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The Ungodly Inspectress: Monopoly and Womanhood in the Beginning of Pombal's Reign*

Ernst Pijning**

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Resumo

Este artigo discute o caso de Catarina Sofia van Zeller, uma mulher portuguesa de ascendência holandesa, que casou com o empresário holandês António Cremer. Após a morte do marido, Catarina Sofia van Zeller assumiu o seu cargo de fabricante de pólvora durante a administração joanina. Após vinte anos de fabrico de pólvora, viu a sua posição ser desafiada na altura em que Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquês de Pombal, ascendeu ao poder. O artigo irá demonstrar o poder e os desafios que enfrentou como viúva num clima político em mudança.

Palavras-chave: Viuvez, Nação Holandesa em Portugal, Pólvora, Mesa do Bem Comum.

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Abstract

This article discusses the case of Lady Catharina Sophia van Zeller, a Portuguese woman of Dutch descent, who married a Dutch entrepreneur, António Cremer. Following her husband's death, she took over his position as manufacturer of gunpowder during the Joane administration. After twenty years of manufacturing gunpowder, she saw her position challenged at the time Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquês de Pombal, gained power. The article will demonstrate the empowerment and challenges as a widow in a changing political climate.

Keywords: Widowhood, Dutch Nation in Portugal, Gunpowder, *Mesa do Bem Comum*.

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Our Dutch merchants are somewhat concerned with regard to the Gunpowder Contract rumored to be under consideration, given that, according to some of the articles that have been divulged, only the widow Cramer would have the right to bring gunpowder to the Kingdom from abroad; this would consequently deprive them of the blanked privilege, which the Dutch have hitherto enjoyed in this respect, pursuant to the Treaty between His Most Faithful Majesty [the King of Portugal] and the High and Mighty Gentlemen [The Estates General], my masters.¹

Dispatch C.F. Bosc de la Calmette to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello, Lisbon, March 30, 1753.

This dispatch of the Dutch minister (envoy) to Portugal to the future Marquis of Pombal expressed the first of many complaints against the renewed policies of what Kenneth Maxwell coined the “nationalization of the Luso-Brazilian economy” (Maxwell 1968, 608-631). By this he meant that the future Marquis de Pombal made “several important initiatives” which “brought a careful and sustained challenge to the British predominance in Portugal and a determination to bring about a more balanced relationship between the two allies” (Maxwell 1968, 631). During previous administrations, and especially under Dom João V, the Portuguese had

¹ “Nos negociants Hollandois sont un peu allarmés, au sujet du Contrat de poudre, que l’on dit être sur le tapis, pour autant, que suivant quelques uns des Articles, qu’on en publie, Madame la veuve Cramer, auroit seule le droit, de faire venir dans le Royaume de la poudre du dehors; ce qui les priveroit par consequent du privilege commun, dont les Hollandois ont jouï jusqu’a present a cet égard, en consequence du Traité, qui subsiste entre S.M.T.F. et L.L.HH.P.B. Mes Maitres” (National Archief Den Haag [NADH], Staten Generaal [SG], Verbaal Calmette, 8782). Calmette did not specify which treaty. However, most likely he referred to the treaties concluded in 1661/1669. For more information about these treaties see: Mello 1998, however, there is no mentioning of gunpowder in this; neither is there during the negotiations during the War of the Spanish Succession, see: Francis 1966. The 1705 commercial treaty concluded between the Netherlands and Portugal, was never recognized by the Portuguese crown, since the Dutch [Latin] version and Portuguese version differed (*Dispatch Schonenberg to Estates General*, January 16, 1706, NADH, SG, Liassen Portugal, 7018). The spelling of Cremer differed: sometimes it is written when an e, at other times with an a. I am using the “e-version” in this article, unless it is a direct quote with the “a” version.

incorporated foreign merchants and entrepreneurs in the development of the economy, and this was not abandoned². Yet, switching allegiances, even among allies, was not appreciated and fully accepted by representatives of their former foreign “nations”. Indeed, Bosc de la Calmette made it a point to stress that the widow Cremer’s “late husband was under protection of the Estates General”³. Nevertheless, he saw that this new contract worked against the interest of the Dutch merchants who exported gunpowder to Portugal, as it was “against the free commerce of the subjects of the state as stipulated by the treaty”⁴. Bosc de la Calmette noted, though, that others had made many representations against this contract’s monopolization of commerce already, and that he expected that these protests would be more successful than his.

This article will discuss the opposition to the “Widow Cremer” and her attempt to control gunpowder and saltpeter production in Portugal. One lengthy representation by the merchant organization (*Mesa do Bem Comum*) survived in the Dutch archives, and its wording was revealing as to how Portuguese elite merchants envisioned her role in the Portuguese economy. Though it was a protest against the main revision in regulations, it was also a strong personal attack against the “foreign” widow. Given the past history of António Cremer and his wife, Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer-van Zeller (**Fig. 1**) this was a somewhat surprising turn of events. Both António Cremer and Catharina Sophia van Zeller might have been of foreign origin, they were still respected members of Portuguese society.

² See for instance the case of the Frenchman Jean Dansant in Pijning 2015, 71-87.

³ “wiens Man zaliger onder de protectie van Haar Ho:Mo: is geweest” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Fagel*, Lisbon, March 6, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8781).

⁴ “dewijle daardoor sekelijc gestremt word, de Vrije commercie der onderdanen van den Staat, door het Tractaat gestipuleert” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Fagel*, Lisbon, March 6, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8781). During the War of the Spanish Succession and before, many arms as well as saltpeter and gunpowder were imported from Amsterdam. One of the importers was Loot, Cremer’s partner (Antunes 2009, 116).



1 Portraits of D. Catharina Sophia Cremer Van Zeller and António Cremer.
Source: Bernardo Costa Ramos, “A Quinta do Peru e da Conceição”. url: www.azeitao.net, accessed June 3, 2019.

