“How it came that the bakers bake no bread”: A Struggle for Trade Privileges in Seventeenth-Century New Amsterdam

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For two weeks in October 1661, New Amsterdam experienced a bread shortage. The bakers refused to comply with a local ordinance charging them to bake twice a week and to keep the town supplied with bread of sufficient weight and quality. The burgomasters who administered the municipal government sent for Hendrick Willemsen, a baker and bread inspector, and demanded to know “how it came that the bakers bake no bread?” Willemsen explained that the regulated price of bread was so low compared to the price of grain that the bakers were “afraid to buy grain for beavers as they may suffer loss” and that they “ought not be obliged” to bake twice a week. The burgomasters declared their intention to “deliberate, so that neither the bakers on the one side nor the community on the other be taken short.” At first, the authorities ordered the bakers to “bake good bread and to keep continually large bread in the shops” or risk exclusion from the trade for a period of a year and six weeks. Ten days later, they revised the ordinances relating to bread, increasing prices by 10 percent. The bakers returned to regular baking, and New Amsterdam was assured of a bread supply.¹

The dispute between New Amsterdam’s bakers and its burgomasters seems familiar from accounts of the regulation of the grain trade and baking in early modern Europe. In the Old World, paternalistic urban authorities regulated commercial activities considered too important to the general good to be left to the whims of the market or the discretion of profit-minded individuals.² In the New World, the scarcity of labor, abundance of land, and

¹ Berthold Fernow, ed., The Records of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674 Anno Domino, 7 vols. (Baltimore, 1976; orig. pub. 1897), 3:378, 389–91 (hereafter cited as New Amsterdam Records). One year 6 weeks was the residency term required before a tradesman could register for the burgher right, a civil status introduced to the city in 1657 that allowed holders the privilege of trading in the town. Beavers were a form of currency in New Amsterdam.


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fluidity of social conditions are often thought to have undermined traditional restrictions on commerce and encouraged the rise of individualistic enterprises. The pursuit of individual interests, so the argument goes, freed trade from social obligations and eventually led to the transition to a free-market economy and, ultimately, capitalism.\(^3\) How does the exchange between the bakers and the burgomasters in New Amsterdam fit in the context of this general transition? The bakers’ refusal to bake could be interpreted as a protest by conservative craftsmen intent on securing their just deserts and preserving their independence and traditional ways of working. Alternatively, their refusal may reveal an entrepreneurial dissatisfaction with regulations and a determination to raise the price of bread and ensure profitable baking.\(^4\) Whether the bakers are portrayed as defenders of a traditional economy or progenitors of a free-market society depends on an assessment of their motives and the communitarian versus individualistic character of New Amsterdam’s economy.\(^5\) This article argues that the categories of craftsman and entrepreneur needlessly constrict our understanding of early American tradesmen and the interaction between self-interest and communitarian concerns in urban artisanal trade.

The 1661 dispute formed part of a campaign by New Amsterdam’s bakers to secure privileges that would mitigate the uncertainties of baking fol-

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lowing the end of the West India Company’s monopoly of New Netherland’s commerce. In 1639, after years of failed attempts to profit from its control of the fur trade, the West India Company opened up the colony to free enterprise, hoping to encourage settlement and economic expansion.6 Like others drawn to New Netherland, the bakers pursued a variety of commercial opportunities.7 Joost Teunissen dealt in livestock, and in 1648 he had been accused of selling muskets to local Indians; Hendrick Willemse ran a water mill at Gowanus; Andries de Haas and, one suspects, others traded in furs and tobacco.8 Beginning in 1649, Peter Stuyvesant, the West India Company’s director general in New Netherland, required the bakers to supply the town with good quality bread at fixed prices. At this time baking was unorganized and plagued by difficulties that threatened the bakers’ well-being. The prices that Stuyvesant set failed to take account of local currency inflation, and competition from seasonal bakers undermined the interests of those who worked full-time at the trade. Meanwhile, the company undermined Stuyvesant’s attempts to ensure the community’s bread supply when it struck down price-fixing regulations that it considered incompatible with the commitment to free trade. These uncertainties encouraged the regulated bakers to evade their obligation to bake, leading to bread shortages and complaints from residents.


8 In addition, Cornelius Barents van der Cuyl worked as a grain measurer and Johan Verpronk was identified as a smith and a baker when he came to New Netherland in 1660; O’Callaghan, Documents, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 15 vols. (Albany, 1856), 1:326, 327, 328, 329, 342 (hereafter cited as Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y.); New Amsterdam Records, 1:100, 120; Cathy Matson, Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York (Baltimore, 1998), 73–91, 341 n. 40. Tradesmen in the Netherlands also engaged in diverse economic activities rather than dedicating themselves to a single trade; see Violet Barbour, Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century (Baltimore, 1950), 141; Arie Theodorus Van Deursen, Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion, and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland (New York, 1991), 17; and Israel, Dutch Republic, 118.
The bakers' situation improved in the early 1650s following a challenge by local merchants to the company's administration of the colony. The merchants sought and won a municipal government that regulated trade in the local interest and in accordance with the practices of urban authorities in the Dutch Republic. Once metropolitan practices were legitimately extended to New Amsterdam, the bakers could justify claims for privileges to improve their conditions. The bakers invoked Dutch customs and craft practices to support their calls for favorable regulations. By 1661, New Amsterdam's bakers had secured such privileges as restrictions on entry to the trade and the regulation of bread prices in line with inflation. Leading bakers rose to public prominence as the local and export trade in grain, flour, and bread grew in the decades following the English takeover in 1664. The organization of baking provided for its future success in New York and Dutch predominance in the trade through the eighteenth century. The administrative principles introduced in the last years of Dutch rule remained in effect until the bakers' strike in 1801: In a campaign that would have dismayed their predecessors, New York's bakers demanded an end to the regulation of baking and the freedom to charge whatever the market would bear for their bread.


10 The importance of trade privileges in providing for a public identity is underscored by the relative anonymity of the women who worked as bakers in New Netherland, either in partnership with their husbands or in their own right as widows. Although Dutch women engaged in commerce enjoyed a measure of equality with men under laws relating to property and regularly appeared as litigants in civil suits, they do not appear to have shared the same claim to trade privileges as men. Public recognition of women's work was limited to a handful of activities, such as midwifery, whose character was related to assumptions concerning female nature. For women working as bakers and at other trades in New Netherland see Martha Dickinson Shattuck, "A Civil Society: Court and Community in Beverwijck, New Netherland, 1652–1664" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1993), 140–92; George Olin Zabriskie, "Anneke Jans in Fact and Fiction," N.Y. Gen. Rec., 104 (1973), 71; Linda H. Biemer, Women and Property in Colonial New York: The Transition from Dutch to English Law, 1643–1727 (Ann Arbor, 1983), introduction, and "Criminal Law and Women in New Amsterdam and Early New York," in Zeller, ed., Beautiful and Fruitful Place, 73–83; and Mary Beth Norton, "Either Married or to Bee Married: Women's Legal Inequality in Early America," in Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger, eds., Inequality in Early America (Hanover, N.H., 1999), 25–46.


The bakers in New Amsterdam worked in an economy that was both competitive and customary and in which they weighed their desire for profit with the duty to bake good bread for the town. This mixture of interests and obligations points to the wisdom of recognizing both the communitarian and individualistic nature of this early American enterprise. Moreover, the bakers’ struggle for trade privileges raises the question of the relationship between political discourse and social practice and the way in which changes in the discussions surrounding the provision of bread permitted the bakers to justify their interests and secure the reorganization of baking in their favor. The bakers were unable to emerge as a distinct group with commercial concerns to defend until the view that the economy should be managed in the local interest supplanted the West India Company’s commitment to free trade as the guiding principle of political economy in New Amsterdam. Once this change came, the bakers’ claims for privileges were acknowledged by the introduction of sensitive pricing regulations and the exclusion of part-timers from the trade. In this respect, the bakers’ demand for a reasonable return and recognition of customary practices represented less the vestiges of European traditions or rhetorical cover for an emerging entrepreneurial sensibility and more contributions to a reconfiguration of the balance between privileges and duties in local trade. The bakers cohered as a collective force during their struggle for trade privileges and in so doing secured a preferential place for themselves and baking in New Amsterdam.

