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'Om de kwaliteit van het geld'. Het toezicht op de muntproductie in de Republiek en de voorziening van kleingeld in Holland en West-Friesland in de 18de eeuw

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Summary and conclusion

This study concentrates on two subjects, that at first glance appear to be completely different topics: the supervision on the coin production in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces and the supply of the smallest denominations in the province of Holland and West-Friesland, both during the 18th Century. The two subjects, however, are both dealing with 'the quality of money'. In either case the generalmasters of the mints and the assayer-general play a crucial role.
The immediate cause for this study is the discovery of three historical documents:

- a series of travel reports of the examination of the production of the mints of the provinces of Gelderland, Holland, West-Friesland, Zeeland, and Utrecht between 1717 and 1809;
- a series of declarations for activities done for the provincial government of Holland and West-Friesland by the assayer-general between 1780 and 1795;
- a series of accounts of the production and distribution of copper duits, ordered by the provincial government of Holland and West-Friesland between 1739 and 1780.

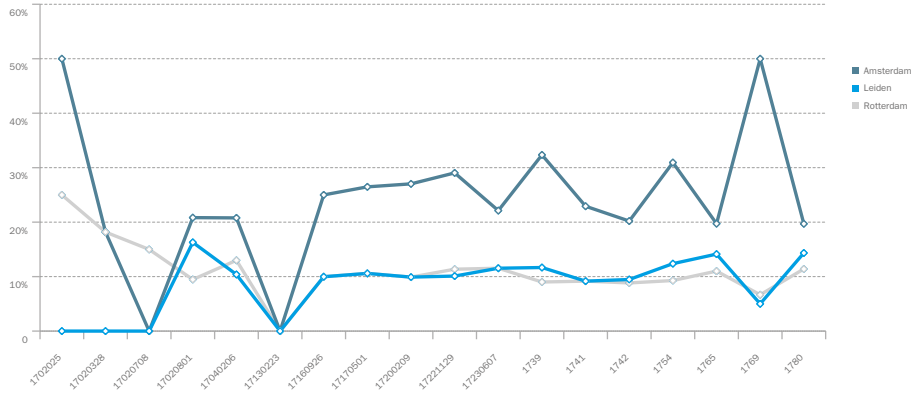
Taken together, these three documents present a good impression of the activities of the supervisors on the coin production and circulation in the 18th century.
For a better understanding of the positions and the tasks of these supervisors this study first concentrates on the organisation of the mints and the quantity of the coin production during the Republic of the Seven United Provinces. The various functions within a Mint, illustrated by the official instructions for Mint employees, issued by the States-General, are leading. Where possible the general instructions are supplemented with a specific instruction, or with a commission for specific functions or a specific employee of one of the two Mints within the province of Holland and West-Friesland in the 18th century. The view of the functions involved in the control of the coin production and circulation is completed with information on the official instructions of exchanger, the assayer, melter and refiner and the inspector of the weights. The names of all these employees within Holland and West-Friesland are also mentioned. When they are mentioned by name in one of the three series of historical documents, a brief biographical outline is also given.
The present knowledge of the size of the coin production during the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, especially in the 18th century, is expanded by this study beyond that of four unpublished surveys, and one printed and published within a small scale, but not generally known todays.
The efforts of the provincial and general government, the States of Holland and the States-General, to restore the quality of the circulation of the copper and smallest silver coins (1 stuiver) in the 18th century is the subject of the second part of this study. During that century the circulation of copper coins has been seriously 'polluted' with coins produced outside the province of Holland or the Republic, which were too light in weight and sometimes so worn that it was not possible to recognize any effigy. Inhabitants of the province of Holland and West-Friesland complained in such a way about their financial damage, that the government felt obliged to act.
This study proves that Mints outside the province of Holland and West-Friesland regularly

produced copper duits of much lighter weight. Poor border check made it possible that the lighter duits were imported and changed against the good examples from the Holland and West-Friesland Mints, which were exported.