António Cremer arrived in Portugal with the Dutch troops during the War of the Spanish Succession and became incorporated in Portuguese society. Cremer was a commissary for the Admiralty of Zeeland, that is he was in charge of assisting Dutch corsairs through provisions and by aiding them when they had taken vessels, and also represented the Amsterdam Admiralty in that city (Verhees-van Meer 1986, 30)⁵. Yet in 1706, three years into the war, he was awarded the Order of Christ from the newly crowned king João V, without the usual research on his ancestors⁶ (Viterbo 1906, 635-636). Indeed, him obtaining the Order of Christ meant, according to Antonio Cremer, that he could not follow the orders of the Estates General if it went against the interest of the Portuguese Crown⁷. Two years later after receiving the Order of Christ, Lady Catharina Sophia van Zeller, daughter of a well-known family of Dutch origin, married António Cremer (Calado 1989, 67)⁸. As such this was not such a surprising move, according to Jorun Poettering such marriages and conversions did happen among

⁵ Cátia Antunes considered Cremer and his partner Loot as financiers (Antunes 2009, 217).

⁶ This was a remarkable one-page document published by Sousa Viterbo. Obtaining the Order of Christ was not uncommon for foreign (Catholic?) merchants, as is seen in the French case (Labourdette 1988, 577-584).

⁷ *Letter Schonenberg to Estates General*, November 3, 1712, NADH, Liassen Portugal, 7019.

⁸ Later their sons would apply for, and receive, the Order of Christ and also as a *familiar* of the Inquisition.

Hamburg and Netherlandish merchants in Lisbon (Poettering 2019, 203)⁹. Lady Catharina Sophia van Zeller's father was the Prussian Resident in Lisbon, but she was a Catholic as her mother was Portuguese. António Cremer, who was originally from Ootmarsum in the Dutch province of Overijssel, may well have converted¹⁰. Their fortunes were rising, before the end of the war they were in the possession of a *morgado*, which included the *Quinta* (estate) *da Conceição* and the *Quinta do Perú* on the South bank of the Tagus river in Azeitão. When the peace with Spain was finally concluded and published on May 1, 1715, Lady Catharina Sophia and her husband thought of themselves and their family as Portuguese. The couple inaugurated a chapel celebrating *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception) wishing that they and their offspring might use the *quinta* and its chapel for many generations to come (Rasteiro 1897, 32-33). Lady Catharina Sophia became involved in the manufacturing of gunpowder through her husband.

According to Jorge Borges de Macedo, the Portuguese administration attracted foreign and domestic entrepreneurs/merchants to develop Portuguese manufacturing between 1720 and 1740. António Cremer was one of them as he brought new technology and started gunpowder factories in Barcarena (Oeiras) and Alcântara (Lisbon) (Macedo 1982, 72). Foreigners who brought such innovations were highly rewarded. In 1725 and 1729, António Cremer not only started his two factories, he also obtained a monopoly for the manufacturing of gunpowder in Portugal; he received later the title of "Intendent of Gunpowder in Portugal" (*Intendente das Pólvoras no Reino*), yet which seems to have meant that they were in charge of the gunpowder production in Barcarena and Alcântara only (Quinela 2000, 89-90). This title brought prestige to Lady Catharina Sophia-van Zeller and António Cremer, so much so, that on a trip to the area, the queen and her entourage visited their estate while being saluted with gunshots and treated with refreshment (Münch Miranda and Miranda 2013, 257; *Gazetta de Lisboa Occidental* 1727b, 351)¹¹. Around the same time the king and his brother were visiting the new gunpowder factory in Alcântara

⁹ According to Jorge Pedreira, he was a "oficial mecânico" in the Netherlands, started as a business clerk in of a German merchant before he founded his own commercial house. Moreover, the Van Zellers and Cremers continued to intermarry (Pedreira 1995, 227-228).

¹⁰ See also Calado 1989, 67, who argued that both were Catholic, based on the chapel they constructed.

¹¹ "Virão depois as duas quintas de Antonio Kremer, em huma das quaes recebeu elle a S. Mag. e Altezas com huma salva de 9. peças de artelharía, e lhes offereceo hum refresco" (*Gazetta de Lisboa Occidental* 1727b, 351).

which the gazette announced, it produced the best powder in Europe (*Gazetta de Lisboa Occidental* 1727a, 376)¹². On March 3, 1733, a manuscript gazette announced the death of António Cremer (“He left the administration of the factory to his oldest son who is underaged, and his third to his wife and his second son”) (Lisboa 2005, 212)¹³. The “third” referred to the part of the assets that the testametary was free to give to any person, the other parts were determined by law¹⁴. The king’s concessions to run the factories were inherited by his heirs. According to the same gazette, Lady Catharina Sophia’s late husband had lend (rumored to be more than 150:000 cruzados) to the king, yet his own family had caused him financial trouble (Lisboa 2005, 212)¹⁵. These problems likely had its origins from a failed tobacco contract (1722-1727) that was farmed out to Willem de Bruijn and Paul Cloots with their partner Arnaldo van Zeller, Lady Catharina Sophia’s brother (Münch Miranda 2019, 127, 136)¹⁶. Nevertheless, after the death of her husband Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer-van Zeller seemed to have personally started with a blank financial sheet, and she became responsible for the administration of the gunpowder factories and therefore also for the monopoly¹⁷. The gunpowder contract that the Dutch minister addressed twenty years later, in 1753, was a renewal of the old one albeit with some major modifications: it was extended to the sale of gunpower and saltpeter.

¹² “Depois que ElRey nosso Senhor, que Deos guarde com o Senhor Infante D. Antonio virão a nova fabrica da polvora, que se fez em Alvantara. comerçou a laborar com sete moinhos, que se vão continuando as mais Officinas que já mostram virá a sera melhor polvora que hà na Europa” (*Gazetta de Lisboa Occidental*, 1727a, 376).

¹³ “Morreu António Cramener [*sic*] [...] deixou [...] administração das fábricas a seu filho mais velho que hé de poucos annos e a sua terça e de sua molher e seu filho 2.º” (Diário de 3 de Março de 1733). André Pedro van Zeller was baptized on December 24, 1724, hence 9 years old (*Diligência de Habilitação de André Pedro Wanzeller*, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo [ANTT], *Tribunal do Santo Ofício*, Conselho Geral, Habilitações, André, mç. 10, doc. 155). His younger brother was named Maurício José Cremer, who did apply for membership to the Order of Christ on May 24, 1757 (ANTT, *Mesa de Consciência e Ordens*, Habilitações para a Ordem de Cristo, Letra M, mç. 1, n.º 3).

