Het Haagse bureau: zeventiende-eeuwse ambtenaren tussen staatsbelang en eigenbelang*, Amsterdam 2001 (*Cultuurgeschiedenis van de Republiek in de zeventiende eeuw*), pp. 38-45. For the resolution record see The Hague, Nationaal Archief, Archief van de Staten-Generaal (1.01.02), Resoluties van de Staten-Generaal, inv. no. 4, 4 April 1578. With thanks to Sjoerd Bijker for translating guidance. For an example of a commission by the Council of State, see Sanders 2013 (note 14), pp. 37-38.
  - 17 A.O. Kerkwijk, 'De stempelsnijders, werkzaam aan de Munt te Dordrecht van 1576-1806', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Munt- en Penningkunde onder de zinspreuk 'Concordia res parvae crescunt' te Amsterdam* 7 (1920), pp. 29-61.
  - 18 For further details of the striking process, see Arne Robert Flaten, *Medals and Plaquettes in the Ulrich Middeldorf Collection at the Indiana University Art Museum: 15th to 20th Centuries*, coll. cat. Bloomington (Indiana University Art Museum) 2012, p. 3. For production processes at the Mint of Dordrecht, see Albert A.J. Scheffers, 'De techniek van het munten', in Martin Bloemendal et al. (eds.), *Geslagen te Dordrecht: Terugblik op de Munt van Holland*, Dordrecht 2015 (*Jaarboek Historische Vereniging Oud-Dordrecht*, 2014), pp. 38-53.
  - 19 Van Loon 1734 (note 13), pp. 146-48.
  - 20 Zuijderduijn 2011 (note 4), pp. 30-31; Van Loon 1734 (note 13), pp. 146-50.
  - 21 Regionaal Archief Dordrecht, Collectie van Handschriften (no. 150), inv. nos. 1056-1059, c. 1700-1725: *Verhandeling der Nederlandse*

- gedenk- en legpenningen mitsgaders derselver noodmunten geslaagen in beleegerde steeden.* For a discussion of this source, see Cees Esseboom, 'Andere producten uit de Munt van Holland', in Martin Bloemendal et al. (eds.), *Geslagen te Dordrecht: Dordrecht op de Munt van Holland*, Dordrecht 2015 (*Jaarboek Historische Vereniging Oud-Dordrecht*, 2014), pp. 146-69, esp. pp. 152-57.
- 22 Gerard van Loon, *Beschrijving der Nederlandsche Historipenningen: Of beknopt Verhaal van 't gene sedert de overdracht der heerschappye van keyzer Karel den vyfden op koning Philips zynen zoon, tot het sluyten van den Uytrechtschen vrede, in de zeventien Nederlandsche gewesten is voorgevallen*, 4 vols., The Hague 1723-31. Gerard van Loon's texts were, in part, a revision of Pierre Bizot's *Histoire métallique de la République de Hollande*, published first in Paris in 1687 and then in Amsterdam in 1688. For the major texts on Dutch counters preceding Van Loon's work, see Gay van der Meer, 'Gerard van Loon (1683-1758): Medallistic Theory and Practice', in Michael H. Crawford et al. (eds.), *Medals and Coins from Budé to Mommsen*, London 1990 (*Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts*, vol. 21), pp. 87-99, esp. pp. 89-90. In the late nineteenth century, Jean-François Dugniolle published another multi-volume jeton reference work: Jean-François Dugniolle, *Le jeton historique des dix-sept provinces des Pays-Bas*, 4 vols., Brussels 1876-80.
- 23 Tas 2009 (note 6).
- 24 Zuijderduijn 2011 (note 4), p. 24, note 1; Van Beek 1986 (note 4), p. 195.
- 25 Zuijderduijn 2011 (note 4).
- 26 *Ibid.*, 28-30, fig. 1, and The Hague, Nationaal Archief, Archief van de Grafelijkheids-rekenkamer: Rekeningen (3.01.27.02), inv. nos. 4940-4944, 16 May 1579 – 27 September 1602. Marianne Eekhout argues that copper counters were intended for civil servants of lower status. Marianne Eekhout, 'De Tachtigjarige Oorlog op zak-formaat: penningen als objecten van herinnering', *Jaarboek voor Munt- en Penningkunde* 103 (2016), pp. 197-219, esp. p. 202.
- 27 Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 228; Dugniolle 1876-80 (note 22), II 2692. Legend: *NON PLACENT DNO MILITIS OCRAE | TIMENTI DOMINVM OIA COOPERANTVR IN BONVM | 1576.*
- 28 See note 3, especially Groenhuis 1981, p. 123.
- 29 Van Maarseveen argues that biblical imagery no longer appeared on medals during the second half of the Revolt. Van Maarseveen 1998 (note 6), pp. 66-67. Also note that the best-known medal with Old Testament imagery (siege of Jerusalem) is a commemorative medal, not a counter: see Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 194 and 195.
- 30 Marianne Eekhout, *Material Memories of the Dutch Revolt: The Urban Memory Landscape in the Low Countries, 1566-1700*, Leiden 2014 (unpub. diss. University of Leiden), p. 148, note 43, see <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/29686>.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 106-07. A rare exception is Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 361, a counter from Hainaut, which depicts Noah's ark.
- 32 For more on the Old Testament and Protestants, see Schama 1997 (note 3), pp. 94-95.