In general terms, baking in New Amsterdam suffered from the classic colonial American problem of how to adapt Old World expectations and practices to New World conditions. Many of the immigrants who came to New Amsterdam brought with them the needs and desires of urban dwellers and were determined to hold the bakers to an obligation to bake. The bak-

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ers brought with them the skills and commercial acumen of a trade accustomed to plentiful supplies of grain and many customers in the populous towns of the Netherlands. New challenges emerged in New Netherland. The colony’s grain shortages and small population initially discouraged the establishment of private bakeries. When the population and supplies of locally grown grain reached levels that could sustain the provisioning trades, bakers faced other difficulties. The cycle of the local Indian trade and the seasonal influx of zeewan (wampum) led to chronic currency inflation that undermined the profitability of bakers, who were required to sell their bread at fixed prices. Regulated bakers also faced damaging competition from part-timers, who sapped their profits during the busiest periods of the year.

Laws concerning the production and pricing of bread were common throughout early modern Europe and appeared in Dutch towns beginning in the early fifteenth century. By the sixteenth century, town governments in the Netherlands relied on the cooperation of powerful guilds of local bakers to oversee the production and sale of bread. The bakers’ guilds supported their members’ interests by excluding strangers from the trade and negotiating favorable prices with the local authorities. In return for these privileges, guild bakers in the Netherlands conformed to stipulated work practices and provided the town with good quality bread at the regulated price. The average Amsterdamer obtained an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 calories a day from the consumption of between two and two and a half pounds of bread. The importance of bread in the seventeenth-century Dutch diet made the bakers’ guilds particularly powerful.

16 Zeewan, or wampum as it was known in New England, was small blue/black and white shells pierced and made into beads that were traded individually or on strings. Zeewan came in various grades: black was more valuable than white, and polished and strung was more valuable than unpolished and unstrung. For wampum and the Indian trade see Daniel K. Richter, Ordeal of the Longhouse. The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization (Chapel Hill, 1992), 84–86, and Lynn Ceci, “The Value of Wampum among the New York Iroquois: A Case Study in Artifact Analysis,” Journal of Anthropological Research, 37 (1982), 97–107.
19 The regulated weight referred to baked bread. For early modern diet and carbohydrate requirements and the importance of bread, see Bettye Hobbs Pruit, “Self-Sufficiency and the
In both Old and New Worlds, Dutch men and women bought bread at the bakery or took their own dough to bake in the bakers’ ovens. Except in the kitchens of the wealthier homes, domestic baking of ordinary bread was uncommon. The leading seventeenth-century Dutch cookery book, *The Wise Cook or the Painstaking Householder*, recommended a balanced diet of cheese, bread, stews, fresh vegetables, and salads but did not include recipes for ordinary baked bread. Studies of New Amsterdam have noted the home baking of Dutch sweet breads or *koekjes*, which ultimately gave America the vernacular “cookie.” Regulations in New Amsterdam requiring the bakers to bake eight-pound loaves at least once or twice a week suggest, however, that the inhabitants relied on bakers for their daily bread.

Commercial bread making required adherence to easily understandable rules of thumb rather than knowledge of arcane practices or mysteries. Freshly harvested wheat needed to rest for several weeks, or preferably months, before being ground by the miller. Wheat ripened and dried in the granary was easier to mill and yielded more flour of a finer quality. Once milled, the meal had to be bolted, or sieved, through graduated meshes to remove the bran and to obtain the different grades of flour for wheat and white bread. Bakers used simple tools to make their bread: cauldrons and basins to heat the water and to mix the flour and yeast; a set of scales and a kneading trough to weigh and make the dough; dough cutters and knives; and a variety of implements for stoking the fires and maintaining the oven. Experienced bakers knew that overheated water could turn the dough bitter and thicken the crust at the expense of the crumb. They learned to gauge the changes in oven temperature for bigger and smaller batches. Practice taught the baker that setting bread in the oven was a delicate process: the quality and weight of different sized loaves depended on where they were placed and


22 Kaplan, *Provisioning Paris*, 49–50. The simplicity of bolting equipment allowed farmers to bolt their own flour, eventually provoking a long-running dispute between the city and rural interests in the flour trade; see Matson, *Merchants and Empire*, 99–117. Bakers in New Amsterdam bolted their flour, evident in a dispute between the bakers Hendrick Willemesen, Joost Teunissen, and Hendrick Jansen in 1658. The 3 men traded a house among each other and then fell out over who owned the bolting mill “that is fastened [to it] in the ground and by nail”; see *New Amsterdam Records*, 2:326, 332, 342, 375, 381, 399, 3:372.
how long they were left to bake. Once the oven was fired, baking extra
batches required only a limited effort. Nevertheless, a baker who produced
too many loaves risked their turning stale and being passed over by cus-
tomers in favor of a fresher batch offered by a competitor.

Bakers baked a variety of breads that sold at different prices, and they
competed within and beyond the limits set by the bread regulations.
Ordinary folk depended on the cheapest and coarsest dark-wheat and rye
loaves for their daily sustenance. Bakers also baked white bread with finely
bolted flour from which all traces of bran had been removed. White bread
was more expensive than brown in part because the whiter flour was consid-
ered purer and thus possessed a higher status that gave its consumption a
symbolic significance over darker varieties and in part as a consequence of
keeping the price of dark bread low to prevent bakers from exploiting the
needs of the poor. However well meaning, these regulations generally dis-
couraged bakers from making dark bread and favored the production of
white loaves, which offered a better return. Alternatively, because all bakers
were supposed to bake to the same standard and sell at fixed prices, individ-
uals seeking a marginal advantage often added bran to their flour to stretch
out valuable supplies, or they evaded the regulated weights by selling wet or
light loaves. To succeed in business, bakers had to balance their pursuit of
profit with a concern for wasted firewood, needless labor, and their duty to
provision the town.23

The delicate balance of interests and obligations in baking meant that it
was essential that the regulated price of bread take account of the conditions
of the trade. Historians have debated the moral implications of the notion of
just price, but there were some equally important practical considerations
involved in setting the rates for bread.24 The fortunes of bakers throughout
early modern Europe depended on the allowances made for their production
costs and estimations of a reasonable gain for the labor invested in baking.
The agreements between municipal leaders and bakers in European towns
had been worked out over many years and took account of numerous local
idiosyncrasies.25 By contrast, the introduction of the baking trade into New
Amsterdam’s uncertain economic conditions made a precise calculation diffi-
cult to ascertain. Whatever the difficulties, the inhabitants needed their daily

23 On the preference of white over brown bread see Thompson, “Moral Economy of the
English Crowd,” 191; Kaplan, Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 33–40, 442–45; and
Schama, Embarrassment of Riches, 150–88. In 16th-century England there were even different
guilds of bakers for white and brown bread; Ashton, History of Bread, 83–88.
24 Nash, Urban Crucible, 342; James Henretta, “Families and Farms: Mentalist in Early
25 For example, in 1497 a local English law itemized the bakers’ expenses and included a
consideration of monies laid out for the furnace and wood, salt, yeast, candles, and sack bands,
the fees paid to the miller, and the costs of provisions for two journeymen, one apprentice, the
baker, his wife, and even his cat and dog. Strict observation of the regulated price of bread
began to break down in the early 17th century when millers ceased to serve only the bakers and
increasingly sold grain and flour on their own account; Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, “The
Assize of Bread,” Economic Journal, 14 (1904), 190–218; Thrupp, Worshipful Company of Bakers,
loaf, and the authorities in New Amsterdam had to set prices at an affordable rate.