¹⁴ For the terça see Lewin 2003, 24.

¹⁵ “e sendo acredor a El Rey dizem que em mais de 150.000 cruzados e tendolhe os seus parentes cauzado penas graves, ficou sem dever couza alguma” (Diário de 3 de Março de 1733).

¹⁶ Arnaldo van Zeller’s debt was not. When his partners fled, he was imprisoned until 1742.

¹⁷ In a nineteenth-century popular magazine was written: “Depois de haver fallecido Antonio Cremer, continuou sua mulher D. Catharina Cremer de Wanzeller a gerir a fabrica, com o mesmo titulo de *intendente da polvora do reino*, que tinha seu marido, até que em 1753 passou a ser administrada pela junta dos tres-estados, ficando na dependencia do ministerio da marinha” (Silva 1863, 292). This is later confirmed by the documents below.

The importance of widows has become more to the attention by historians of early modern Iberia, after long being neglected. Helen Nader, wrote rather ashamed in an introduction to her book about Spanish Mendoza women:

Here I must confess that I was one of the worst offenders. More than twenty years ago I published a book about the Mendoza family as leaders of the Renaissance in Spain. While carrying out research in Spanish archives, I read thousands of manuscript documents, but assuming that all decisions were taken by men, I disregarded documents by or about women. [...] I managed to write a whole book about a family's two-hundred-year's intellectual history without discussing women. (Nader 2004, 18)

Historians of widowhood from the early modern Iberian countries have pointed out that widows were especially engaged in upkeeping their estates, and as such can the gunpowder factories be seen. Stephanie Fink De Backer, for instance, showed that especially wealthy sixteenth-century Toledo widows managed large estates after their husband had died, and Shirley Cushing Flint did the same considering sixteenth-century New Spain (Fink De Backer 2010, esp. chapter 4; Cushing-Backer 2013). This has been echoed by other authors, such as Allyson Poska for seventeenth-century Galicia, and Caroline Brettell about eighteenth through twentieth-century Minho (North Portugal) (Poska 2005; Brettell 1986). They did this while dealing with society's opposition. As Susan Socolow argued about colonial Buenos Aires, "Women [...] could also serve as administrators of their husbands' estates. There was, however, a general supposition that, although legally competent to fulfill those roles, a woman lacked sufficient knowledge of life in general, and of business in particular to succeed" (Socolow 1978, 35). Indeed, did Socolow argue, because of this stereotype of female incapacity, when elite women did want to earn money, they used male surrogates (Socolow 2000, 114). Lady Catharina Sophia defied this perception. Instead, after the death of her husband, she openly continued to run the gunpowder factories on her own. What makes this case more surprising was that Lady Catharina Sophia had minor sons when she inherited but continued to be in charge for twenty years, at least some years after her oldest sons had come of legal age. By 1753, she actually made a division of tasks: whereas her oldest son would run the gunpowder factories, she would obtain a new official function of "Inspectress", a title that even her late husband did not have. This contract meant that she oversaw all production, sale and importation of gunpowder and saltpeter in Portugal, whereas previously the title of "Intendente" meant that she and her husband were only in charge of gunpowder production in Barcarena and Alcântara.

On January 29, 1753 Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer-van Zeller was awarded this new gunpowder contract after recommendation of the *Junta dos Três Estados* (the Council of the Three Estates)¹⁸. In this contract she promised to provide gunpowder at a fixed price to the king. In return she was promised a monopoly on the production and sale of gunpowder and saltpeter in Portugal. To make sure that gunpowder was produced well and continuously in Portugal and given the high status of technology of her factories, she was going to have the title of Inspectress, and examine the gunpowder factories that existed in Portugal. In order to avoid illegal production or sale beyond the current factories, she had the right to nominate officials throughout the country to enforce the gunpowder monopoly. The contract had many different provisions to streamline the production of gunpowder, such as wood for charcoal, the recycling of barrels, the buying of ingredients abroad, and searching for possible saltpeter mines in Portugal. Finally, the contract was continued in her family, yet was now farmed out (Quintela 2000, 90)¹⁹. This contract would have meant a creation of a new monopoly, and the provisions referred to the already existing tobacco contract. The Dutch minister was very upset about the way the Portuguese government was acting. He claimed that “we can now see how the majority of the cases are resolved: with the influence of one or another person who acts in their own interest, without hearing the people who are affected by these policies”²⁰. The person who was the instigator was not Pombal but was a widow.

During this time there were various other contracts under discussion. At the same time as the gunpowder and saltpeter contract, the French merchant Grenier wanted to send a ship to Goa four years in a row in exchange for troop transports. According to Bosc de Calmette, this caused infighting within the administration, because of the competition between Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real and Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello:

¹⁸ *Contract Polvora*, Salvaterra dos Magos, January 29, 1753 (NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782). The *Junta dos Três Estados* was created during the war of restoration, to make sure that the troops could be maintained, such as the paying of soldiers and the distribution of arms. The production of gunpowder and saltpeter also fell under this (Lopes 1999, vol. 2, 148-149).

¹⁹ “No entanto, por decreto de 29 de Janeiro de 1753, fora decidido que a referido concessão lhe fosse attribuída po arrematação e não por sucessão”.

²⁰ “Uyt deze twee staalties zal U Wel Edel Gestrenge ligt kunnen afneemen, hoe de meeste saaken althans hier verhandelt worden, door induction van deeze of geene daarbij geïnteresseert, en de meeste tijd geconcludeert, zonder alvorens op dezelve gehoort te hebben, diergeene, die het zoude kunnen aangaan” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Fagel*, Lisbon, March 6, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8781).

