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Chapter 8 ‘Vrieslant’

8.1 Under Habsburg rule

Unlike other regions in the Low Countries, medieval Friesland did not have a prince. For example, Holland and Flanders had a count, Gelderland and Brabant both had a duke, but Friesland was proud of its so-called *Friese Vrijheid* (Frisian Freedom).¹²³⁷ That changed in 1498, when Albert, duke of Saxony, conquered Friesland. In that year he bought the rights Philip the Fair had over Friesland. Albert sold his privileges to Charles V in 1515. A ten-year conflict about rights and duties between the Frisians and Charles began, ending in 1524. From then up to and including 1572, Friesland was under Habsburg rule.¹²³⁸ Charles V and later his son Philip II had themselves represented by a *Stadhouder* (governor) and *Hof* (court). First they resided in Franeker;¹²³⁹ in 1504 the court was moved to Leeuwarden, which from then until today is the capital city of the area.¹²⁴⁰

Compared to the cities in Holland, Brabant and Flanders, the Frisian cities were small and relatively weak. Around 20 to 30 per cent of the Frisian populace lived in towns, the rest in the countryside. The capital Leeuwarden, for example, had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the 16th century,¹²⁴¹ this number doubling towards the end of the century, which still made Leeuwarden a small town compared to those elsewhere in the Low Countries. Other Frisian towns, for example Franeker, Bolsward, Sneek, Dokkum and Harlingen, were even smaller.¹²⁴² Trade and industry were the most important economic pillars.¹²⁴³ Shipping played an extra role in towns which had a good connection to the sea.¹²⁴⁴ The main function of each town was to be a trading centre for the surrounding countryside. Therefore, contrary to the big

¹²³⁷ On the *Friese Vrijheid* see Kalma/Spahr van der Hoek/De Vries 1980², pp. 154-164.

¹²³⁸ On this period and the political situation in Friesland: Woltjer 1962 and Kalma/Spahr van der Hoek/De Vries 1980², pp. 259-283.

¹²³⁹ Algra 1983, pp. 29-31.

¹²⁴⁰ Vries 1997, pp. 135-136; Kunst 1999, p. 88.

¹²⁴¹ Faber 1972, volume I, pp. 638 and 640 come to 4,100-4,500. Kunst 1999, p. 94 mentions that Leeuwarden had about 4,400 inhabitants in 1511.

¹²⁴² Spaans 1997, pp. 18-19.

¹²⁴³ Woltjer 1962, pp. 50-51.

¹²⁴⁴ Spaans 1997, p. 19.

cities in Flanders, Brabant and Holland, Frisian towns owed their prosperity to the neighbouring country, and did not attract people from the countryside with their wealth.

All important Frisian towns had hospitals for the needy, just as in other cities in the Low Countries. Already around 1450 Leeuwarden, Harlingen, Bolsward, Sneek, Franeker, Dokkum and Workum had hospitals; Leeuwarden even had four of them. Remarkable for Friesland is that most of them were dedicated to St Anthony. They accommodated poor, sick and old people (some of them paid for their lodging and care; they were called *proveniers*), but also travellers.¹²⁴⁵ In 16th-century Friesland, welfare became more and more a task of the local authorities, instead of the clergy.¹²⁴⁶

Friesland belonged to the diocese of Utrecht, but in actual practice the Frisian Freedom kept control. The parishioners often chose their own parish priests and the priests themselves chose their own deans. The area functioned quite independently from the bishop of Utrecht.¹²⁴⁷ The same situation applied for the convents in the district.¹²⁴⁸ Compared to other regions, and considering the low number of inhabitants,¹²⁴⁹ Friesland counted more medieval convents than any other area in the Netherlands.¹²⁵⁰ Remarkably, the entire region did not have one single collegiate church.¹²⁵¹

Because of the lack of sources, it is not really clear when the Reformation started in Friesland and how much influence this movement had. It is obvious that the Baptists formed an early and important reform group in the area with a large following, but in the end they left the church to become a separate obedience.¹²⁵² During the 1570s the struggle between the old Catholic religion and the new religion becomes more obvious. Finally, in March 1580, the Frisian representatives chose the side of the new faith: from then on Catholic services were forbidden and convents were closed.¹²⁵³

A few years before Gheerkin de Hondt left 's-Hertogenbosch for 'Vrieslant', an overview of churches of the region was made. On 25 August 1542 the governess

¹²⁴⁵ Spaans 1997, pp. 30-32.

¹²⁴⁶ Spaans 1997, for example pp. 15-17.

¹²⁴⁷ Woltjer 1962, pp. 57-58 and Kalma/Spahr van der Hoek/De Vries 1980², pp. 284-285.

¹²⁴⁸ Woltjer 1962, pp. 67-77. On the general religious history of Friesland: Kalma/Spahr van der Hoek/De Vries 1980², pp. 229-256.

¹²⁴⁹ The total number of inhabitants in 1511 is estimated at 76,000 (Faber 1972, volume I, p. 24).

¹²⁵⁰ Kalma/Spahr van der Hoek/De Vries 1980², p. 236.

¹²⁵¹ Verhoeven 1994, p. 15.

¹²⁵² Woltjer 1962, pp. 78-90. See also Zijlstra 1997.

¹²⁵³ Kalma/Spahr van der Hoek/De Vries 1980², p. 299.