In its early years, New Netherland lacked the resources and population to sustain the kind of baking trade that served European urban dwellers. In 1628, the West India Company ordered the construction of a windmill to grind the settlers’ grain, and in 1635 it added a bakery to supply the company store with bread.26 These and other efforts to establish a thriving permanent community failed. The promise of the fur trade lured the few free colonists who came to New Netherland from farming, agricultural production languished, and the company found itself competing with its own employees for the pelts brought in by local Indians.27 To encourage the growth of population and trade, the company subsequently tried a patroonship system under which it offered large tracts of land to private investors if they brought settlers to the colony. The passenger lists for those coming to settle at the Rensselaerswyck patroonship suggest the kind of customer base needed to support a baker’s trade: the 174 immigrants who came between 1630 and 1644 included representatives of thirty-two occupations but only one baker. The patroons also failed to attract large numbers of immigrants, and in the late 1630s New Netherland remained underpopulated and dependent on its trade lifeline with the United Provinces.28

In 1639, the company relinquished its monopoly of the fur trade in the hope of attracting immigrants and encouraging expansion through private enterprise. The company hoped to recoup its potential loss by minimizing its costs and by earning increased revenue from duties. To enhance the attraction of the colony, the company also undertook to govern New Netherland “according to the style and order of the province of Holland, and the cities and manors thereof, to which end the courts there shall follow, as far as the same is possible, the ordinances received here in Amsterdam.”29 The new approach worked, and fortune seekers came to join in the fur trade. In spite of a disastrous war with local Indians under the administration of William Kieft in 1645, the passenger lists for vessels coming to New Netherland iden-

26 In Aug., 1628, the Rev. Jonas Michaelius wrote to the Rev. Adrianus Smoutius in Holland describing the colony and reported that “they are making a windmill to saw the wood; and we also have a gristmill,” in Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 2:769. Various men served as millers from 1638 onward: Abraham Pietersen (1638), Philip Gerritsen (1640), Peter Cornelissen (1650), Abraham Martens Clock (1655), Jan de Witt (1661); John A. Bogart, “New Amsterdam Windmills Made History: 1,” De Halve Maen, 35 (July 1960), 5–6; see also O’Callaghan, The Register of New Netherland, 1624–1674 (Albany, 1865), 117.


28 Rink, Holland on the Hudson, 102–16, 131. On the patroonship experiment and the problems of populating New Netherland, see Bachman, Peltries or Plantations, 93–140; Merwick, Possession Albany, 6–67; and Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 1:106–07.

tified increasing numbers of family groups. As restless single men gradually gave way to a more diverse and settled community, the colony’s population reached a sustainable level.  

Although agricultural productivity remained low, farmers spread out from the settlement clustered around New Amsterdam and cultivated new areas for grain production. Even as the colonists settled down, leading free settlers began to demand a greater say in the town’s affairs and the regulation of trade in the interests of the inhabitants.

Although the company’s free-trade approach encouraged the growth of a settled population that provided a potential market for the bakers, the expansion of commerce also brought hundreds of seasonal traders to New Amsterdam each year. They destabilized local prices by exacerbating currency inflation, particularly the value of zeewan, in the town. From May to June, Indian traders brought their furs to Beverwijck, modern-day Albany, approximately 150 miles north of New Amsterdam. Residents and seasonal European traders assembled with whatever trade goods and zeewan they had to offer in exchange. Toward the end of July, traders moved their furs to New Amsterdam for resale or trans-shipment aboard the vessels that arrived from Holland in August. During the late summer, New Amsterdam’s population swelled with Indians and traders, and its taverns were the setting for large- and small-scale auctions. In mid-October, the Indians departed and the seasonal traders steadily thinned out until only the resident population remained. The inhabitants of New Amsterdam were left to rue the season’s inflationary effects on the value of local zeewan relative to other currencies and especially beavers, which would remain scarce until the following spring’s hunt.

New Amsterdam’s seasonal trade explains why complaints of bread shortages tended to concentrate between September and November. Zeewan and beavers were “current money” in New Amsterdam, meaning that they were acceptable in payment of taxes as well as in trade. As the low-

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30 In 1628, New Netherland’s population was estimated at 500, rising to 2,500 in 1645; in 1655, there were an estimated 2,500–3,500 in the colony, and by 1664 this figure was 9,000; Rink, *Holland on the Hudson*, 134–78, 158–59, 164–65, 210.


32 Between 1625 and 1640, Ft. Orange returned roughly 5,000 skins a year. Historians generally agree that the fur trade peaked in 1666–1657 when 40,000 beaver and otter skins were shipped to New Amsterdam from uptriver. Merwick, *Posseining Albany*, 68–133, has described the seasonal trading cycle and calculated that if only half the beaver pelts traded in 1657 were purchased with zeewan, 39,320,400 black-and-white shells would have been exchanged in trade.

33 Between 1649 and 1661, the inhabitants complained about the bread supply on 6 occasions—1649, 1650, 1656, 1657, 1659, and 1661. Unusual circumstances provoked the bakers’ suspensions in Apr. 1650 and Jan. 1657; on the other occasions the inhabitants complained in the months between Sept. and Nov.; *New Amsterdam Records*, 1:14, 26, 31, 43, 46–48. For the importance of the autumn months in England’s baking and grain trade see Thompson, “Moral Economy,” 207.
est denomination available in the town, zeewan was most commonly used for everyday purchases such as bread, and the bakers had to accept it. The year-by-year decline in the value of zeewan produced a general inflationary trend that made it difficult to assess a fair price for local bread.\textsuperscript{34} In the months leading up to the summer trading season, the bakers had to deal with the inflationary effects of the increase in zeewan stock from the previous season. Bakers who had bought flour for beavers or zeewan valued at an earlier, higher rate would find themselves selling bread at fixed prices for devalued zeewan and losing out on each loaf sold. In these circumstances individual bakers might bake light loaves, or seek a higher return by baking more white and fewer dark loaves. As long as other bakers continued to bake dark bread, the town need not suffer a shortage. When the trading season commenced in August, New Amsterdam teemed with traders bearing zeewan. The desire for baked goods called forth part-time bakers, who peddled white bread and cakes on the streets. The temptation to switch from dark to white bread proved too great for many bakers, and the consequent shortage of coarse loaves provoked complaints by the inhabitants before the court. In 1649, the bakers' failure to supply the town during the trading season attracted the attention of Peter Stuyvesant, the West India Company's director general in New Netherland.

In 1646, the company had dispatched Stuyvesant to New Netherland with orders to secure the colony and its commercial interests in the aftermath of Kieft's War. Stuyvesant was determined to establish a stable settlement, and he transformed the administration of New Amsterdam with a battery of measures covering everything from church attendance to fire prevention.\textsuperscript{35} He also tried to protect New Amsterdam's commerce from the seasonal traders who overpaid for pelts, giving "11 and 12 guilders in loose Wampum for one Beaver," and who left at the end of the season without paying taxes in the town. Stuyvesant prohibited the itinerants from trading "unless they take up their abode here in New Netherland three consecutive

\textsuperscript{34} The values of beavers and zeewan were usually calculated in relation to each other and in terms of the Dutch currency of guilders and stivers: 20 stivers equaled a guilder (or florin), and there were 6 guilders in a Flemish pound. In 1641, there were 5 unpolished beads and 4 polished beads per stiver and 4 strung and 6 loose beads to a stiver; in 1650, there were 6 white or 3 black beads per stiver for high-quality "merchantable" zeewan and 8 white or 4 black beads per stiver for "bad strung" zeewan; in 1656 these rates were the same but Nov. 1657 saw a general devaluation of all zeewan to the 1650 rate for poor quality beads. In 1663 the West India Company devalued the zeewan it paid to its employees so that it took 16–24 white and 12 black beads to make a stiver. McCusker estimates that between 1641 and 1658 wampum depreciated by about 60% and fared much worse thereafter. He also argues that beaver and wampum were equally inflationary, but the bakers' petitions suggest that they at least felt that beaver held its value better; McCusker, \textit{Money and Exchange in Europe and America}, 1600–1775 (Chapel Hill, 1987), 42–45, 156–57. See also Curtis P. Nettels, \textit{The Money Supply of the American Colonies before 1720} (Madison, 1934), 203–28; Matson, \textit{Merchants and Empire}, 32–34, 341–42 n. 54; \textit{Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y.}, 1:425 and New Amsterdam Records, 1:16.

years, and . . . build in this city, New Amsterdam, a decent citizen dwelling, each according to his circumstances and means.”36 The West India Company’s Amsterdam Chamber struck down this and similar orders, arguing that it contravened the free-trade policy and limited the potential for commercial expansion.37 The bakers were crucial to Stuyvesant’s efforts to build a settled community, but he was unable to protect their interests with effective regulations because of the limitations set by the company’s directives. Consequently, Stuyvesant could do little more than threaten the bakers with fines and prohibitions and demand that they bake bread for the town.