The case of Mr. Grenier is the work of Mr. Mendoga and, one sustains, of many courtiers, among whom the favorite king's, Pedro Antonio. I have heard that a few days ago there have been quarrels between the two secretaries of state in Salvaterra. The Portuguese merchants, enticed by the Jesuits, and supported by Mr. de Carvalho, have submitted a lengthy request to the king about this. Unlike to what the king usually does, he kept the request to himself, rather than giving it to Mr. de Carvalho. One is very curious what will be the outcome of the case.²¹

In the end Grenier's project was not accepted. Success of these projects seem to depend on good contacts in court, and at this time these struggles over dominance had yet not solidly been decided in favor of the future Marquis of Pombal²².

Concerning the gunpowder contract, it was unclear where Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello stood. The project fitted well in Nuno Luís Madureira's description of economic policies during Pombal's consulate:

Marquis de Pombal's governance inaugurated a new phase during which the priorities of restructuring the domestic economy induced the Crown to stimulate and protect private enterprise through a significant expansion of prerogatives granted to the manufacturing and commercial sectors. Property rights were thus enshrined [in law] that furthered the exploitation of resources within a monopolistic framework, and this sparked off a board cascade of [economic] externalities, given that the privileges granted to some morphed, in due course of time, into prejudicial factors harmful to others. (Madureira 1997, 24)²³

²¹ “De Saak van d’Hr. Grenier is het werk van d’Hr. de Mendoga, die men sustineert, neevens eenige voornaame Hovelingen, en onder anderen de Favoriet Domesticq van den Koning, Pedro Antonio, daarbij zeer geinteresseert te zijn; En ik ben in ‘t sekere onderrigt dat voor weijnige dagen tot Salvaterra veel leeven daarover, tusschen de twee Staats Ministers is geweest. De portugiesche Koopluijden, aangeset door de Jesuiten, en ondersteund door d’Hr. Carvalho, hebben een wijdloopig request daar over aan den Koning gepresenteerd die zijne Majt. niet nevens de andere na gewoonte, aan d’Hr. Carvalho heeft overgegeeven, maar na zig gehouden, zo dat men zeer nieuwsgierig is, te weeten, wat van de zaak werden zal” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Fagel*, Lisbon, March 6, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8781).

²² See Sena-Lino 2020, 321-330.

²³ “O período da governação do Marquês de Pombal inaugura uma nova fase em que as prioridades de reestruturação da economia interna levam a coroa a estimular e a proteger as iniciativas particulares com uma significativa ampliação das prerrogativas concedidas a sectores da indústria e do comércio. Instauram-se, assim, direitos da propriedade para a exploração de recursos, em regime de monopólio, desencandeando amplos fenómenos de externalidades, já que os privilégios de uns se tendem a transformar, com o correr dos tempos, nos prejuízos dos outros”.

The prior technological advances in manufacturing, the proposed horizontal and vertical integration of gunpowder and saltpeter production and distribution as well as the quest for finding of new saltpeter deposits were in favor of the contract holder. However, in an atmosphere of political intrigue this led to, using Madureiro's words, "economic Darwinism" (Madureira 1997, 98). In other words, the evaluation of the gunpowder contract very likely depended as much on the outcomes of internal intrigues, than on economic policy viewpoints.

The Dutch minister Bosc de la Calmette somehow had obtained an abridged French translation and the Portuguese original of the gunpowder contract dated January 29, 1753 on which he had based his information. The Portuguese language contract showed that the Portuguese officials highly respected the contributions of Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer-van Zeller²⁴. This seemed to be in contrast to the Dutch minister who referred to her only as "the widow Cremer" thus apparently viewing her mostly as an extension to her late husband who used to be a member of the Dutch Nation in Lisbon²⁵. The king disagreed, and the contract emphasized Lady Catharina Sophia's contributions as well as her late husband's not unlike a remuneration of services:

Given that António Cremer established in this kingdom a Gunpowder manufactory using the most reliable method hitherto witnessed, and considering that D. Catharina Sophia Cremer van Zeller, widow of the aforementioned, shall serve me satisfactorily and shall draw on the expertise available in her establishment to promote said manufactory, and [also] to establish one for saltpeter, endeavoring that both would reach perfection.²⁶

Unsurprisingly, the contract still emphasized the preference for men. The final article dealt with succession: should she die before the contract's expiration the contract should go to the son whom she had designated and if there was none nominated it should go to the head of the household²⁷.

²⁴ NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

²⁵ *Dispatch C.F. Bosc de la Calmette to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello*, Lisbon, March 30, 1753. NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

²⁶ "Atendendo a que o Antonio Cramer estabeleceu neste Reyno a fabrica da Polvora com methodo mais regular; da qual antes se tinha observado, e considerando que D. Catharina Sophia Cramer Van Zeler, Veova do sobredito me servirá com satisfação e se ajudará das Experiencias, que ha na sua caza, para adiantar a mesma fabrica, e estabelecer a da salitre, procurando o que ambas cheguem a sua perfeição" (*Contract Polvora*, Salvaterra dos Magos, January 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

²⁷ Article I did mention a successor, her son André Pedro Cremer van Zeller (*Contract Polvora*, Salvaterra dos Magos, January 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

The latter kept succession open so that the contract could be continued by either a female or a male member of the household. The king used a specific female designation for Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer-van Zeller, namely “the Inspectress”, a title she was acquiring through the contract. In short, the contract placed her in charge to oversee all the importation, production and sale of gunpowder and saltpeter in Portugal, as was stated in the preamble of the contract:

D. Catharina Sophia Cramer Van Zeler, emulating the zeal that her husband António Cramer deployed in establishing the Gunpowder manufactory, and wishing to further carry on these Kingdoms so useful a business, bringing it to its greatest perfection and hoping to earn thereby the outcome of [our] Royal benevolence, undertakes to assume at her cost and risk the inspecting and administration of the Manufactory of this useful and necessary product.²⁸