Mary of Hungary issued an order on behalf of Emperor Charles V to the *Hof van Friesland* to ask the Frisian local authorities to make lists of the incomes of all the parishes and religious goods in their region. The results were compiled in the so-called *Beneficiaalboeken*.¹²⁵⁴ These books give us a good impression of the financing of the parishes in Friesland and in some cases they even give information on polyphonic music in the liturgy.¹²⁵⁵ Combined with the sources that have come down to us in local archives, we are able to select four towns and two villages that might have been Gheerkin's destination in 'Vrieslant' in October 1547.¹²⁵⁶

8.2 Traces of (polyphonic) music in the liturgy

8.2.1 Leeuwarden¹²⁵⁷

Since 1504 the city of Leeuwarden served as the main residence of the Frisian court.¹²⁵⁸ In the court housed in the so-called *blokhuis* ('fortress'), which was built

¹²⁵⁴ The *Beneficiaalboeken* are not complete (anymore?); missing are the *grietenijen* (a sort of shire) of Franekeradeel, Aengwirden, Gaasterland and Schoterland, the towns of Dokkum, Slooten, Workum and Stavoren and the villages of Appelscha, Berterwird, Boonwerderhuizen, Burum, Elahuizen, Giekerk, Greonterp, Haskerdijken, Hemelum, Hoogebeintum, Luktewoude, Luxwolde, Nes (Utingeradeel), Oenkerk, Oudkerk, Scharl, Warns, Wetzens and Zwaagwesteinde (Van Leeuwen 1850, p. 5). The originals are now in Leeuwarden, Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 14 (Hof van Friesland), Inv. nos. 86 (Oostergo), 87 (Westergo) and 88 (Zevenwouden).

¹²⁵⁵ Because of the extent of the source, the lack of church accounts of the period and the fact that we do not have any clue of where Gheerkin de Hondt might have worked, mainly the places mentioned in Vlagsma 2003 have been consulted: Leeuwarden, Wirdum, Stiens, Hyum, Roordahuizum, Werregae, Rinsumageest, Franeker, Harlingen, Sneek, Bolsward, Schyngen, Deinum, Weydum, Bozum, Jellum, Wommels, Oosterend and Schoterburen.

¹²⁵⁶ A quick investigation of the accounts of the churches of Roordahuizum (1557-1650; Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 245-18, Inv. no. 81), Wier (1563-1622; Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 245-53, Inv. no. 72) and Wirdum (1555-1601; Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 77-D, Inv. no. 238) did not offer any account items especially for music and liturgy, other than payments for organs, organists and bellows blowers. I have not been able to track down more Catholic church archives from before 1565 than the ones mentioned in this chapter.

¹²⁵⁷ See on the history of Leeuwarden in general: Kunst 1999.

from 1498 onwards and had its own church, a small chapel dedicated to St Anne.¹²⁵⁹ The inhabitants of the town could attend three churches: the Sint-Vitus in the district of Oldenhove, the parish church of Sint-Maria or Nijehove and the church of Sint-Catharina or Hoek (Hoeksterkerk).¹²⁶⁰ Furthermore, there were four chapels in convents: of the Jacobins, the Friars Minor, the Witte Nonnen ('white nuns') and the Grauwe Begijnen ('grey beguines').¹²⁶¹

The chapel of St Anne at the *blokhuis* was renewed in 1530. It was a simple building, with an attic that served as a store for grain. The chapel was a place of worship for about 150 people. On weekdays a Mass was read by the Friars Minor, and on Sundays a sung Mass was celebrated. On the feast of St Anne (26 July) Mass was sung with extra lustre. The Friars Minor were also responsible for the liturgy on this feast day. During the year, a priest was in charge of the care of the inhabitants of the *blokhuis*.¹²⁶²

Traces of music are to be found in several accounts.¹²⁶³ In 1527 a small organ (*posityff*) was bought. It was placed on the ambulatory where 'the singers' also stood. Since the chapel was very small and there was only one sung Mass a week, taken care of by the Friars Minor, it seems very unlikely that professional singers were hired on a structural basis; an organist was sufficient for the services. However, as we will see below, there were professional singers in Leeuwarden, and they might have been hired for the Sunday sung Mass. The singers, whoever they were, had several choirbooks at their disposal, but it remains unclear if polyphony was sung and if a *zangmeester* was appointed.

Around 850 a small wooden church dedicated to Sint-Vitus was built in Leeuwarden. About two centuries later (in the early or late 11th century), the

¹²⁵⁸ See § 8.1 above.

¹²⁵⁹ See on the *blokhuis*: Theissen 1913.

¹²⁶⁰ Kunst 1999, p. 89.

¹²⁶¹ Vlagsma 2003, p. 18.

¹²⁶² Vlagsma 1996, pp. 169-170.

¹²⁶³ Based on Vlagsma 1996, pp. 176 and 180 and Theissen 1913, p. 23. Vlagsma refers to Theissen and Theissen only mentions the Rentmeestersrekeningen (now in Leeuwarden, Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 4) as his source in general, he does not mention specific accounts for specific information. In his book on the Frisian organs, Vlagsma specifically refers to the accounts of 1517-1519 (Inv. no. 2.b: 2e rekening), 1523-1530 (Inv. no. 3: 5e rekening) and 1517-1530 (Inv. nos. 55.a and 55.b) (Vlagsma 2003, p. 19). For the Gheerkin period, two accounts of the court have come down to us: Inv. no. 14 (17e rekening over 1546/1547) and Inv. no. 15.a (18e rekening over 1547/1548); neither of these accounts gives information on singers.

wooden church was replaced by a building made of tuff.¹²⁶⁴ From 1529 onwards, the plan was to replace the Romanesque cruciform church by a new building, to start with the tower. Because of problems with the foundation of the building, only part of the tower was built. Today this leaning tower is called 'Oldehove'. The church itself was never built, and the old building was demolished in 1596.¹²⁶⁵

The Sint-Vituskerk was the most important church in town,¹²⁶⁶ having nine prebends in 1542.¹²⁶⁷ The first account of the church that has been preserved, dates from 1576. However, since that is still before 1580 (the year the Frisians passed to the new faith), it could also represent the situation around 1547.¹²⁶⁸ The accounts of the late 1570s show us that each year there is an account item mentioning the singers.¹²⁶⁹ The group was rather small and consisted in the years 1576-1578 of a *sangmeester*, an organist, and two or three other singers (sometimes specified as *basconter* and *hoechconter*). Perhaps this is the result of the turnover to the new faith and therefore more singers might have been active in earlier years.¹²⁷⁰ Some of the names suggest that the musicians came from the region of Friesland.¹²⁷¹ What the tasks were the

¹²⁶⁴ Kunst 1999, pp. 28, 40 and 53.