The provincial government acted in two ways to keep the quality of the (small) coins in circulation in order. First by the control of the coin production in general, and

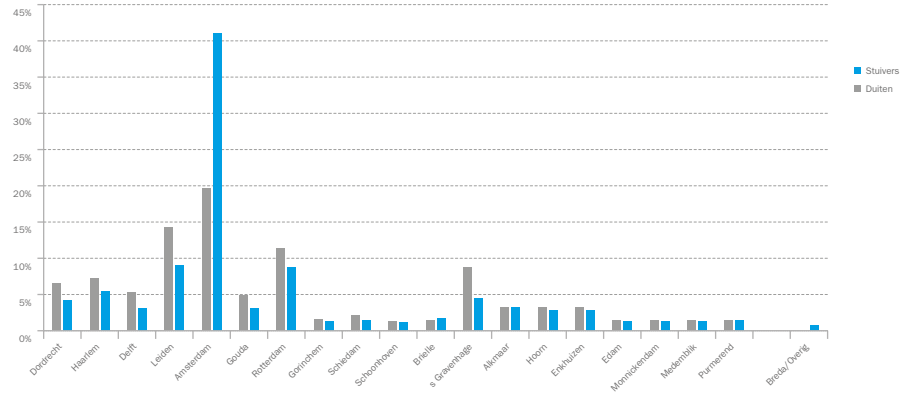
secondly by orders to produce and distribute new small money to replace the bad quality samples in circulation.

Between 1702 and 1780 the two mint masters of Holland and West-Friesland were ordered nineteen times to produce on the account of the provincial government new copper duits, and distribute these among the cities.



Graphic 26. Distribution of the new produced duits amoung the cities of Amsterdam, Leiden, and Rotterdam between 1702 untill 1780, based on the distrubution lists,

The second denominations within the category of pocket money that was produced and distributed on order and account of the province of Holland and West-Friesland is the silver 1 stuiver coin of 1738-1740 and 1764. In contrast with the orders of the production and distribution of the copper duits, these are authorised by a resolution of the general authorities, the States-General, and for each of the seven provinces. Comparing the available data on the distribution of the copper duits 1702-1780 and the silver 1 stuiver 1738-1740 of Holland and West-Friesland results in the following chart.



Graphic 27. Distribution of the copper copper duits 1702-1780 and the silver 1 stuiver 1738-1740 of Holland and West-Friesland to the various cities, based on the distribution lists.

On the basis of the incomplete series of distribution lists it can be concluded that Amsterdam, being the largest city of Holland and West-Friesland, received the biggest allocation of the new duits and 1 stuiver coins. Of the new copper duits almost a quarter and of the 1 stuiver 1738-1740 more than 41 percent.

The assayer-general managed the production and the distribution of the new copper duits and 1 stuiver coins. He bought the copper for the new duits, checked the delivery of blanks, assigned the portions to the Mints and the newly produced duits to the cities. He was responsible for the entire project, and had to give account for all the expenses and profit involved. He received an allowance for his effort extra above his normal salary.

The silver and copper for the production of the 1 stuiver coins were bought by the mintmasters. It is not known whether the assayer-general received any extra allowance for managing the production and distribution.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that, in contrast to what has been written, certainly a lot of historical source documents exist on the production and even the distribution of copper duits.

For the eighteenth century copper duits of Holland and West-Friesland this has been proven with this study, while various samples are given from the seventeenth century. The government, in this case the States of Holland and West-Friesland, tried to keep the quality of the circulation of small coins under control. But this same government was only prepared to restore the quality of the small coin circulations, when it cost no money. When the price of the raw material was too high, the weight of the blanks was lowered. When blanks of too much weight were delivered, the deliverer had to pay the difference. The actions to improve the quality of the circulation of copper duits normally delivered a profit to the provincial treasury, and only once a deficit.

The six accounts of the production and distribution of copper duits (1739, 1741-1742, 1754, 1765, 1769 en 1780) show that the master of the Mint of Holland received more money for the dies, but also for the linen bags, than his colleague the Master of the Mint of West-Friesland. In this study,

however, this fact could not been explained.

The resolution of the States-General of November 13, 1769 about the equality in weight of the copper duits of all the Mints within the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, but also about the salary of the Mint employees for the production of the copper duits, seems to bring provincial particularism to an end. But a first look in the cash book of the Arme Wees- en Kinderhuis (Poor Orphans and Children's House) of Leiden, with data on the years 1769-1785 makes clear that after 1769 copper duits from other provinces than Holland and West-Friesland were still exchanged, and that the organisation accepted a loss of 15-20%. Whether this is an exception or a general phenomenon of that era, has still to be proven.

Other questions are also not answered by this study. For instance it did not become clear how the distribution of the newly produced coins among the citizens exactly was organized. What role did the city governments play in this matter? It looks as if they have been obliged to accept the amount of new coins in the lists that were sent to the two mint masters. But had the city governors for instance been consulted about the quantity of the new coins they needed? Was someone within the city government paid for the exchange of the old and worn coins for new ones? More research on these subjects is definitely needed, and strongly recommended.