The preamble stressed that it was Lady Catharina Sophia who had petitioned for this right to become an Inspectress. Indeed, the Dutch minister wrote that “the Widow Cramer [...] has concluded a new contract with the king”²⁹. However the preamble to the contract stressed that it should be awarded to her because of the utility of the production for the Kingdom, because of her technological knowledge, and because of her past services to the Crown. Additionally, in the law-enforcing provisions of the contract. This must have been noticed that there were precedents for this in the tobacco contract, because in the French abstract there were several references to tobacco³⁰. Thus, even though these provisions were new to the productions of gunpowder and saltpeter, this was not completely a novelty in terms of a royal contract but would have restricted the sale and fabrication of this widely used product. If implemented, this contract would have been an important restriction in manufacturing and commerce, hence protests like those of the Dutch minister were to be expected. However, as the Dutch minister pointed out “The public is very dissatisfied about this

²⁸ “D. Catharina Sophia Cramer van Zeler, emitando o zello com que seu marido Antonio Cramer se empregou no estabelecimento da fabrica da Polvora, dezejando perpetuar nestes Reinos, hum estabelecimento tão util, reduzindo a sua major perfeição e esperando mereser asim os efeitos da Real beneguidade se anima tomar por sua Conta a inspecção e administração da Manufactura deste util e necessario misto” (*Contract Polvora*, Salvaterra dos Magos, January 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

²⁹ “de Weduwe Cramer [...] met de koning een nieuw contract heeft aangegaan” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Fagel*, Lisbon, March 6, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8781).

³⁰ See for instance article XIX concerning contraband (*Contract Polvora*, Salvaterra dos Magos, January 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

[contract] and have made various representations to the king”³¹. When the minister returned to the Netherlands three years after the 1755 earthquake, he appended to his written report (*Verbaal*) a lengthy memorandum in Portuguese (and not translated into French so that it could be more accessible for the Estates General) from a highly politicized merchant confraternity: the *Mesa do Bem Comum*³².

The 48-page memorandum was phrased as an *ad feminum* attack (Fig. 2). Fascinating enough this was the case even though her full name was mentioned only three times in the document, and even though it was never explicitly expressed that the attacks on her character were so devastating because she was a woman.

D. Catharina Sophia Cramer, wither as Inspectress or contract holder, shall always cause harm through her inspecting, for she seeks to reserve the handling of gunpowder, and of Saltpeter, for herself and her sons, not driven by zeal, [which is] a thing to be emulated, but by the advantages that the deal confers upon her quite formally, and under the guise of Royal benevolence a playing field is [thus] opened for these *arbitristas* [improvers], who introduce manufactories into this Kingdom using propriety [technical] secrets.³³

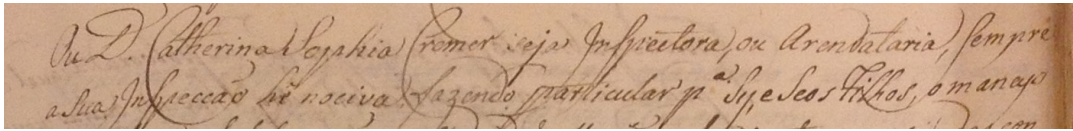
This was a direct response to the wording of the contract. First, it centered on Lady Catharina Sophia: her intentions were selfish and had little to do with development of Portuguese industry. Second, neither the interests of Portugal or the king were foremost in her mind, rather it was those of her own family: she wanted to keep all secrets for herself and, as a widow, her male offspring. Third, she used her late husband’s contributions for her own advancement, namely she was imitating the zeal of António Cremer, although in actuality her actions were unlike his. Fourth, the memorandum considered Lady Catharina Sophia and her family as if they were not Portuguese, even though according to the Dutch minister,

³¹ “Het publicq is daar over zeer misnoegt, en zijn ook reets representatien aan de Koning daar omtrent gedaan” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Fagel*, Lisbon, March 6, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8781).

³² Unfortunately, too little is known about this institution, other than that only since 1751 they had received some official function wanting to represent the corpus of merchants in Lisbon. See Pedreira 1995, 67-70.

³³ “A D. Catharina Sophia Cremer seja Inspector, ou arrendataria, sempre a sua inspecção hê nociva fazendo particular para sy, e seos Filhos, o manejo da polvora, e Salitre, não acistida do zello, que incluía imitar, mas sim das conveniências, que o negócio lhe propos bem formalizado, e susposto a Real benevolencia se deixe participar a quelles arbitristas, que com secretos particulares introduzão fabricas neste Reino”. *Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição 1^a. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

she was not under the protection of the Estates General anymore. Fifth, the king fell for this, or rather the king was decentered in “his royal benevolence”. Sixth, the memorandum was written to set the king straight, which was later to become a dangerous proposition during the time of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello’s administration.



2 The first lines of the memorandum. Source: Representation *Mesa do Bem Comum* to king, Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

The title of “inspectress” seemed to be the most offensive to the authors of the memorandum. Just like the contract, the members of the *Mesa do Bem Comum* used the title “Inspectress” throughout the whole memorandum. As Darlene Abreu-Ferreira noted about a similar word usage by the Lisbon Municipal Council who wanted to abolish an office (*juiz das bravas*) held by women in 1765 “Indeed those fines were labelled *coimas de bravas* and not *de bravos*, the masculine equivalent. In a gendered language that presumed the male form as normative, any exception to the rule is noteworthy” (Abreu-Ferreira 2017, 12). From the very beginning the authors stressed that “we see the Widow his Wife, armed with the Inspectress patent, appoint her sons to the administration of the manufactory and of the contract” thereby keeping the secrets of the production in her family’s hands keeping them from Portuguese laborers³⁴. Like in the case of the *juiz das bravas*, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* like the Lisbon Municipal Council seem to believe that “that office had been awarded to a woman, an individual who according to male authorities had no judicial authority to deal with judicial matters” (Abreu-Ferreira 2017, 19). According to the *Mesa do Bem Comum*, the title of Inspectress given by the king allowed Lady Catharina Sophia to maintain a monopoly on the production of gunpowder and saltpeter.

In the epilogue of the petition, the male and the female forms of the title inspector were distinguished in terms of “dedication” and “self-interest”.