¹²⁶⁵ Karstkarel 2009³, p. 189.

¹²⁶⁶ Vlagsma 2003, pp. 18-19 states that the church was a collegiate church, but there are no indications that this was the case and all other authors refer to the church as parish church. This is confirmed by Verhoeven 1994, p. 15, where he mentions that there was not a single collegiate church in the entire district of Friesland. Kunst 1999, p. 74 also speaks of three parish churches in Leeuwarden.

¹²⁶⁷ Kunst 1999, p. 92.

¹²⁶⁸ We also have to keep in mind that Friesland got its own bishop in 1559 and the Sint-Vituskerk became his cathedral, although in actual practice only in 1570 (Kunst 1999, p. 93 and 102).

¹²⁶⁹ Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer L913, pp. 51-61 (1576), fol. 25r-29r (1577), fol. 23v-27v (1578) and fol. 28r-31v (1579). The account of 1580 is only minor, since the church was no longer Catholic. It is not clear if there were more accounts than these (we had three different church accounts in Bruges), containing more information about liturgical activities.

¹²⁷⁰ According to Verhoeven/Mol 1994, pp. 365-367, three singers, most likely of Sint-Vitus, are mentioned as witnesses for the last will of Fed, widow of Wierd Metzies, on 15 July 1541: Frans Jan zoen (*tenoryt*), Crystophorus van Campen (*hoichsangher*) and Peter Henrick zoen (*bas*). Perhaps the man mentioned before Frans Jan zoen (jonghe Hans Cruys) was also a *tenoryt* and therefore there would be four singers. It seems a mystery why these singers (together with a priest from Sint-Vitus and the schoolmaster) were asked to be the witnesses; there are no references to music or liturgy in this last will.

¹²⁷¹ For example Luithien Sipke zoon.

group of musicians had to fulfil remains unclear; of the *sangmeester* we know that he had to teach the choirboys.¹²⁷²

The *Beneficiaalboeken* of 1543 also give us information on the Sint-Vituskerk.¹²⁷³ First we find out that the seven canonical hours were sung, probably not on a daily and regular basis, but as a result of several foundations made by parishioners, for example by the couple Tryn and Peter Janszoon and the sister of Tryn, Reynsk Doeckes. Together they (co-)founded the singing of the seven canonical hours, a visit to the grave of Reynsk during Vespers, the Vigil with nine lessons during Lent, a Mass at the altar of Our Lady on Saturdays in the morning with two servants (probably priests) followed by a visit to the grave of Peter, three weekly Masses at the altar of Saint Christopher followed by a visit to the grave of Reynsk and Masses and Vigils as memorial services (Tryn's memorial service took place around the feast of St Boniface). Peter and his father Jan Sybrantsz. also had made foundations for memorial services (Vigil and Mass) for themselves, as did their relatives (Heer Jella Juwsma and Sibbel Sittes). Memorial services were also founded for Lysbet Douwes and Heer Fedde (former parish priest of the Sint-Vituskerk). The memorial service founded by Dirck Willems contains a Vigil and Requiem Mass on Fridays at the altar of St Anne, sung by the priests in the presbytery. In short, the Sint-Vituskerk in Leeuwarden was a well-established church, where rich parishioners made foundations.

This is confirmed by the traces left by a guild of the Holy Sacrament, which had its own altar in the Sint-Vituskerk.¹²⁷⁴ The guild was responsible for poor relief for people living at home. It was officially suppressed before 24 January 1526, but the liturgical tasks were turned over to the Sint Anthony Gasthuis.¹²⁷⁵ The oldest account of this guild dates from 1561.¹²⁷⁶ It shows us that in 1561 the liturgical services were

¹²⁷² The total remunerations of the *sangmeester* are about 60 Carolus guilders a year, including an amount for the rent of his house. This is in the late 1570s a lot less than Gheerkin de Hondt received in 's-Hertogenbosch during the 1540s. The other singers also received less than their colleagues in 's-Hertogenbosch in the 1540s.

¹²⁷³ Leeuwarden, Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 14 (Hof van Friesland), Inv. no. 86 (Oostergo). For a transcription see: Van Leeuwen 1850, pp. 69-72.

¹²⁷⁴ Vlagsma 2003, pp. 18-19.

¹²⁷⁵ The Sint Anthony Gasthuis was founded before 1425 as a guesthouse for poor, old, needy and ill people, both from Leeuwarden and its surroundings and for travellers; it had its own chapel (Spaans 1997, pp. 32-33 and 44-46).

¹²⁷⁶ It is part of the oldest surviving account of the Sint Anthony Gasthuis (Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Archief Sint Anthony Gasthuis, Toegangsnummer 263, Inv. no. 920). An edition of this account is available in: Eekhof 1876, deel 1, pp. 456-554. Since

taken care of by a mature group of musicians, as we find them in other churches of the Low Countries: four to six singers, among them a *zangmeester*, an organist and a bellows blower.¹²⁷⁷ Payments are also made to a schoolmaster, together with the church and the city of Leeuwarden (1/4 by the guild, 1/4 by the church of Sint-Vitus and 1/2 by the city), probably for teaching choirboys. Some of the names suggest that most of the men were most likely of local origin.¹²⁷⁸ As with the Sacramentsbroederschap in the Sint-Janskerk in 's-Hertogenbosch, the singers received their payments at four times a year; in this case at All Souls, Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, first of May and St James (25 July). In order to get paid, they had to sing *in musijck* and in chant the *Lof* of the Holy Sacrament and the Mass of the Holy Sacrament on Thursday. We may safely assume that the situation was the same as in 's-Hertogenbosch: the musicians of the church were hired by guilds and crafts for their own liturgical services.¹²⁷⁹ Remarkable is that the payments are almost equal to all singers (13 or 14 *stuivers*): one would expect that the *zangmeester* would receive more. Notable too are payments to two other singers, for singing in the Sint Anthonij Gasthuis and the chapel of Sint-Jacob.¹²⁸⁰

Further interesting information about music and liturgy in the church of Oldehove in Leeuwarden comes from the archives of the *Soete Name Jhesus Gilde*,¹²⁸¹ which had its own altar in the church¹²⁸² and paid for hearing polyphony. Shortly after the

the account is from before 1580, it will be representative for the situation of around 1547.