In November 1649, New Amsterdam’s inhabitants complained to Stuyvesant of the scarcity of coarse bread and the light weight of the white bread. The bread shortage was exacerbated by the “the savages or natives of this country [who] take the white bread from the bakers without inquiry for or scrutiny of the black bread or price in strung wampum.” Consequently, the bakers’ “greed and the desire for greater profits cause[d] the savage and barbarous natives to be accommodated with the best before the Christian nation.” In response, Stuyvesant regulated the weights and standards of bread and instructed the bakers to bake loaves from clean wheat or rye weighing eight, four, or two pounds and to sell the bread at prices “which the Honble Court shall from time to time fix according to the price and arrival of grain.” Stuyvesant acknowledged the importance of white bread and cakes for the settlers and permitted each householder to “cause to be baked for his own household and meals such quantities of white bread as occasion may require.” To ensure that the bakers baked sufficient dark bread, the director prohibited “the wanton consumption and general sale of white bread and cakes to inhabitants as well as to natives.”38

Stuyvesant’s regulations produced a subtle change in the bakers’ efforts to make a profit. The following spring the inhabitants complained that the bakers were still baking insufficient coarse bread and were now producing oversized and prohibitively expensive white loaves.39 The director amended the earlier ordinance and allowed bakers to offer white bread, “but not cakes or cracknels, provided that they bake said white bread conform in weight with the rules of the Fatherland.” Once again, the bakers also had to bake

37 As an alternative, the Amsterdam Chamber recommended that itinerant traders should keep an open store, thereby qualifying for tax payments, in the town; O’Callaghan, ed., Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1624–1674 (Albany, 1868), 148–50 (hereafter cited as Laws and Ordinances).
38 New Amsterdam Records, 1:14; Laws and Ordinances, 115.
39 There is some evidence that Stuyvesant may have been partially responsible for the shortage in 1650. Following the introduction of regulations in 1649, the director attempted to control the market in flour and grain by buying on “credit at a high price payable in the Spring, all the provisions which were on hand” and promptly shipping them for resale in Barbados. Locals complained that Stuyvesant’s actions left “the poor people . . . reduced to extremity and great scarcity” and that “no supplies of bread, butter, beef and pork can now be had, except for beaver or silver coin”; Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 1:585–86.
loaves from clean wheat and rye flour to avoid “the thinness and meagerness of the common bread.” In May, Stuyvesant identified the root of the problem when he noted that New Amsterdam was awash with low-grade zeewaan, much of which was “unpierced and only half finished, made of stone, bone, glass, shells, horn, nay even of wood, and broken, [and] which causes many inhabitants to complain, that with it they cannot go to market and buy any commodities, not even a little white bread or a mug of beer.” 40 The director tackled currency concerns by clarifying the distinctions between merchantable strung and poor-quality unstrung zeewaan and establishing exchange rates for the coming season. Yet complaints of profiteering on the part of bakers, who refused “to bake rye bread, and do not hesitate to give as the reason that they derive more profit from the white and wheaten bread,” continued. The bakers’ decision to seek their profits from the better margins on white loaves left many in the town hungry and threatened the development of local agriculture because “the farmers cannot sell the rye they have raised.” Once again, Stuyvesant ordered the bakers to bake eight-pound loaves of wheat and rye bread, setting prices of fourteen and twelve stivers respectively. The director permitted the baking of white bread but instructed the bakers to bake it according to its “correct weight” of one pound, one-half pound, and one-fourth pound and not to sell it “for more than three stivers a pound.” 41

Stuyvesant’s efforts to ensure New Amsterdam’s bread supply failed to recognize the bakers’ interests and proved unacceptable to the West India Company’s Amsterdam Chamber. As New Amsterdam’s demand for food outstripped production, the infant export trade between New Netherland and the mid-Atlantic and West Indian colonies intensified the competition for local grain. Bakers had to look further afield for their ingredients, and, while the market value of grain and baked goods increased, the value of zeewaan declined and the price of bread remained fixed by the regulations introduced in 1650. 42 Rising costs and diminishing returns squeezed the bakers’ profits. In August 1653, baker Andries de Haas refused to accept the zeewaan that Daniel Litschoe, a local tavernkeeper, offered in payment for his bread. 43 The company’s Amsterdam Chamber also undermined Stuyvesant’s efforts, and he implemented measures only to have them subsequently denied. The chamber supported public order provisions and approved regulations concerning weights, measures, and local markets intended to protect

40 New Amsterdam Records, 1:15; Laws and Ordinances, 115–17, 119.
42 Matson, Merchants and Empire, 30–31; In 1656, Teunissen sued Samuel Mayhew, an English merchant, for failure to deliver 730 florins worth of prepaid grain. Mayhew acknowledged the debt and responded that “he has long waited here for the corn . . . and sent vessels expressly for it, and still expects news”; New Amsterdam Records, 2:39, 90, 93.
43 For Litschoe v. de Haas and other cases involving bakers suing or being sued for debt, see New Amsterdam Records, 1:100, 108, 114, 120, 123, 125, 322, 2:159. For Litschoe as tavernkeeper, see Kenneth Scott, “New Amsterdam’s Taverns and Tavern Keepers,” De Halse Maen, 39 (October 1964), 14. A dispute concerning firewood supplies during the bitter winter of 1655 also suggests the rising tension in the bakers’ ranks. In Oct., Teunissen was charged with assaulting Francois Fyn after a disagreement regarding the amount of firewood Fyn had agreed to let Teunissen take from Blackwell’s Island; New Amsterdam Records, 1:377; Charles T. Gehring, ed. and trans., Council Minutes, 1653–1656 (Syracuse, 1993), 4–5.
consumers from fraudulent practices. But it opposed Stuyvesant’s attempts to fix prices and wages, arguing that they discouraged immigration and the pursuit of individual interests. In 1654, the chamber informed Stuyvesant that an order “fixing . . . the price of provisions, bread, beer, and wine” was “impracticable” as it “can only give rise to dissatisfaction and troubles . . . Among the inn and tavern keepers and other traders.”

Stuyvesant's 1650 regulations also failed to address the problem of itinerant and part-time bakers who took up the trade during the trading season, which should have been the richest period of the full-time bakers' commercial year. Bakers in New Amsterdam were particularly sensitive to part-time competition because, compared to established Old World markets, the ratio of customers to bakers was low. Because the full-time bakers, who had to provide for the town, served few customers, the entry of part-timers into baking could quickly undermine their position. The problem of part-time bakers also troubled the bakers in Beverwijck, which was granted a municipal court and introduced the burgher right limiting local trade to residents in 1652. In a noteworthy parallel with subsequent events in New Amsterdam, the Beverwijck bakers petitioned the court to act against traders who had not taken the burgher oath but nonetheless baked and sold bread. The 1656 trading season was the most successful in the colony to date, yet his record-breaking year merely exaggerated the problems in baking. Residents complained of shortages, and the bakers from New Amsterdam and Beverwijck protested the conditions of the trade and the inroads made by part-timers. Facing widespread dissatisfaction with the bread regulations, the director once again attempted to organize the trade.

In October 1656, Stuyvesant introduced new measures that acknowledged the bakers’ complaints concerning part-timers and accepted that the good order of baking required regulations on entry to the trade. He aligned the problems in baking with “tapping,” or innkeeping, another trade plagued with difficulties “because so far no guild nor certain number is known.” Thus, “for the advantage of the Christians as for the sake of the profits arising from it,” Stuyvesant declared, “no one shall be allowed to do business as tapster or baker” unless he or she registered with the court and paid one

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44 The company also objected to Stuyvesant’s attempt to fix the wages of carpenters and masons for the same reason; see Laws and Ordinances, 119–22, 148; Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 14: 251–52; and Syrett, “Private Enterprise in New Amsterdam,” 540–47.

45 In New Amsterdam and Beverwijck there were approximately 90–150 inhabitants per baker during the 1650s. This was a poor ratio compared to the customer base enjoyed by bakers in European towns. The 18 bakers who worked in the village of Graft in the Netherlands in the mid-17th century served a population of 3,000. Kaplan, Bakers of Paris, 84, has calculated a ratio of one baker to just under 400 inhabitants for 18th-century Paris. See also Shattuck, “Civil Society,” 9, 20, 94.

46 In 1652, Stuyvesant annexed part of the settlement gathered around Ft. Orange from the Rensselaerswijk patroonship and granted the community at Beverwijck a charter with the authority to convene a municipal court and introduce the burgher right; Shattuck, “Civil Society,” 20–72, 208–15.