³⁴ “servemos a Veuva Sua Mulher munida com a patente de Inspectora, nomeando seus filhos, para a administração da fabrica e contracto” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição 1^a. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

Even with the title of Inspectress that she arrogates to herself is strange to behold, given the proper etymology of this word and given its practical application as always understood by Royal Tribunals. ‘Inspection’, in its natural meaning, is the action of observing something and the effective care that one applies to one who supervises work, taking care that workers complete it with due diligence. From this follows the practical distinction between private Inspectors and public ones, namely that the former attend to the interests of whoever appoints them, whereas the latter attend to the Public Good, which is entwined with that of the King.³⁵

This was followed up with “and how might one properly apply the title of Inspectress to one who solely cares for her own family, and not for the interests of Your Majesty”³⁶. Although never fully outspoken in the memorandum of the *Mesa do Bem Comum*, the Mesa used the distinction between female and male in their rhetoric to vilify the contract and most personably Lady Catharina Sophia. Only an Inspectress could be self-centered, not an Inspector.

The memorandum was somewhat more positive about António Cremer who had established the gun powder factory, and who brought new technology to Portugal. The *Mesa do Bem Comum* found it necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the actions of Lady Catharina Sophia and her late husband. When he was mentioned it was always in the following combination “António Cremer, husband of the Inspectress”. His actions, in the interpretation of the *Mesa do Bem Comum*, contrasted with Lady Catharina Sophia, again pointing out the differences between male and female actions (“This was not what they practiced with António Cremer, her husband”)³⁷.

The memorandum had nothing positive to express about Lady Catharina Sophia, rather every single aspect of the contract was explained as to how she would abuse the contract to her own advantage. It was personal; the *Mesa do Bem Comum* attributed many negative character traits to her or her actions such

³⁵ “Athe o titulo que asy aroga de Inspectora hé estranho aver, da direita [dr^e] etimologia desta palavra, e ao exercisio pratico, com que ella sempre foi interpretada nos Tribunais Regios, Inspeccão no sentido natural hé acção de estar vendo olhando para alguma cauza, eo affectivo cuidado de examinalla e no mesmo sentido a palavra Inspector se atribue aquelle que vigia a obra, que se faz, e toma sentido nos officiaes para que a fazão com a devida perfeição. Da que procede, que na differencia pratica de Inspectores particulares e publicos attendem estes para os interesses da quem os propoz, e aquelles para o comodo da Republica, que hé unido ao interesse Regio” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Epilogo. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

³⁶ “E como podera acomodarse propriamente o titulo de Inspectora a quem trata só dos seos, e não dos interesses de Vossa Magestade” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Epilogo. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

³⁷ See for instance, *Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVI (about supply of gunpowder), XXX-XXXI (loss in transport) and XL (about wood for charcoal) (Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

as she conspired (“conspirou”), she brought vexation (“vexame”). She was prejudiced (“prejudicada”). She showed lack of righteousness (“iniquidade”). She brought destruction (“destruição”). She committed theft (“robo”). Her soul was vicious (“vicio animo”). She was driven by vindictiveness (“vigança”). She dealt out insults (“insultos”). She was aggressive (“offensiva”). She was imbued with ambition (“ambição”). The contract had a pernicious effect (“pernicioso efeito”). It was meant to grab and thwart (“aquerir e confundir”). These were horrible projects (“horriveis projectos”). She was acquiring despotic and absolute power (“despotico e absolute poder”). The dealings were disgraceful (“desgraçados”). She fomented oppression (“opressão) and violence (“violencia”). The contract would bring only iniquity (“iniquidades”) and disorder (“desordens”). The contract was repugnant (“repugnante”) and rife with harm (“damno”) and its pretensions were intolerable (“insuportaveis”). She paid to deceive (“enganar”). She was destroying manufactures (“as fabricas se destruição”). She was disrupting commerce (“o commercio se embarasse”). She brought tyranny (“tirania”). She defrauded the rich (“fraudar os ricos”) and ground down the People (“assolar os povos”)³⁸.

Indeed, there was no positive reference to Lady Catharina Sophia to be found in the memorandum, unless it was then turned around rhetorically. For example in the provision where the contract holder was to buy up older gunpowder from the royal warehouses “it seemed that this clause in no way infringed Commerce [...] yet it is not what it seems, for in fact, where this contract is concerned, all is a mystery”³⁹. If there were any seemingly positive attributes, then they were misleading:

[...] thus, with D. Catharina Sophia Cremer having monopolized the manufactory for such a great length of time, not only do those suffer a loss who in complete futility now seek to manufacture it [i.e. gunpowder], but the commonwealth likewise loses the undeniable benefit of having well trained people who might fill the need at any point.⁴⁰

³⁸ Reflexão da Condição: VII-VIII, X, XII-XIII-XXIV, XXVI, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XL, XLVII, XLVIII and the Epilogo (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVIII. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

³⁹ “Parecia, que esta condição em nada offendida ao Commercio [...] porém não hé assim como parese, porque na realidade com [este] contracto, e tudo hé misterio” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVIII. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

⁴⁰ “arrogando asy D. Catharina Sophia Cremer esta fabrica, por tão dilatado tempo, não só perdem aquelles, que plenamente infructos, agora se sustentão de o fabricar, mas perde o commum do Reino a utilidade innegavel, de ter pessoas bem instruidas, que a todo o tempo possão” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição II. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

Thus, unlike the king who credited Lady Catharina Sophia for running a factory that manufactured gunpowder around Lisbon for about two decades, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* blamed her for not giving it over to Portuguese merchants after her husband's death. Whereas the king based his positive view of Lady Catharina Sophia to her prior management of the gunpowder factories, the *Mesa do Bem Comum's* assumptions were solely based on its interpretation of the gunpowder contract. As Lady Catharina Sophia was singled out as perpetrator, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* also had to point out the casualties.

Who or what were the casualties of the gunpowder contract? “The new monopoly interfered with the freedom of trade [“liberdade do comercio”], the liberty and rights of the people [“a liberdade e direyto da gente”], utility to the vassals [“utilidade dos vasallos”], public wellbeing [“succego publico”], the interests of the Royal Treasury [“os interesses da Real Fazenda de V. Mage”], the wishes of the vassals [“a vontade dos Vasallos”], the contemplative life of the clergy [“a vida contemplativa”], the flourishing of commerce [“o comercio triumphá”], and it was against [Written] Law and Reason [“leys e a rezão”], the Res Publica [“o Republico”], and Brazil [“America”], as well as against natural law [“a ley natural”]⁴¹. The *Mesa do Bem Comum* wanted to demonstrate that all fundamentals of society were affected by this contract: the Mesa wanted the king to revise his decision.