¹²⁷⁷ Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Archief Sint Anthony Gasthuis, toegangsnummer 263, inv. no. 920, fol. CXXVr-CXXXVJr. A transcription is in Eekhof 1876, deel 1, pp. 535-543.

¹²⁷⁸ For example the last names Jansma and Van Hallum and the first name Fecco are typically Frisian. None of the other names is Flemish or French.

¹²⁷⁹ The next account of the guild is that of 1582, which is after the turnover to the new religion. Therefore we cannot compare the names of the singers mentioned in 1561 with the accounts of the church of Sint-Vitus, of which the oldest account is that of 1576.

¹²⁸⁰ The Sint-Jacobsgasthuis was founded in 1478 by Hille van Zwolle as the second *gasthuis* in Leeuwarden next to the Sint Anthony Gasthuis and was ruled by Hille's family and the guardians of the Guild of the Holy Sacrament (Spaans 1997, p. 33). The buildings were sold on 24 January 1526 to the Sint Anthony Gasthuis. Only the chapel – built for the memorial services for the founders Hille van Zwolle and her family – survived (Spaans 1997, p. 44).

¹²⁸¹ Vlagsma 2003, p. 265.

¹²⁸² Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inv. no. 57, account of 1551/52, p. 87, payment to the widow of Frans Janssoen for singing the weekly *Suete Naeme Jhesus* Mass at the altar in the church

suppression of the Guild of the Holy Sacrament, the Soete Name Jhesus Ghilde became more active in poor relief,¹²⁸³ given at a special table in the church, according to the tradition of other guilds in the medieval Low Countries. From 1533 onwards, the guild received more inheritances, among them the one of Ritske Boelema in 1547-1549.

The oldest document from the Soete Name Jhesus Ghilde dates from 6 January 1528 and contains its regulations, which suggest that the guild had already existed for a long time.¹²⁸⁴ The most important task of the guild was to hold memorial services for its members (between twelve and over twenty), all men, all belonging to the top level of the Frisian society. The fifteen rules of 1528 give us information on music and liturgy. First (no. 1), Mass had been sung on Fridays 'for a long time', but from then on, Mass had to be sung on Wednesdays, preferably at seven o'clock (in the morning?). Second (no. 9), the *oldermannen* (the administrators) should order a 'singing' Mass, 'in *discant* or otherwise', every week. It remains unclear if this is the same weekly Mass as the one mentioned before, or if it is a second Mass. Furthermore, it is not obvious whether these Masses were memorial Masses or other Masses, or perhaps both (in case there were two Masses).

Another document gives some more information: a charter from 1548, in which Emperor Charles V gives permission to accept inheritances up to and including the amount of 500 guilders *rentes* (as rent income) a year.¹²⁸⁵ The text mentions the weekly Masses, that are celebrated in honour of *Gebenediden Naem Jesus* (the sweet name of Jesus). This suggests they were not memorial services.

A new document with regulations dated 9 November 1579 adds a yearly sung Mass to the existing Masses, namely on the day the new administrators are chosen,

of Oldehove. It was overlooked by Vlagsma and Spaans, both stating that it was unknown in which church or chapel the guild was based.

¹²⁸³ On a possible connection between these two events and on the Soete Naeme Jesusgilde see: Spaans 1997, pp. 48-51. On the history of the guild see also the Introduction to the inventory on <http://www.historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl>, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis).

¹²⁸⁴ The original is lost, but a 17th-century copy is now in Leeuwarden, Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 327 (Familie Van Sminia), Inv. no. 2027a. A transcription is on the website of the Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden (<http://www.historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl>), Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inventaris, 2.8.1, Bijlage no. 1.

¹²⁸⁵ Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inv. no. 343. A partly transcription is on the website of the Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden (<http://www.historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl>, Introduction to the inventory). A complete transcription is given in Thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg 1768-1793, volume III, pp. 145-147.

on the first Sunday after All Saints.¹²⁸⁶ The same document also refers to a 'sung or read' memorial Mass on the next Monday, so that leaves the possibility that the sung Mass on Sunday is a 'general' polyphonic Mass. The memorial service will be sung or read at the altar of the guild, and will be a *missa pro defunctis*. During the Mass, the names of the deceased members will be read. Confusing is that the text of 1579 also refers to the Wednesday Mass at seven o'clock as the 'sung or read memorial service (*zielmisse*)'. This would suggest that on Wednesday a memorial service was sung or read and not a polyphonic regular Mass. However, since this document dates from 1579, less than a year before the Frisians turned to the new faith, the original liturgical observances might have decreased by that time (compared to 1548).

From a list with receipts and expenditure of 1555 we know how many singers were involved during a Mass and banquet.¹²⁸⁷ A priest was paid 4 *stuivers* for singing the Mass; he had two servants who also received 4 *stuivers* (together). The *sangers ofte musyckers*¹²⁸⁸ received together 12 *stuivers*. The sexton got paid 4 *stuivers*. The schoolmaster received 4 *stuivers* 'for two days', 'the children' 1 *stuiver*. The organist and bellows blower respectively received 3 and 1 *stuiver(s)*. If the organist received as much as each of the singers, there would have been four singers. If the amount the organist and bellows blower received together was the same as each of the singers received (namely 4 *stuivers*, as did the priest, his servants, the sexton and the schoolmaster) there would have been three singers.¹²⁸⁹ A list of receipts and expenditure of 14 October 1579 also mentions the singers as a group, not as individuals.¹²⁹⁰ A little more information can be derived from accounts that have been fragmentarily preserved. There are mentioned the 'kralen/coralen' (choirboys)

¹²⁸⁶ Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inv. no. 14. A transcription is on the website of the Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden (<http://www.historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl>), Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inventaris, 2.8.1, Bijlage no. 3.