Flemish pound for a license renewable every three months. Registered bakers were ordered to bake good bread at least once or twice a week and faced fines ranging from 25–600 florins for breaches of the regulations, a third of which would go to the schout as the “Officer, who makes the charge.” Stuyvesant threatened the “absolute closing of the business” for three transgressions, and he appointed Frederick Barents, a man not previously associated with baking, as the first overseer for the trade.48

The new orders established the principle that baking should be a closed trade limited to registered practitioners but seemed designed to control the bakers rather than to improve their conditions. The registration fee amounted to a quarterly tax equivalent to ten eight-pound rye loaves. The insistence on regular baking and the threat of punitive fines required registered bakers to bake and sell bread at the regulated price regardless of the rate of return on their investment in flour and grain. In spite of the inflationary pressure on zeeuwon and the escalating demand for bread, the prices in 1656 remained fixed at the level set six years previously.49 Determined to ensure the community bread supply, yet denied the authority fully to regulate local trade, Stuyvesant could do little more than badger the bakers into fulfilling their obligation to the community, effectively treating them as unpaid employees of the West India Company. In these circumstances, bakers had little incentive to abide by the regulations and to provide New Amsterdam with a reliable supply of good quality and reasonably priced bread.

The future of organized baking in New Amsterdam depended on the bakers’ ability to secure the privileges that provided for the success of the trade in the United Provinces. New Amsterdam’s bread supply would remain uncertain until the bakers could limit access to the trade and sell bread for prices that reflected their costs. Before the bakers could secure these privileges, the notion that the local economy should be managed in the interests of residents had to supplant the company’s commitment to free trade in New Amsterdam. This change came in the 1650s, following a campaign by leading settlers for political rights and privileges they claimed as freeborn Dutch citizens. The introduction of the burgher right in 1657 drew directly on Dutch practice and restricted trade to registered residents of New Amsterdam. The extension of Dutch urban practices and customs to New Amsterdam permitted the bakers to justify their trade interests more effectively. To understand how the bakers’ cause related to this broader debate requires examining the political principles that animated the New Amsterdam merchant’s protest against the company’s administration in New Netherland.

Following his arrival in 1647, Stuyvesant had continued Kieft’s practice of assembling a board of local merchants to consult on local affairs. The

48 Laws and Ordinances, 261–63; New Amsterdam Records, 1:25–27; O’Callaghan, Register of New Netherland, 135.

49 The prices set on Oct. 26, 1656, were 14 stivers for a double coarse loaf of 8 lb., 7 stivers for a single coarse loaf of 4 lb., and 3.5 stivers for a half coarse loaf of 2 lb. White bread sold for 8 stivers for a double loaf of 2 lb., 4 stivers for a single of 1 lb., and 2 stivers for a half loaf of 1/2 lb.; New Amsterdam Records, 1:26, 2:204.
director made it clear that he would not tolerate opposition from the group, and he harangued his critics and jailed the most vocal for insubordination. The group, known as the Nine Men, became the focus for a loose alliance of settlers who were opposed to Stuyvesant’s administration and advocated regulatory reforms that favored the residential interest. They also constituted the nucleus of the group of merchants who administered the city as burgomasters and schepens until the English takeover in 1664. The reformers sent delegates to the States General in Holland in 1649 with a remonstrance calling for a “suitable municipal (borgerlycke) government, such as your High Mightinesses shall consider adapted to this Province, and somewhat resembling the laudable Government of our Fatherland.” The Nine Men declared that the colony would prosper only if it had “what we consider to be the mother of population, good Privileges and Exemptions, which could encourage the inhabitants.” Only then, they argued, would New Netherland be “entirely relieved and released from oppression and slavery.”

The reformers’ gloomy assessment of their slavelike conditions represented more than rhetorical hyperbole. The Nine Men had to justify their challenge to the company’s chartered privileges with reference to something more compelling than local commercial interests. The terms in which they described the colony’s political condition provides an insight into what the reformers believed was the proper balance between liberty and the obligation to obey authority. Their petition reflected the contemporary assumption that liberty and slavery represented the best and the worst conditions possible for individuals and the states in which they lived. In this view, slaves were unfree not only because they could be coerced into acting by physical force or the threat of it, but also because they had lost control over their fates and lived under the authority of another. Dutch citizens were free and their liberty remained secure because they lived under their own authority, expressed through their representatives and the sovereignty of the republic. The ancient network of councils, colleges, estates, and the privileges and practices of urban government in the United Provinces embodied the social bond uniting Dutchmen in the republic and around the world. Thus, the rights and privileges of individual citizens were intimately related to the liberty of their community at large, and an attack on one constituted a threat to the other.


A free state could lose its liberty in various ways. Conquest was the most obvious, although a state did not have to be vanquished or subject to the daily depredations of a tyrant before its liberty and that of its citizens came under threat. The liberty of individuals and the state was also infringed when ruling elements assumed discretionary or prerogative powers, ignored customary privileges, and determined the fates of citizens without the consent of their representatives. The reformers' fear of what they considered the company's unconstitutional prerogative power animated the defense of their rights and privileges. The Nine Men's remonstrance highlighted specific issues, such as Indian attacks and Stuyvesant's tendency to advance his favorites at the expense of others. Their general complaint was that the company exercised illegitimate, discretionary authority over free-born Dutchmen who were entitled to live under a government in keeping with Dutch practices. In the absence of such a government, the Nine Men, whose leader Adriaen van der Donck styled himself "President of the Commonalty in New Amsterdam," understandably likened their condition to that of slaves living under a tyrannical system.53

A political crisis in the Dutch Republic favored the reformers' campaign for municipal reform in New Amsterdam.54 By 1653, the States General had accepted their arguments and, fearing for the security of New Netherland, pressured the company to order Stuyvesant to equip New Amsterdam with "a Burgher Government"—a schout, two burgomasters, and five schepens.55 When Stuyvesant and the new municipal authority clashed concerning the selection of magistrates and the levying of taxes for the colony's defense, the burgomasters elaborated on their earlier assertion that the force of Dutch


53 Skinner, Liberty before Liberalism, 47–49; Van Gelderen, Political Thought of the Dutch Revols, 115–17, 280–81; Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 1:473. A pamphlet critical of the company's administration in America, which appeared following the delegate's arrival in Amsterdam, highlighted the intimate relationship between the condition of liberty in New Netherland and in the Dutch republic. Breeden Raeds (Broad Advice), Doc. Hist. N. Y., 4:99–113, presented a dialogue between a group of Dutch citizens who compared the abuse of power in New Netherland with the Spanish tyranny in the Netherlands. The pamphlet finished by demanding that all "those who have the prosperity of the Netherland, of New Netherland, of its inhabitants and of its government at heart, ought to strive to redress such grievances."

54 In 1648–1650, Holland and the States General emerged victorious from a struggle for mastery with the stadholder, William II, which revived popular arguments regarding the rights and privileges of autonomous states and towns in the Dutch constitution. Israel, Dutch Republic, 600–09, has described 1650, along with 1618 and 1672, as one of the 3 most important years in the history of Dutch republicanism for the quality and vehemence of political tracts issued from Dutch presses. See also Peter Geyl, The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century, 2 vols. (New York, 1964), 1:113–25. Maika discusses the connections between the campaigns in New Amsterdam and in the Dutch Republic in "Commerce and Community," 95–118.

55 Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 1:387–91. The offices of burgomaster, schepen, and schout were broadly equivalent to those of mayor, alderman, and sheriff in the administration of English towns. For the structure of urban government in the Netherlands see Price, Holland and the Dutch Republic, note 18 above.
customs and privileges extended to New Netherland. The burgomasters argued that, although they inhabited a distant colony, the residents of New Amsterdam remained subjects of "God, the Lord, [and] . . . the States General as His Ministers" and a government intended "to promote the welfare of their subjects . . . within the United Provinces and in the foreign settlements." Thus they held their "privileges to be the same, harmonizing in every respect with those of Netherland, being a Member dependent on that state and not a conquered or subjugated people." In the burgomasters' view, Stuyvesant's arbitrary "enactment . . . of new Laws or orders affecting the Commonalty, or the Inhabitants, their lives or property, is contrary and opposed to the granted Freedoms of the Dutch Government, and odious to every freeborn man." Rejecting the company's characterization of their protest as treasonous, the burgomasters "humbly submit[ed] that," as citizens of the Dutch Republic, "'tis one of our privileges that our consent or that of our representatives is necessarily required in the enactment of such laws and orders."