- 33 At the Rijksmuseum: inv. nos. NG-VG-3-515-B, NG-VG-3-544, NG-VG-3-546; at De Nederlandsche Bank: inv. no. RP-02472.
- 34 The Duke of Alba had been called Goliath as early as 1575 in the Sea Beggars' *Nieuw Liedeken* (New Song), see Groenhuis 1981 (note 3), pp. 119-20.
- 35 Peter Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt*, Ithaca 2008, p. 286. See also Nevada Levi DeLapp, *The Reformed David(s) and the Question of Resistance to Tyranny: Reading the Bible in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, London 2014 (*Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies*, vol. 601), pp. 73-96. For a primary account of the triumphal entry, see Jehan Baptista Houwaert, *Declaratie van die triumphante Incompt vanden ... Prince van Oraingnien binnen die Princelijcke Stadt van Brussele ...*, Antwerp 1579.
- 36 Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 249.1, Dugniolle 1876-80 (note 22), II 2743.
- 37 *King James Bible*. Psalm 28:3 was also used in the title-page engraving for an anti-Spanish pamphlet (1598): *Copie van seker Refereyn by de overheerde Nederlantsche Provintien aen Hollant gheschreven, beroerende den vrede*, Amsterdam 1598. See Anna E.C. Simoni, '1598: An exchange of Dutch Pamphlets and their Repercussions in England', in Theo Hermans and Reinier Salverda (eds.), *From Revolt to Riches: Culture and History of the Low Countries, 1500-1700*, Los Angeles 2017 (*Global Dutch: Studies in Low Countries Culture and History*), pp. 100-25, esp. p. 102.
- 38 The same boar and lion sequence was used for another counter, see Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 249.2.
- 39 See Anne-Laure van Bruaene, 'Revolting Beasts: Animal Satire and Animal Trials

- in the Dutch Revolt', in Walter S. Melion, Bret Rothstein and Michel Weemans (eds.), *The Anthropomorphic Lens: Anthropomorphism, Microcosmism, and Analogy in Early Modern Thought and Visual Arts*, Leiden 2015 (*Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture*, vol. 34), pp. 23-42. According to Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 250, the historian Everard van Reyd (1550-1602) noted that the Bishop of Cologne arranged a fight between a lion named Alba and a bull representing William of Orange.
- 40 Legend: TV SOLVS DEVS ET MAGNA FACIS / FIDE DOMINO ET IPSE EFFICIET | 1578.
- 41 Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 530, Dugniolle 1876-80 (note 22), III 3470.
- 42 Exodus 17:10.
- 43 Legend: VICTORIA A DEO PRECIBVS.
- 44 Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 530.
- 45 Olaf Van Nimwegen, *The Dutch Army and the Military Revolutions, 1588-1688*, Woodbridge 2010, p. 167.
- 46 Schama 1997 (note 3), p. 110.
- 47 Legend: CVI TRIBVTVM TRIBVTVM 1599.
- 48 Eekhout 2014 (note 30), p. 107.
- 49 Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 313, Dugniolle 1876-80 (note 22), III 2886.
- 50 I Kings 11:31, 37.
- 51 Legend: SIC TRANSFERT DOMINUS REGNA.
- 52 Delegates from Brabant, Gelderland, Flanders, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Tournai, and Mechelen.
- 53 Van Loon 1723-31 (note 22), I 313.
- 54 Legend: CONFIRMA DOMINE OPVS TVVM | 1582.
- 55 See M.G.A. de Man, 'Over eenige Zeeuwsche legpenningen', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Munt- en Penningkunde onder de zinspreuk 'Concordia res parvae crescent' te Amsterdam* 12 (1925), pp. 1-21, esp. pp. 14-15, for a record of the design: 'Valcke is belast te verdincken een devijs te zetten op de leghpenningen, die men eerstdaechs sal doen maecken uuyter munte van Zeelant voor den Raede'. Middelburg, Zeeuws Archief, 2 Staten van Zeeland en Gecommitteerde Raden (1574) 1578-1795 (1799), Archief van de Staten van Zeeland en Gecommitteerde Raden (no. 1), Resoluties, inv. nos. 465-603, 4 September 1584. Also note that in 1591 the States of Zeeland appointed Jacob Valcke to oversee the execution of the tapestry of the battle of Bergen op Zoom. For his biography see 'Valcke, Jacob' in *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, Part 19, Haarlem 1854, pp. 11-12.
- 56 The Union of Utrecht officially united the Northern provinces of the Low Countries.
- 57 See De Man 1925 (note 55), p. 15. Jeronimus Bruynzeels was the former mint master of Dordrecht.
- 58 Eekhout 2016 (note 26), p. 202.
- 59 A. M. (Frank) Pietersen, *De kogel door de kerk? Herdenkingstentoonstelling Unie van Utrecht 1579-1979: Politiek op penningen*, exh. cat. Utrecht (Centraal Museum) 1979, p. 1.
- 60 Katie Heyning, *Turbulente Tijden: Zorg en materiële cultuur in Zierikzee in de zestiende eeuw*, Hilversum 2017, p. 57.
- 61 Zuijderduijn 2011 (note 4), p. 35. He references Henk F.K. van Nierop, *Van ridders tot regenten: De Hollandse adel in de zestiende en de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw*, Dieren 1984 (*Hollandse Historische Reeks*, vol. 1), p. 203.