¹²⁸⁷ Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inv. no. 44. A transcription is on the website of the Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden (<http://www.historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl>), Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inventaris, 2.8.1, Bijlage no. 2.

¹²⁸⁸ The transcription on the website of the Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden incorrectly gives 'musyckeis'.

¹²⁸⁹ Four singers would correspond to the lowest number of singers singing for the Guild of the Holy Sacrament, which had an average of 4-6 singers. We have to take into account that this is only a random indication of one Mass and banquet in 1555.

¹²⁹⁰ Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inv. no. 45, fol. Vv.

or 'kinderen', the organist and bellows blower and *sangmeester* Frans Jan zoon.¹²⁹¹ Complete lists with names of singers are not available.

Although we do not know who the singers were and how many of them were singing every week, since the altar of the guild was based in the church of Sint-Vitus, it would be most logical to assume that the singers of this church were hired to sing the weekly Masses of the Soete Name Jhesus Gilde, as was the case with the Masses and *Lof* of the Guild of the Holy Sacrament.

Without a doubt we may say that the Sint-Vituskerk was the major church in Leeuwarden and polyphony was sung there. However, the group of singers seems to have been a little smaller than in important churches elsewhere in the Low Countries, although a group of four to six singers was not unusually small. The question remains how high the level of singing was and where the singers received their education.

The archives of the church of Nijehove (derived from Sint-Vitus in the 12th century and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary)¹²⁹² and the Sint-Catharinakerk (Hoeksterkerk, founded by the Camminga family in the 14th century)¹²⁹³ are lost. We cannot tell if any music was professionally performed there during the liturgical services. The *Beneficiaalboeken* do mention the church of Nijehove, but they do not tell us anything about the liturgical activities. The only trace of music in the Sint-Catharinakerk around the time Gheerkin must have arrived in Friesland comes from a legal document of 1547 which mentions an organist called Jan Absolons living in the district 'Nijehoeff'. Another document tells us that a certain Pietro Christiany was the organist of the church of the Jacobins and of the church of Nijehove shortly before 1580.¹²⁹⁴

¹²⁹¹ Leeuwarden, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Toegangsnummer 119-B (Ritske Boelema Gasthuis), Inv. no. 57, accounts of 1537/38, 1538/39, 1543, 1551/52, 1559/60, 1564/66 and 1567/68 until 1574. The draft account for the years 1550/57 does not give any information on music (Inv. no. 73). Frans Jan zoon is probably the same man as the *tenoryt* mentioned in the last will of Fed, widow of Wierd Metzies, dated 15 July 1541 (Verhoeven/Mol 1994, pp. 365-367).

¹²⁹² Kunst 1999, pp. 37, 43 and 69-70.

¹²⁹³ Kunst 1999, pp. 45 and 74.

¹²⁹⁴ Vlagsma 2003, p. 19. The fact that Absolons lives in the district does not guarantee that he was the organist of the church.

8.2.2 Franeker¹²⁹⁵

The small town of Franeker¹²⁹⁶ only had one church, which was dedicated to St Martin of Tours, as were many churches in the diocese of Utrecht and in Friesland. The current building was built in the 15th century, succeeding a tuff church. It still has the original mural paintings of several saints on the pillars of the church. The remarkable collection is formed by paintings of Clotilde, Adrian, James, Dominic, Sebastian, Roch, Hubertus, Francis of Assisi, Catherine, Apollonia, Luke the Evangelist and Margaret the Virgin. The Martinikerk is the only Frisian medieval church that has an ambulatory, where many altars found a place.¹²⁹⁷

Two important books with copies of original documents of the church remain, in which we can find information on liturgical activities.¹²⁹⁸ They show us that the Martinikerk was a church like many others in the Low Countries. A parish priest was assisted by several other priests to fulfil the daily spiritual needs of the people in town. There were several prebends and altars in the church:¹²⁹⁹ of St Catherine, St Nicolas, a Sjaerdema prebend (called after the donor),¹³⁰⁰ a Sint-Jans prebend,¹³⁰¹ an altar of the cobblers dedicated to SS Crispin and Crispinian¹³⁰² and a prebend of *Ons Lieve Vrouwe ter Noodt*¹³⁰³ (Our Lady with the dead Christ). Besides the cobblers, the riflers had their guild based in the Martinikerk and celebrated a sung Mass every year on the day of St Christopher, followed by a memorial service for the deceased

¹²⁹⁵ On the history of Franeker in general: Algra 1983 and Hallema 1953a.

¹²⁹⁶ Around 1530 there were about 2,500-3,000 inhabitants (Hallema 1931, p. 124).

¹²⁹⁷ Karstkarel 2009³, pp. 114-117; De Vries 1992².

¹²⁹⁸ Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 251, Inv. no. 1 (Oudste kerkeboek) and Franeker, Archief van het Stadsbestuur van Franeker, Inv. no. 10 (Oudste Privilegeboek). Parts from the Oudste kerkeboek are published by Telting 1856. Hallema 1931 and Hallema 1953b also published from this archival document, as well as from the Oudste Privilegeboek.

¹²⁹⁹ Telting 1856, p. 80. See also: Van Leeuwen 1850, pp. 253-260.

¹³⁰⁰ Founded in the 15th century (Hallema 1931, p. 91).

¹³⁰¹ Probably already founded in the 13th century (Hallema 1931, p. 91).

¹³⁰² The regulations of the guild of the cobblers have been kept in Franeker, Archief van het Stadsbestuur van Franeker, Inv. no. 80. The document contains no information on feasts or liturgy.