In the years after the granting of a municipal government in 1653, the burgomasters added incrementally to their influence and introduced institutions and practices familiar from Dutch towns. The West India Company retained considerable authority in New Amsterdam and the colony: Stuyvesant and his council acted as an appellate court in serious civil and criminal cases; the director approved the burgomasters' ordinances and appointed new members to the court from lists presented by the magistrates. The threat of English attack, which culminated in the 1652–1654 Anglo-Dutch War, underscored the settlers' reliance on the company's military capabilities to defend New Netherland. Nevertheless, the burgomasters' court soon became the forum for discussions concerning the community's economic welfare and social harmony. More important, as far as the bakers were concerned, the logic of the burgomasters' protest against the authority of the West India Company implied that the liberty of free settlers in New Amsterdam depended on their enjoyment of the customary privileges of Dutch citizens. Just as the merchant elite claimed the privilege of representing the interests of the town, the bakers could now claim privileges as residents and tradesmen in New Amsterdam. Early in 1657, the combination of

59 The burgomasters were able to increase their influence while the director general was kept busy with other projects. In 1653, Stuyvesant went on a trade mission to the Caribbean and returned to fight the Swedes on the Delaware River and then defend the colony in the Peach Tree War in 1654–1655. See Gehring, Council Minutes, 1655–1656, introduction. The role of the burgomasters' court in the communities of New Amsterdam and Beverwijk and their relationship to the West India Company are described in Maika, "Commerce and Community," 68–80, and Shattuck, "Civil Society," 20–72.
Stuyvesant’s tough new regulations and the ruinous decline in the value of *zeeuan* the previous season prompted a protest by leading bakers. Although the record is incomplete, this protest and a subsequent meeting seem to have led to the introduction of the burgher right, which permitted the bakers to justify their interests in new ways.

On January 8, 1657, the *schout*, Nicasius de Silla, reported to the court that the loaves of Joost Teunissen, Andries de Haas, and Hendrick Willemsen were all lighter than the regulation weight. The bakers appeared and offered truculent rejoinders rather than humble apologies to the charges. De Haas stated that unless he “be fined according to the laws of Holland he is unable to pay the fine fixed.” Teunissen contrasted the restrictions on bakers with the freedom of customers to order loaves of unregulated sizes and weights. Highlighting the director’s hypocrisy, Teunissen declared that “he can give nothing for the established price and weight” when even "the Honble. [West India] Company’s loaf of 7 lbs. is fixed as 12 stv[ers]; on ac[count]," a price and weight in breach of Stuyvesant’s own regulations. Stuyvesant acknowledged that in the six months since *zeeuan* had last been assessed, its value relative to other currencies had fallen by a third. In a revealing admission of his inability to resolve the problem, the director instructed the town’s merchants to consider what measures might be taken “to render the *zeeuan* as current as beavers or other pay.” When the merchants retired, they invited Teunissen to join their discussion.⁶⁰

The meeting considered the devaluation of *zeeuan* and the town’s prospects in the coming summer trading season. The merchants argued that, because they currently held large amounts of *zeeuan*, to devalue it straight-way would “create considerable confusion” as the Indians “will know it immediately” and “charge more for every thing and . . . enrich themselves” and never again “be brought to the previous rate.” The meeting recommended that the devaluation be postponed until “the [Indian] trade comes and every one can get rid of what *zeeuan* he has.” In the interim, they suggested that an ordinance recognize the difference between *zeeuan* and other currencies “as already exists among all as well in trade as in labor.” Although this measure was subsequently struck down by the company’s Amsterdam Chamber, the change of rating intended to serve those who worked in “trade as well as in labor” emphasized the shared interest between merchants and tradesmen concerning the prosperity and good order of New Amsterdam’s commerce.⁶¹

The bakers’ protest had secured the attention of the local ruling merchant group whose own campaign for municipal influence made them amenable to claims for Dutch urban privileges. The day after the meeting to consider the value of *zeeuan*, the burgomasters accommodated the bakers by revoking the registration order Stuyvesant had introduced the previous October, declaring that “it is not customary in any place for tradespeople to

⁶¹ Ibid., 260–63.
pay any thing in this shape” and that if it was required of the bakers now, “it would hereafter be imposed also on other handicrafts, to prevent the same in time.” The burgomasters’ invocation of customary practice and the common good reveals a growing concern for local interests and the changing tenor of debate in New Amsterdam. Their selective application of past precedents underscores the way in which the claim of custom operated within a rhetorical strategy rather than in defense of putative practices. Even as they revoked the licensing of bakers, the burgomasters upheld it for innkeepers. The innkeepers negotiated a compromise, agreeing to pay the registration fee and sell beer at the regulated price as long as they could charge what they pleased for wine, “as the price and pay of wines are different and not so necessary for the common people.”

The introduction of the burgher right established an institutional foundation for the regulation of local trade in accordance with the practice of Dutch towns. The bakers had won some useful concessions following the meeting in January, but baking and making a profit continued to be difficult as long as baking remained open to all comers. The burgher right granted the privilege of trading in New Amsterdam and provided grounds for excluding strangers from trade. All native-born residents or persons who had lived in New Amsterdam for one year and six weeks, married “native born daughters of Burghers,” or paid twenty guilders, were eligible to apply for the burgher right. To placate the company, the order permitted nonresidents to register, so long as they maintained a retail store and paid taxes in the town. The burgomasters ordered that “all bakers, brewers, shopkeepers and merchants should sell their goods at reasonable prices to the people,” and they forbade outsiders from offering their wares for sale except at stated times and places. When a Jewish baker, Jacob Cohn Hendricus, applied for permission to bake and sell bread, the court rejected his application, claiming that it would be “contrary to the privilege granted by the Honble Director General and Council to the Burghery of this City.”

62 Ibid., 261, 264, 265.
63 Residents who had been and were at present “in the High or Supreme government of the Country,” former and present burgomasters and schepens, ministers of the gospel, military officers, persons of higher standing who paid 50 guilders, and the male descendants of all these ranks were entitled to claim the greater burgher right qualifying them to fill all “offices and dignities within this City, and consequently be nominated thereto.” The ordinance of 1657 was reissued by Stuyvesant and his council in 1660 and by the burgomasters and schepens in 1660 and 1661; “Burgher Right of New Amsterdam,” 11–36. For the burgher right in Holland see Barbour, Capitalism in Amsterdam, 16, 70.
64 New Amsterdam Records, 1:26–45, 7:154; Dock Rel. Col. N. Y., 14:219–21, 278–79, 315; Syrett, “Private Enterprise in New Amsterdam,” 540–41. Between 1657 and 1661 some 210 tradesmen registered for the lessor burgher right. This was a substantial proportion of the resident able-bodied male population of 315 that Goodfriend, Before the Melting Pot, 14–15, estimates for 1664. Hendricus and other Jewish settlers were subsequently granted the burgher right when the West India Company opposed their exclusion for fear of discouraging immigration and new investment in the colony. When the Jewish settlers were denied the burgher right, they invoked their status as citizens of the Dutch Republic and argued that they were entitled to enjoy the same privileges in New Amsterdam as they did in the Netherlands. See Council Minutes, 1654–1656, 261–62, and Samuel Oppenheim, The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654–1656 (New York, 1909), 1–40.
As the burgomasters assumed greater control of the local economy, the bakers increased their influence over the trade and were better placed to address the problem of zeeuwan inflation.\(^{65}\) The proliferation of trade regulations required an inspectorate of enforcers, and some of the bakers secured minor municipal offices. The entry of bakers into the lower ranks of municipal officialdom improved their links with the authorities, added to their knowledge of local commerce, and encouraged them to identify their local interests in the provincial context. In September 1658, New Amsterdam’s bakers complained that New England traders paid 25 percent more in zeeuwan for local goods, “whereby this place is so overstocked [with zeeuwan] that it is held in no esteem, and bakers, brewers, traders, labourers and others are so particular, that much difficulty is experienced in managing with it.”\(^{66}\) By the following spring, the declining value of zeeuwan brought Joost and Jacob Teunissen and Andries de Haas before the court to complain that since the last bread ordinance the price of grain had increased, the “wheat not being to be bought from the sellers under four guilders in beavers.” To this, the petitioners explained, they had to add 280 florins freight and milling costs for bringing 400 skepels to the bakery. The New Amsterdam bakers contrasted the conditions of their trade with the bakers at Beverwijck, where “‘tis notorious and known that ... grain is easier to be had and more abundant, [and the bakers] sell the loaf of 8 lbs for 20 stivers each.” Defending their interests as New Amsterdam tradesmen, the bakers submitted their petition in the hope that by considering the “market-price of said grain” the court would “fix another and a higher value” on the bread and “such pro rata price as by the rise of grain shall be considered the petitioner’s right.”\(^{67}\)