The *Mesa do Bem Comum* was on dangerous ice when it resorted to an implied threat to the monarchy:

Finally, my Lord, we now address the Issue that the Inspectress proposed [this] to Your Majesty under the guise of zeal and of benefit accruing to your Royal Treasury, as well as the issue of the common complaint [raised] by those who have pondered how the Inspectress robs the People, with uncommon iniquity, to the benefit of Your Majesty, when no Ruler in the World among those who are Catholic, and even less so the Kings of Portugal who are the most faithful among Catholics, would ever wish that their interests should result in harm to their Vassals.⁴²

⁴¹ *Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição: I, V, XII-XIII-XXIV, XXII, XXXIV, XLVIII and the Epilogo. Lisbon, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

⁴² “Em fim Senhor chegamos a Condição, que a Inspectorá propos a Vossa Magestade revertida com a capa de zello, e beneficio da Real Fazenda a vos vaga, e a queixa universal, dos que ponderão esta condição ha[ver] a Inspectorá com iniquidade estranha roubar o povo, para fazer beneficio a Vossa Magestade quando nenhum Monarcha do Mundo entre os Catholicos, e muito mais, os Monarchas Portuguezes que são fidelissimos sobre Catholicos quizerão jamais, que os seos intereses avultassem com distruição dos Vassallos” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXII, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

The title of the Portuguese king was “*El Rei Fidellissimo*” (most faithful king) and of the Spanish monarch, the Catholic kings, (“*El Rey Cathólico*”). The implied threat was not only that there might be revolts, but also that their loyalty might move over to their neighbors. The *Mesa do Bem Comum* also pointed out that the contract was contrary to the policies of the king’s immediate predecessors: king Pedro and João V, thereby implying that he acted different from other family members⁴³. Even here the wording had Spanish references to Philip I of Portugal (who was also Philip II of Spain): “as prudent in this matter as [also] Catholic”⁴⁴. (Philip was remembered as the “prudent king”). King José I himself was implicitly accused: in most of the memorandum the king was told that he did not see through machinations of “the Inspectress”, but here it actually stated that he put his own self-interest above that of his vassals. Eventually this might lead his vassals to switch loyalties. That was a very dangerous accusation, and the *Mesa do Bem Comum*’s vilification of Lady Catharina Sophia was not enough to excuse its words.

This contract was a foreign conspiracy against Catholics. It was a foreigner who had the contract in her hands, and the safety of the kingdom was at stake in case of war, using a comparison with Spain:

How can we uphold the Crown establishment when she [i.e. D. Catharina Sophia Cremer] by virtue of this Contract holds the key to the Dominions in terms of the gunpowder that serves to defend them. Not so long ago the English desired to provision the Spanish Navy and, because their neutrality prevented them, the supplies were withheld.⁴⁵

Putting all gunpowder in the hands of foreigners, whose loyalty to the kingdom could not be guaranteed, was in the words of the *Mesa do Bem Comum*, a recipe for disaster. The members of the *Mesa do Bem Comum*, as the most loyal servants had the task to put this in front of the king. In case of war “all the Vassals as a body [*em comum*] offer their lives [to defend the

⁴³ *Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVI, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

⁴⁴ “nesta materia tão prudente como Catholico” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVI, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

⁴⁵ “Como poder astangar (sic) o stabelicimento da Coroa, se ella por força deste Contracto tem a chave dos Dominios na polvora, que os deffende. Não há muitos annos quando os Inglezes quizerão prover a Armada de Espanha, e porque a neutralide (sic) lhe impossibilitou o provimento ficou derolada (sic).” *Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVI, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

Crown], but the merchants in particular offer both lives and goods”⁴⁶. Of all arguments, this proved to be the most persuasive. As Tamar Herzog has argued in the Spanish case, it was not being a naturalized citizen that made foreigners truly Spanish, rather it was the love and zeal of the local community (Hertzog 2003, 71). The *Mesa do Bem Comum*’s petition had apparently convinced its best to prove that the widow did not have this zeal, and thus could not be trusted to be truly Portuguese. Still, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* had to justify its own zeal to persuade the king that its members were the true defenders of the Crown.

The *Mesa do Bem Comum* had to defend its own existence: “the obligation of this Council, on behalf of the Collective Body [corpo mistico] of all Merchants, is to prohibit partiality, preclude damage, and caution against the disorders to which merchants are exposed through the formidable application of this agreement”⁴⁷. As merchants, the members of *Mesa do Bem Comum* defended commerce, and defending commerce was also defending the king’s taxes:

With the sacred respect that all Vassals owe Your Majesty in terms of regalian rights we feel free to assert that the Inspectress intends to deceive Your Majesty when, disregarding the interests of your Royal Treasury, she seeks to establish a contract that offends the Law, Reason, and Equity.⁴⁸

The members of the *Mesa do Bem Comum* were acting as good vassals to “caution against damage to the Sovereign, for this amounts to conspiring against the commonwealth of all Vassals”⁴⁹. In contrast, it would be dangerous to let gunpowder production because it will put “in times of grave peril, [in the hands of] a single house and lineage, which even though settled

⁴⁶ “todos os Vasallos em Commum offercem as Vidas, mas os commerciantes em particular offercem vidas e fazendas” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Reflexão da Condição XXVI, March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

⁴⁷ “A obrigação da Meza, pelo Corpo Místico de todo o Commerciantes hé defender o prejuizo, obviar o damno, e acautelar as desordens que se expoem os commerciantes na formidavel exercio deste tracto” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Epilogo. March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

⁴⁸ “ao sagrado respeito que todos como Vasallos tribut[am] aos reaes direitos de Vossa Magestade podemos livremente afirmar que a Inspectoria pertende Enganar a Vossa Magestade quando sem interesse da sua Real Fazenda quis stabelecer hum contacto offensivo das Leys, da Razão e da equidade” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Epilogo. March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

⁴⁹ “para a cautelar o damno do prencipe, que assim se conspira contra o commum dos Vasallos” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Epilogo. March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

within the Realm is not native to the latter and does not evince the boundless affection that can only be expected of your Vassals”⁵⁰. In closing, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* explained that the memorandum was presented in all humility, but it would have been a crime of omission not to bring this to the royal attention. Again, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* stressed that the contract was damaging to both commerce and the monarchy.