¹³⁰³ Hallema 1931, p. 89 mentions that it was gifted with rich goods shortly before 1501. The only connection with music is a reference to a payment to the organist of the church in the Oudste kerkeboek (Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 251, Inv. no. 1, fol. 67v).

members the next day.¹³⁰⁴ The church also housed a guild of the Holy Sacrament, which was – just like in Leeuwarden – succeeded by a *Zoete Naam Jezusgilde* in the first half of the 16th century.¹³⁰⁵ In 1503 a guild of St Anne was founded,¹³⁰⁶ of which the articles of association have been preserved.¹³⁰⁷ Considering the musical elements of these statutes, this charter shows us that the members of the guild celebrated the feast of St Anne (26 July) every year with great lustre, with a procession, a sung Mass and organ playing. The day after, a memorial service was sung in honour of the deceased members of the guild.

A picture of the liturgy in the church can be drawn from two texts that have come down to us containing instructions for the sexton.¹³⁰⁸ Every day there was an early Mass, Matins, a High Mass, Vespers, *Lof* and Vigil. The feasts that were celebrated were (at least) Easter and its octave, Pentecost and its octave, Christmas, New Year's Day, Epiphany of Our Lord, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, St James, St Michael, St Victor, All Saints' Day, St Martin (also being the day of the Dedication of the church), the Marian feasts, and St John. These feasts correspond to the feasts listed for Delft, which belonged to the same diocese, although that list counted many more feasts.¹³⁰⁹

The directions to the sexton also mention that he had to participate in singing during the early Mass, Matins, High Mass, Vesper, *Lof* and Vigil.¹³¹⁰ We do know that besides chant¹³¹¹ polyphonic music was sung in the Franeker Martinikerk, since we have an inventory of 6 October 1565 of the goods the sexton had to take care of.¹³¹² The list mentions two graduals to sing the Mass, two Psalters, four antiphonaries (two winter parts and two summer parts), a large but thin book for the

¹³⁰⁴ Hallema 1931, p. 148-149. I have not been able to track down the original document of 24 July 1539 containing the renewal of the regulations of the guild.

¹³⁰⁵ Spaans 1997, pp. 34 and 62.

¹³⁰⁶ Hallema 1931, pp. 100-105.

¹³⁰⁷ Franeker, Archief van het Gilde of de Broederschap van St. Anna, Inv. no. 1.

¹³⁰⁸ Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 251, Inv. no. 1 (Oudste kerkeboek), fol. 70v-72r (between October 1564 and October 1565) and fol. 79r (09-11-1569). Transcriptions in Telting 1856, pp. 93-96 and 100. See also Algra 1983, p. 36.

¹³⁰⁹ See Appendix 5. We have to keep in mind that Delft was a larger town and that the information we have here only comes from instructions for the sexton.

¹³¹⁰ As we saw in Delft, the sexton there was added to the group of singers 'if he had nothing else to do' (§ 3.4).

¹³¹¹ Hallema 1953b, p. 250 (original in Franeker, Archief van het Stadsbestuur van Franeker, Inv. no. 10 (Oudste Privilegeboek), fol. CXXXVJr; dated 28-01-1561).

¹³¹² Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 251, Inv. no. 1 (Oudste kerkeboek), fol. 74r. Transcription in Telting 1856, p. 98.

Lof services, a large *musyck boeck* and a small *sanghboeck* and a missal. We do not have any information on the content of the liturgical books.

There also is a lack of facts on the singers, let alone whether they were professionals or ‘just’ priests. We do know that there was a *sangmeester* in February 1551, but what his tasks were is not determined, only that he lived in a certain house.¹³¹³ Perhaps he was – together with the head of school – responsible for teaching the schoolchildren, since we know that they also played a role in liturgy. Several references in the books with copies of original charters mention that children were educated in singing in the church.¹³¹⁴

Finally, there was a professional organist who had a new organ at his disposal from 1528 onwards. It was originally built by Jan van Koevelens from Amsterdam; the final payment was made in 1534 to his successor Henrick Niehoff, who around that time built the organ for the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in ’s-Hertogenbosch.¹³¹⁵

8.2.3 Sneek

Besides several convents, Sneek had one church in the 16th century that was also dedicated to St Martin. The first stone Sint-Maartenskerk was probably built in the second half of the 11th century, most likely following a wooden building and in turn followed by a new building between 1498 and 1503.¹³¹⁶

None of the church records has been preserved,¹³¹⁷ so we depend on the *Beneficiaalboeken* for information on music and liturgy.¹³¹⁸ They tell us that the Sint-Maartenskerk had quite a vivid Catholic life, having nine priests and at least seven

¹³¹³ Hallema 1953b, p. 244. Original in Franeker, Archief van het Stadsbestuur van Franeker, Inv. no. 10 (Oudste Privilegeboek), fol. XXIjv-XXIIjr.

¹³¹⁴ Hallema 1953b, pp. 233, 239, 240, 244, 249 and 250. Original texts in: Franeker, Archief van het Stadsbestuur van Franeker, Inv. no. 10 (Oudste Privilegeboek), fol. XCv, CXv-CXjr and XXIjv-XXIIjr; Telting 1856, p. 87; Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 251, inventarisnummer 1 (Oudste kerkeboek, fol. 30v-31v and 40v; Hallema 1931, p. 107).

¹³¹⁵ Vlagsma 2003, pp. 20, 37-40, 85-87; the original texts in Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Toegangsnummer 251, inventarisnummer 1 (Oudste kerkeboek), fol. 30v-31v and 40r; Franeker, Archief van het Stadsbestuur van Franeker, Inv. no. 10 (Oudste Privilegeboek), fol. XXXVr-v and XXXVjr.

¹³¹⁶ Schroor 2011, pp. 57 and 61.

¹³¹⁷ Keikes 1955.

¹³¹⁸ Van Leeuwen 1850, pp. 267-274.

but probably twelve prebends.¹³¹⁹ The church also housed a guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A professional organist, *meester* Harmen Ymez./Emez., was paid for his services; his name suggests that he was of local origin. The number of priests and prebends suggests a mature liturgical centre, therefore the possibility that professional singers sang here cannot be ruled out.