The demand that the price of bread be linked to the rise and fall of grain values as a matter of “right” indicated a new level of assertiveness on the bakers’ part. Previously, bakers had been told what to charge for their bread and had baked light or insufficient coarse loaves to indicate individual dissatisfaction with the terms of their trade. In the years after 1657, by contrast, the

\(^{65}\) In March, Stuyvesant relinquished the company’s milling monopoly and allowed private millers to offer their services in New Amsterdam. Subsequent millers included Adam Brower, Hendrick Willemsen, and John Robinson, who came to the city toward the end of the Dutch period. John A. Bogart, “New Amsterdam Windmills Made History: 1,” *De Halve Maen*, 35 (July 1960), 6; Matson, *Merchants and Empire*, 342 n. 56. The Robinson and Willemsen families were later united when John Robinson married Hendrick Willemsen’s daughter, Grietje, in 1678; Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot*, 52.

\(^{66}\) In Feb. 1658, Hendrick Willemsen had replaced Frederick Barents, who had been Stuyvesant’s appointee, as the overseer of baking. In Dec. 1658, Andries de Haas became the official stamper (or certifier) of cans and weights. The following year Cornelis Barentsen was appointed as measurer of all the grain and lime which came into the city. In 1659, the court added to de Haas’s responsibilities when they entrusted him with the key to the newly constructed meat market; O’Callaghan, *Register of New Netherland*, 135; *New Amsterdam Records*, i:44, 4:172, 7:205. The petition concerning New England traders in 1658 is ibid., 3:16.

\(^{67}\) The New Amsterdam bakers exaggerated the favorable conditions of the Beverwijck bakers where an 8 lb. coarse loaf sold for 16 stivers in the winter of 1658. When the bakers in New Amsterdam won special consideration, the fortunes of the Beverwijck bakers also improved; *New Amsterdam Records*, 7: 219; *Laws and Ordinances*, 361; Shattuck, “Civil Society,” 215–16. A skepel was a measure of a basket of grain, which varied in different localities.
decision to bake light or insufficient bread assumed the guise of a collective tactic intended to force the authorities to reconsider the price of bread. In September 1659, midway through the trading season, the bakers switched to baking white bread and leaving New Amsterdam short of coarse loaves. When the inhabitants complained of the lack of coarse bread and the expense of the white, the bakers countered that they could not "bake [coarse] bread at the formerly fixed prices without loss." The burgomasters appeased the bakers by increasing their margins on coarse bread for the first time since Stuyvesant had fixed prices nine years earlier.68

The bakers came together to represent their interests following the introduction of the burgher right, and their prospects improved. By 1660, residents of New Amsterdam were paying almost as much for coarse bread as they had paid for white ten years earlier.69 Yet baking remained an uncertain business for some, and the regulations did not limit competition in the trade. The continuing slide in the value of zeewan combined with the bakers' dwindling beaver, grain, and flour reserves produced divisions that exacerbated the problem of internal discipline. Having secured restrictions on access to the trade and regular reviews of bread prices in line with the costs of production, the final step in the organization of New Amsterdam's baking trade involved the introduction of quality controls and the creation of a self-governing bakers' guild.

In February 1661, the case against Anthony de Milt prompted a complicated defense that drew on the support of leading bakers and involved close attention to the technicalities of the trade and customary Dutch practice. When the schout, Pieter Tonneman, charged de Milt with "having his bread, both large and rusk, under weight," he demanded a 150-florin fine in accordance with the regulations. De Milt defended himself, arguing that the 1656 regulations made no mention of rusk, and the schout could have "no complaint against him on that account." As to the light weight of his large loaf, de Milt asked the court to hear the views of Hendrick Willemsen and Cornelius Barentsen, "being acquainted with baking." Willemsen appeared and, when asked if dough weighed out in due quantity can lose a quarter pound in baking, replied "yes," and "he [could] shew it immediately, if the magistrates will please see it." Willemsen then described how dough left too long in the oven lost weight during baking. Barentsen also supported de Milt's case, explaining that the "custom in Holland is, that when the loaf is

68 The prices set on Sept. 25, 1659, were 15 stivers for a wheat loaf of 6 lb., 12 stivers for a rye loaf of 6 lb., and four stivers for a white loaf of 1 lb.; New Amsterdam Records, 1:43–44.
69 In 1650, the baking regulations set prices for the heaviest loaves of coarse and white bread and then divided and subdivided the rate for smaller loaves. The 1650 regulations established the rate at 1.75 stivers per lb. of wheat bread, 1.5 stivers per lb. of rye, and 3 stivers per lb. of white. These prices remained in force for the next 6 years, although in 1656 the bakers were permitted to charge 4 stivers per lb. for white bread. In 1659, the burgomasters increased prices to 2.5 stivers per lb. for wheat bread. Two years later, following the bakers' action in 1661, the price of wheat bread rose to 2.75 stivers, rye bread to 2.25 stivers, and white bread to 5 stivers per lb.
two ounces too light, it is not regarded; if four ounces too light, he [the baker] is told for the first time to pay more attention; and being found out a second time, is subjected to a small fine.”

De Milt appealed to Barentsen’s invocation of Dutch custom and elaborated on the circumstances that had produced the light loaf when he was recalled to plead his case. He asked that, since this was his first offense, he might, “like the other bakers . . . be excused.” He recounted how on the day in question he had weighed out the dough as usual but then had to go out “about his business” and leave his servant, Louwrens van der Spiegel, in charge. Stressing his compliance with the order requiring regular baking, de Milt explained that he had baked all week and consequently there were fewer loaves than usual in the oven. Van der Spiegel, who confirmed that his master had been “out for yeast,” had left the bread for too long in a half-filled and overheated oven and the loaves turned out light. Despite this sophisticated defense, de Milt lost his case. The baker’s servant had sold the light loaf to the son of the schout, the man charged with enforcing the bread regulations. The court fined de Milt and amended the regulations to include rusks and rolls, doubtless intending to prevent similar evasions in the future.

Although de Milt’s case revealed that bakers were prepared to undertake the collective defense of one of their number, competition could still divide the trade. In summer 1660, Hendrick Willemsen and Andries de Haas ran short of cash and beavers. As flour supplies diminished and the value of zee-wan declined, the number of debt cases involving bakers and bakers’ quarrels with their customers increased. Hendrick Jansen was arrested in March 1661 and fined for baking light bread and for seizing the offending loaf from Jan Juriansen Becker and his wife, Maria, after she had reported it to the schout. Maria Becker complained further that Jansen had “berated her for a whore, a swine, an informer and a jade.” On September 17, 1661, the rising price of grain and flour caused a rift in the bakers’ ranks. Willemsen, the bakers’ spokesman who had supported Anthony de Milt in February, came before the same court to complain of the actions of his fellow tradesmen. He protested that “one baker raised the price of the grain on the other” and that some were baking with the bran separated from the flour, a process, he informed the court, that was “forbidden in Holland.” Broadening his critique of practices in the trade, Willemsen complained that certain bakers left their ovens in the charge of their “youngsters (apprentices) when now and again from home” and the “bread is indifferently baked, and that on the contrary no baker in Fatherland leaves it to the boys to set the bread in the oven.”