The *Mesa do Bem Comum* had done all to stop the gunpowder contract⁵¹. It was dangerous to oppose the king, and the outcome could have been detrimental. However, as the Dutch minister predicted, this petition did have an effect. The king was careful enough to send the memorandum to the *Junta dos Três Estados*, and he followed their opinion (Figueiredo 2007, 38). The contract was cancelled, the royal treasury took over the production of gunpowder, and the *Junta dos Três Estados* took over the gunpowder factories. The king restated that the security of the state, the private and public interest were at stake according to the memorandum. Therefore, it was necessary to nationalize the gunpowder production. However, he did not take over the argument, just rephrased that these were in the memorandum and that was the reason for the *Junta dos Três Estados* to run the factories. It was unclear if Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer-van Zeller was compensated; the only reference was that the gunpowder factories’ employees would be paid the same as before. It seemed likely that she did keep her fortune. Ten years later Lady Catharina Sophia Cremer van Zeller did leave her *morgado* to her son, and left jewelry and a monthly income of 4800 cruzados to her granddaughter, and continual pay to a housekeeper⁵². According to Jorge Pereira, “her son Maurício José Cremer van Zeller integrated himself already in the national merchant community, and was as such charged by the *Junta do Comércio*” (Pedreira 1995, 228)⁵³. After hearing about this decision, the Dutch minister wrote that “now the negotiations will go like they used to” and “the people in general and the merchants are very happy

⁵⁰ “para as ocasiões de de major risco a hua casa e a familia, que ainda que stabelecida no Reino, não teve nella a 1ª origem nem aquelle amor completa, que so pode esperar dos seus Vassalos” (*Memorandum Mesa do Bem Comum*, Epilogo. March 29, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782).

⁵¹ Lisbon, June 30, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8782.

⁵² ANTT, *Registo Geral dos Testamentos*, liv. 282, fl. 68r-69r. Testament, Lisbon, January 28, 1763, opened June 8, 1763. D. Catharina Sofia Cremer van Zeller did not sign the testament “por não poder escrever”. It is unclear if she was analphabetic or if she was too ill to do so (she was in her bed).

⁵³ “O seu filho Maurício José Cremer Vanzeller integrava já o corpo mercantil nacional, e foi por isso colectada pela Junta de Comércio em 1769-1773”. Pedreira discussed António Cremer, and, thus, literally the translation should be “his son”.

about this decision”⁵⁴. The *Mesa do Bem Comum* had good reasons to be careful about the memorandum: two years later, after submitting another one to the king, the organization was abolished.

In 1755, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* protested against the newly formed regional Brazilian monopoly company of Grão-Pará and Maranhão. This petition led to the exile of several of its members, and the abolition of the *Mesa do Bem Comum* itself by Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello (Maxwell 1995, 69-70)⁵⁵. According to J. Lúcio de Azevedo, the prime minister wrote to the governor of Grão-Pará that it was “a crime of lèse-majesté to speak out against royal decisions” (Azevedo 1990, 116). This referred to instigation of open revolt against a royal decision, but it was evident that the prime minister and his king would not permit themselves to be overruled anymore.

In 1753 the *Mesa do Bem Comum* looked at every single weakness in its memorandum against the gunpowder contract. A great part was found in the contract holder herself: she was of Dutch origin, and therefore suspect as a “foreigner” (even she was born in Portugal, she remained of Dutch origin – yet the Van Zellers continued to intermarry and trade with Dutchmen) someone who could not defend Catholicism (even though she was a Catholic, her family came from a country of many Calvinists) and as a woman. Womanhood, or rather widowhood, was defined by taking care of one’s family first, rather than having the royal interests in mind. The continuation of contracts in her family’s hands after her death showed, in the eyes of the *Mesa do Bem Comum*, that she worked for family only. Widowhood also meant governance over one’s family. The repetition of the title “Inspectress” through the memorandum, challenging the office itself and contrasting it with the more positive “Inspector” begged a question never openly raised: how can we let ourselves be dominated by a woman? The consequences would be detrimental, even though no evidence whatsoever was given that any of the negative character traits were ever exhibited during her twenty more years of administration of the gunpowder factories.

The king had not challenged Lady Catharina Sophia’s authority. Initially, he saw her worthy of holding the contract and acquiring the title of Inspectress. This was partly due to the contributions of her late husband, but also because of her own knowledge and experience. Since this was a

⁵⁴ “Hier door raaken de zaak wederom op den oude voet [...] soo het gemeen als de koopman hier over zeer voldaan” (*Dispatch Bosc de la Calmette to Peter Steyn*, Pensionary Estates of Holland. Lisbon, July 10, 1753, NADH, SG, Verbaal Calmette, 8751).

⁵⁵ For a note on the exiles see: Carreira 1982, 36-37. The petition itself can be found in Carreira 1982, 303-329.

contribution of her family, the crown did not directly blame it on her womanhood, but on her family (Abreu-Ferreira 2017, 21). The king though, was forced to recant by the *Mesa do Bem Comum*'s memorandum and because of popular feeling, according to the Dutch Minister. Interestingly enough, the *Mesa do Bem Comum* suffered the consequences after another petition challenging the king's authority yet again. The *Mesa do Bem Comum*'s name was resurrected in 1757, but then for the retail trade. This new council regulated retail commerce. One of its tasks was that, in the case of the death of a shopkeeper and continuation of the shop, it reported on the widow or descendant's books every other year⁵⁶. Apparently, widows needed to be more closely controlled.

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