8.2.4 Bolsward

The *Beneficiaalboeken* mention that in the Sint-Maartenskerk in Bolsward the seven canonical hours were sung.¹³²⁰ It was the only parish church, of which the current building dates from the 15th century.¹³²¹ The addition *op sekere daghen* ('on several days') suggests that the seven canonical hours were not sung every day. None of the church accounts has survived,¹³²² and therefore we do not know if professional singers were hired. As in Sneek, we can only consider the possibility.

8.2.5 Schyngen

Interesting is the situation in Schyngen, a village situated between Leeuwarden and Franeker, where the church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The *Beneficiaalboeken* first mention Haucke Sybrenszoon, *die kercks Sanger* (the singer of the church). Then the writer complains about the high costs the church had: the church masters had to pay seven (!) organists, of which four were still alive. Furthermore, there was the group of singers (*koersanghers*) which maintained the liturgical services. The parish priest even wanted more singers, but former singers did not want to return to the church.¹³²³ It remains undetermined what the singers sang: were they priests singing chant, or were they professional singers singing polyphony or a combination of both?

¹³¹⁹ We find seven in the *Beneficiaalboeken*, twelve in Schroor 2011, p. 65.

¹³²⁰ Van Leeuwen 1850, pp. 277-278.

¹³²¹ Keikes 1955, pp. 57-58.

¹³²² Keikes 1952.

¹³²³ Van Leeuwen 1850, pp. 335-337. See also Vlagsma 2003, p. 26, with misinterpretations.

8.2.6 Bozum

A similar situation occurs in Bozum (or Boazum), a village to be found between Leeuwarden and Sneek. The Sint-Martinuskerk most likely dates from the second half of the 12th century and was completed in the late 13th century.¹³²⁴ According to Vlagsma, the church accounts from the church masters have been preserved from 1515 onwards and therefore are the oldest Frisian church accounts that survived.¹³²⁵ Because the *Beneficiaalboeken* only mention an organ,¹³²⁶ we depend on these church accounts.¹³²⁷ Alas, the accounts are restricted to general receipts and expenditure.¹³²⁸ The inscription in the account of 1556-1581 tells us that these are the accounts of the *patroens ende arme goeden* (church masters and poor relief), suggesting that there might have been other accounts, as we saw in Bruges, containing information on liturgy. At least the items in these accounts (partly alphabetically ordered) are typical for a church fabric (up to 1570), not for liturgical purposes.

Vlagsma refers to expenditure for an organ, organist, a psalter and some cymbals, which at least suggests a musical life in the church. The account of 1556 gives another interesting reference to singers that we have to consider here. On 8 December 1556 Hoiert (or Heiert) Claesz. is paid for helping the choir to sing, which was very welcome, *overmits datter seer weinich sanghers zyn* (because there was a shortage of singers). This could indicate that professional singers were taking care of the liturgy in the church in Bozum.

Altogether we may safely conclude that polyphony was sung in Leeuwarden, at least in the church of Sint-Vitus, where professional singers were hired to sing during the liturgy. In the Sint-Maartenskerk in Franeker polyphonic music also sounded, but we do not know if professional singers were involved. For Sneek, Bolsward, Schyngen and Bozum there are indications that there might have been professional singers, but we do not have any proof of that, let alone evidence that they sang polyphony.

The few names that we have of professional singers in Leeuwarden suggest that most of them were probably of local origin. This differs from the western and southern parts of the Low Countries, where singers from all over the region and

¹³²⁴ Karstkarel 2009³, p. 47.

¹³²⁵ Vlagsma 2003, p. 21.

¹³²⁶ Van Leeuwen 1850, pp. 364-365.

¹³²⁷ The originals are in Groningen, Regionaal Historisch Centrum Groninger Archieven, Toegangsnummer 622 (Borg Lulema), Inv. no. 68.

¹³²⁸ Especially in the oldest accounts, many pages are very difficult to read too, since the ink is very light.

beyond were hired. It certainly makes us wonder at what professional level the music was performed and where the singers had received their education. As we saw, Friesland was not a densely populated area around 1550. The towns were small and depended on the surrounding countryside for their wealth. Compared to wealthy and culturally and musically attractive cities like Bruges and 's-Hertogenbosch, and even Delft, Friesland was an underdeveloped area. Therefore, we might wonder what the motives of a highly trained professional singer/composer like Gheerkin de Hondt were to travel to the upper northern region of the Low Countries.

8.3 Gheerkin in 'Vrieslant'?

Up to October 1547 the steps in Gheerkin de Hondt's professional life were quite logical. From the relatively small parish church of Delft to a rich parish church in the metropolis of Bruges, and from then on to a large chapter and parish church in one of the main cities of Brabant, his path makes perfect sense in the light of building a career. But what did he look for in 'Vrieslant'?

The first question to be asked is how Gheerkin got the idea to go to Friesland. Through the accounts of the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch (Gheerkin's last employer), only a few connections are visible between 's-Hertogenbosch and Friesland during the period 1519-1568. First there is the barber Jaicop who donates money that came from 'Vrieslant'.¹³²⁹ In the year 1526/27 we find out that there are no agents (*provisoeren*) in the Frisian area, but that the agent of Groningen looks after the interests in the region.¹³³⁰ During Gheerkin's period in 's-Hertogenbosch, the death money for Lysbeth, the daughter of Claes from Harlingen, is paid for.¹³³¹ The same goes for Mr. Henrick Pistoris, parish priest in Germerwolde, Vrieslant, in 1564/65.¹³³² A more interesting connection becomes clear in October 1552, when the Frisian *lantcommantguer* (commander) in Es (Nes) near Leeuwarden, heer Huberden Scoeffs (Huybrecht Schoors), becomes a sworn member of the Confraternity.¹³³³ But at that time Gheerkin had already left 's-Hertogenbosch for five years.

¹³²⁹ BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 127, Rekening 1523/24, fol. 241v.

¹³³⁰ BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 128, Rekening 1526/27, fol. 165r.

¹³³¹ BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 131, Rekening 1541/42, fol. 14v.