70 New Amsterdam Records, 3:262–63. Rusks were small pieces of browned and sometimes sweetened bread used as provisions on board ships.
71 Ibid., 263–64, 285.
72 In June, Cornelius Clopper, a local smith, sued Willemsen for iron work on his mill, and Willemsen tried to evade payment. In August, Peter Rudolfus sued Andries de Haas for 106 florins in beavers, and De Haas was forced to admit that “he has no beavers nor can he get any.” The burgomasters were unimpressed by Jansen’s defense that he only took the bread from Becker “to weigh and to see if it was too light,” and he was fined; New Amsterdam Records, 3:173–75, 195, 202, 269, 271, 275, 283. For bakers appearing as defendants in debt cases see ibid., 3:301, 325, 343, 353. This was not the first time Willemsen had fallen out with other bakers over
In one sense, Willemesen was only grumbling about being beaten out of a grain deal by a competitor. Yet his complaint also suggests divisions in the trade and, in his capacity as overseer or simply as a concerned baker, he challenged the authorities to establish professional guidelines for those who baked in New Amsterdam. The division lay between bakers such as Willemesen, who sought profits within the regulations, and those who relied on what he considered illegitimate advantages, such as hoarding or adulterating flour. Demonstrating his facility with the rhetoric of customary practices, Willemesen also denounced bakers who left their servants in charge of ovens while they pursued sidelines away from the bakery. A practice that Willemesen had tacitly accepted when he spoke up for Anthony de Milt in February had, by September, become a transgression of the laws and customs of the “Fatherland.”

The burgomasters responded to the troubles in March and Willemesen’s challenge by ordering the bakers to bake white and brown bread at proper weights and prices. To ensure the easy identification of offending loaves, the court ordered the bakers to “designate the bread, you bake, with a special mark” within seventy-two hours “under the penalty of forfeiting bread found unmarked and paying a fine of 25 fl.” In September, following Willemesen’s complaint, the burgomasters ordered the bakers to bake “whenever they have the flour to do it, under penalty of being forbidden to bake for a year and six weeks and a fine of 50 fl.” and added a further 25 florin fine for those who “do not bake good and eatable bread.” The court had revived Stuyvesant’s licensing scheme, but in its new form the registration empowered the bakers, who were told to “govern yourself accordingly under the penalties identified in the proclamation.” The following month and in response to the baking stoppage, the burgomasters appointed Willemesen and Stoffel Hooglandt as official bread inspectors to oversee the trade. To ensure the community bread supply and in response to bakers’ protests, the burgomasters had established a guild of registered and self-regulating city bakers.73

The baking inspectors assumed control of the trade and exercised their discretion when considering customer complaints. Henceforth, before the schout could charge a baker, he had to present the offending loaf to the inspectors. When the schout, Pieter Tonneman, presented Jacob the Baker’s loaf, the inspectors found “that it is not good to eat nor to be offered on sale” and fined Jacob. The inspectors also ruled against Jacob Teunissen’s bread, refusing to accept his excuse that the grain from which the flour had come had sprouted at the mill and that his customers insisted he take the loaves out of the oven before they were fully baked. When the schout charged Jan Gerrizen for baking underweight bread, however, Gerrizen protested that his customer, Hille van Outren, had “engaged him to bake a portion of biscuit for her and that the small loaves were prepared there.” When Willemesen declared that the bread “was good,” Gerrizen avoided punishment.74

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73 Ibid., 1:26–48.
74 Soon after this rush of cases the court introduced spot checks on local bakeries and ordered that “the Officer shall go around once every week, without observing any precise day, with one of the Inspectors of baked bread”; ibid., 3:404, 4:37, 101, 111, 165, 215.
During the 1650s and early 1660s, the bakers of New Amsterdam secured trade privileges that provided for their own fortunes and a steady supply of reasonably priced, good quality bread. The distinctiveness of the town’s response to the problem of the bread supply is highlighted by comparisons to other times and places. In the early modern Atlantic world and subsequently, bread and food shortages often provoked riots by indignant consumers determined to set a just price. The bakers and their customers in New Amsterdam were more tentative than their European and, later, American counterparts regarding the production and sale of bread. Bakers adopted evasive tactics such as baking light and adding bran to flour, rather than simply engaging or forestalling the supply to increase their profits. So far as is known, hungry residents merely complained to the local authorities; no crowds seized bread and set fair prices.

The different responses to bread shortages caution us against treating claims for just rewards and customary privileges as manifestations of enduring traditional attitudes passed from generation to generation. No matter how seductive such appeals to tradition, the baker in New Amsterdam claimed customary privileges as part of a struggle concerning the balance between privileges and duties. It is equally unsatisfactory to label the bakers’ claims as rhetoric concealing an underlying desire for profits. While material concerns doubtless motivated the bakers’ struggle for better terms, such interests did not dictate how they would justify their cause. To secure favorable regulation, the bakers had to advance their claims for special consideration in politically acceptable language. Before 1657, they were barely visible as a distinct group, and they were unable to articulate a compelling defense of their trade before a director general who was committed to enforcing the West India Company’s free trade objectives in New Netherland. Thus the bakers’ representation of baking, and consequentially its organization, could change only when it was possible to draw parallels between colonial and Dutch practices in the debate over New Amsterdam’s commerce. The coming to power of a municipal administration committed to the principles and

75 Tax lists and assessments suggest that the bakers fortunes improved following the organization of baking. In 1655, the bakers de Haas, Willemsen, and Teunissen contributed 20, 25, 25 florins respectively in a means tested tax assessment. In 1664, Hendrick Willemsen was assessed at 250 florins, Reynier Willemsen at 100 florins, and the bakers Claes Jansen and Anthony de Milt paid 150 and 100 florins respectively. By 1674, Hendrick Willemsen, Jacob Teunissen de Kay, and Reynier Willemsen made the list, although admittedly near the bottom, of the 62 “best and most affluent inhabitants of this city” with fortunes of 2,000, 8,000, and 5,000 florins. For tax assessments see New Amsterdam Records, 1:567-75, 5:30-33, 221-225, and Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y., 1:699-700.


procedures of urban Dutch government permitted the bakers to make this case and claim privileges for their trade. In the years after 1657, bakers invoked local norms, their condition as New Amsterdam tradesmen, the technical processes involved in baking, and the laws and customs of the parent country to challenge unfavorable measures, mitigate the force of penalties, and settle disagreements among themselves. Flourishing under public recognition of their position, the bakers cohered as a group sufficiently to withstand criticism by their customers and to secure a measure of influence over the administration of the trade.

Following the English takeover of New Netherland in 1664, the bakers consolidated their position in the newly named New York. Between 1664 and 1698, the city's population more than trebled—from approximately 1,500 to almost 5,000—and the English administration relied on the bakers to provision the town. The English were determined to expand New York's trade, and the bakers organized local production to take advantage of lucrative contracts in the city's developing international trade.\(^{78}\) The ties between baking and the municipal government grew closer as leading bakers rose through the ranks of municipal service to attain high office in the town.\(^{79}\) By 1688, the city's bakers had been granted the authority to decide "what Bakers are Necessary and fitt for that employment within this City," to organize production on a daily schedule, and to "bring in a report of the price and weight and goodness as bread ought to be according to ye prices of wheat as it rises and falls."\(^{80}\) With a list of accredited bakers working on a planned schedule and selling bread at prices regulated in accordance with the costs of production, the bakers had ensured that they and their trade would enjoy a privileged place in the burgeoning economy of colonial New York.

\(^{78}\) See, for example, the agreement between 4 unnamed bakers and Samuel Griffeth, captain of the Diamond, to supply 15,000 lb. of ship's biscuit at the rate of 51s. "in silver or beaver" for each cwt. in Minutes of the Mayor's Court, Division of Old and Condemned Records, County Court, New York City, 1674-1675, 35. For the population of New York see Valentine, \textit{History of the City of New York} (Albany, 1853), 213-14, and \textit{Doc. Rel. Col. N. Y.}, 1:44, 467.


\(^{80}\) The presence of several women on the schedule of official bakers who had most likely worked at the trade for some time underscores the ways in which the bakers' privileges reinforced the gender inequalities between Dutch men and women. The weekly schedule identified the following as legitimate bakers: Mondays—Hendrick Willemens, Thomas Lawrence, Huuy Barentson, Gersic Lewis, Tuesdays—Hendrick Johnsen Van Veurden, Anrony de Milt, Catrina Hooghlandt. Wednesdays—Jacob Teunissen de Key, Marretie the widow of Nicles the baker, Gerret Cornelissen, David Provoost. Thursdays—Brymer Willemens, Lucas Kierstede, Peter Jansen de Paap. Fridays—Jasper Nessipat, Anna Van Vleck widow, Lendert Huugen de Klyn, Johannes Vander Spregel. Saturdays: Teunis DeKay, Jan Van Slensburgh, Nicholas Demeyer, Isaac Forrest, Jacobus Virhulst, Anna Popelaers widow; Osgood, ed., \textit{MCC}, 1:172-76.