

Modernization of the Government: the Advent of Philip the Good in Holland*

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On the sixth of January 1425 John of Bavaria died. He had been a former bishop-elect of Liège in Belgium and had been for the last six years of his life in effect ruler of the counties of Holland and Zeeland. It is a moot point whether his death had been caused by a murder attempt on him during the previous summer, when sir John van Vliet had tried to do so by rubbing poison on the pages of his prayer-book. Then John of Bavaria must have had the bad habit of licking his fingers when turning pages. But I will not go into his now¹.

The death of John of Bavaria cleared the field for the succession of Philip the Good in Holland and Zeeland. He was John's heir only to his personal possessions as the rightful heir to the government was Countess Jacqueline of Bavaria. But she was preoccupied with a hopeless military adventure to regain her lands from her estranged second husband John the Fourth, duke of Brabant, with the dubious help of her third husband, Humphrey of Gloucester, brother of the English king Henry V. The only person who could have denied Philip the Good the succession in Holland, was actually this second husband John, duke of Brabant; but he hastened to rid himself of these lands, as he had troubles enough at home. In July 1425 he was only too glad to appoint the duke of Burgundy as regent of Holland and Zeeland². A few days before this date, the Countess

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1. See the confession of the murderer in F. van Mieris, *Groot charterboek der graaven van Holland en Zeeland* (4 vols.; Leiden, 1753-1756) IV, 729-730. Excerpts from the comital accounts about the illness of John of Bavaria in the autumn and winter 1424 in F. Schneider, *Herzog Johann von Baiern. Erwählter Bischof von Lüttich und Graf von Holland (1373-1425)* (Berlin, 1913) 230-236. About the possibility that Jacqueline of Bavaria was implicated in the murder attempt see H.P.H. Jansen, *Jacoba van Beieren* (The Hague, 1967) 58-60.

2. Th. van Riemsdijk, *De opdracht van het ruwaardschap van Holland en Zeeland aan Philips van Bourgondië* (Amsterdam, 1906) especially 43-45. The most authoritative treatment of the political history of these times is given by A.G. Jongkees, 'Strijd om de erfenis van Wittelsbach' in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (12 vols.; Utrecht, 1949-1958) III, 226-252. The accession of Philip the Good to the counties of Holland and Zeeland is treated in English by R. Vaughan, *Philip the Good. The Apogee of Burgundy* (London, 1970) 36-50.