¹³³² BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 134, Rekening 1564/65, fol. 404r.

¹³³³ BHIC, Inv. no. 133, Rekening 1552/53, fol. 269r. *Heer Huybrecht Schoors commenjeur in Vrielant* is host during the second meal of the season on 27 August 1554 (BHIC 1232,

A very interesting item in the accounts of the Broederschap, however, was written between 9 April and 6 May 1548, shortly after Gheerkin had left 's-Hertogenbosch.¹³³⁴ Mr. Jaspaeren the organ builder and N. [Nicolas] the son of Mr. Henricken organ builder received an amount of 20 stuivers for bringing the money they received from the sale of the Broederschap organ in 'Vrieslant'. The account refers to an item in the receipts. These receipts are now missing, so we cannot tell to whom and when exactly the organ was sold. If Gheerkin went to Friesland, he might have played a role in selling the organ. Another possibility is of course that Henrick Niehoff, who was paid by the Broederschap since 1538/39 for maintaining their new organ (built by him in 1534), is the link between the two parties; Niehoff had recently – in 1534 – received the last payment for the new organ in Franeker.

But there is one more connection between the Broederschap and Friesland and that is one of the Swan Brethren, Maximiliaan van Egmond, count of Buren. Maximiliaan was a music-loving member of the staff of Charles V and since 1543 a Swan Brother of the Broederschap. In 1540 he was appointed governor of Friesland, a position he would keep until his death in 1548.¹³³⁵ Maximiliaan might be the third possible tie between the Broederschap and the buying party in Friesland for the sale of the organ. He was in 's-Hertogenbosch on 17 April 1548, at the time the organ was sold.¹³³⁶

Maximiliaan could also have been the person who brought Gheerkin to the idea to move to Friesland after his discharge. Shortly before Gheerkin had to leave the Confraternity at the beginning of October 1547 Maximiliaan paid a visit to 's-Hertogenbosch. In September 1547 he joined governess Mary of Hungary when she visited the city.¹³³⁷ The city accounts mention payments for wine and meals for Maximiliaan, his wife and his daughter on 6 and 19 September.¹³³⁸ It only is a hypothesis, but perhaps in September the argument between the Broederschap and the chapter on Gheerkin's functioning was already going on. Since the chapter

Inv. no. 134, Rekening 1554/55, fol. 19r-v), which was held in the house of the Broederschap itself.

¹³³⁴ BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 132, Rekening 1547/48, fol. 33v.

¹³³⁵ <http://www.dutchrevolt.leiden.edu/dutch/jaarendag/Pages/jaar%20ned%20pol.aspx> and http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/aa__001biog06_01/aa__001biog06_01_0124.php (accessed July 2012).

¹³³⁶ SAHt, OSA, Inv. no. 1399, *Duytgeven* [expenditure], fol. b 6r, the count received wine from the city government.

¹³³⁷ Schipperus 1962, p. 25.

¹³³⁸ And also to Prince William of Orange, the later husband of Anna van Bueren, Maximiliaan's daughter. SAHt, OSA, Inv. no. 1398, *Duytgeven* [expenditure], fol. [B 8r], [B 8v] and [B 9v].

finally unilaterally discharged Gheerkin, without consulting the Brethren, the Brethren probably did not share the point of view of the chapter. Besides, the Broederschap must have appreciated Gheerkin and his work, because two of his Masses were copied in one of their choirbooks and he already served for almost eight years. Therefore, they might have looked for an elegant solution to a delicate question. And there was the music-loving Maximiliaan, governor of Friesland. He could have offered to help and provide Gheerkin with a new position in a region that was far enough away enough from 's-Hertogenbosch not to embarrass the Broederschap any longer. It is a long shot, but it could have been the way things went.

None of the consulted documents that have come down to us in Frisian archives mentions Gheerkin's name,¹³³⁹ but of course we have to keep in mind that many archival pieces have been lost.¹³⁴⁰ We also have to consider the possibility that Gheerkin never arrived in Friesland. But if indeed he went to Friesland, and Maximiliaan van Buren was the person who offered him a position there, Gheerkin probably went to Leeuwarden.

Whatever the case may have been, professionally it was a big step backwards.¹³⁴¹ Friesland only had small towns, with small parish churches that did not have the rich and professional liturgical activities Gheerkin was familiar with in Bruges and 's-Hertogenbosch. The singers in the Frisian churches were most likely all of local

¹³³⁹ I am deeply indebted to Marga ten Hoeve from the Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden for looking for Gheerkin's name in the following *Klappers* (indexes with names occurring in archival documents): K 25, K 30.1, K 30.2, K 31.1, K 32, K 33.1, K. 33.2, K 33.3, K 33.4, K 33.5, K 33.5.1 and K 33.6. Indexes of several Frisian '*burgerboeken*' (*poorterboeken*, books with names of those who became the *poorterrecht*) from the Gheerkin period are available through www.tresoar.nl (Bolsward (1579-1582), Dokkum (1547-1798), Franeker (1539-1807), Sloten (1562-1783) and Sneek (1517-1803)). Indexes of the Leeuwarden *burgerboeken* are available on www.gemeentearchief.nl.

¹³⁴⁰ Many inventories of Frisian town archives contain sources that I would have consulted if I had been certain that Gheerkin was in that city, although my research in Bruges and 's-Hertogenbosch proved that the chances that I would find him would have been extremely small.

¹³⁴¹ We have to consider here that this step backwards could have been Gheerkin's own choice. He must have been over 50 years old when he got fired in 's-Hertogenbosch, so he might have wanted to slow down. The fact that his father had died about a year earlier, leaving a considerable inheritance in which Gheerkin might have shared, could have helped to make the decision to step down on the career ladder. But the question remains why he would have chosen Friesland, instead of some Flemish or Brabant town, which would have been more familiar with him.

origin, not having the education and professional level Gheerkin had himself. We can only guess why he made this career move, because further biographical facts are not available. So for now, after October 1547, we lose track of Gheerkin de Hondt's biography.