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Chapter 9 Gheerkin's social-economic position

9.1 Wages in the Low Countries

A thorough investigation of the living standards of musicians in the 16th-century Low Countries has not yet been made. Without a doubt this is caused by the fact that there were no generally standardised remunerations for *zangmeesters*, singers and other musicians, as are available for other professions with many more members, for example masons and carpenters. Furthermore, it seems much more difficult to provide an overview of yearly remunerations for a singer. Musicians were often paid for individual tasks and had different job responsibilities almost every day and in every town, whereas a mason, for example, had more uniform tasks and was usually paid per day. And finally, the scattered preservation of the accounts of churches – the main employers of singers and musicians – complicates matters too.

Prices and wages in general in the Low Countries have been the subject of several research projects.¹³⁴² For this chapter the wages are most interesting, because it is my purpose to compare Gheerkin's remunerations with those of other professions, to determine his financial position, as an indication of his social status, and not to gain an impression of Gheerkin's purchasing power. Complete lists of wages have been published, mainly for workers in the building industry. There are a few considerations we have to take into account, though.

First, there is the difficulty of determining the position of the builder in question. Was he an unskilled labourer or a highly qualified master? Then there is the problem of the number of working days each year. In the case of a *zangmeester* and singers in churches in the Low Countries all available sources point to a working week of seven days, fifty-two weeks a year, the same as the duties of the clergy. But in almost all other lines of business Sundays were days off, as were the feasts according to the liturgical calendar; people were simply not allowed to work on these days. And then there were of course the days in which there was no work, or a person was absent because of illness, or the fact that he could no longer work because he had

¹³⁴² Used for this book: Verlinden 1959-1973; Scholliers 1975; Noordegraaf/Schoenmakers 1984; Noordegraaf 1985; Munro 2003; Hanus 2010.

become too old. This has led to different calculations of the total (and maximum) number of working days a year,¹³⁴³ but an average of 250 will not be far from the actual situation, depending of course on the diocese.¹³⁴⁴ In relation to this, there often was a summer and winter wage.¹³⁴⁵ In summer labourers could get paid more, simply because they worked more hours a day since there were more hours of daylight. Finally, the institution or private person commissioning the work could pay more or less than other organisations or individuals. This not only depended on the quality of the working men, but also on their availability.

Nevertheless, the following table of wages and remunerations may be representative:

Table 9.1 Wages and remunerations in the late medieval Low Countries.

Profession/Name	Date	Location	Wages and remunerations	In guilders a year (estimate) ¹³⁴⁶
Carpenter, mason ¹³⁴⁷	1520-1535	Court of The Hague	5 <i>stuivers</i> a day ¹³⁴⁸	65
Carpenter, mason ¹³⁴⁹	1520-1550	Dordrecht	5.5 <i>stuivers</i> a day ¹³⁵⁰	71.5

¹³⁴³ For Holland Noordegraaf 1985 (pp. 58-61, 170) gives 245 days up to 1540 and from then on til 1575 260; for Antwerp he quotes Scholliers mentioning 264 days in the 15th and 16th centuries; Munro 2003 (pp. 639-641) quotes Van der Wee in giving 230 working days in the Antwerp-Lier region in 1526; Kuijer 2000 (pp. 331-332) calculates circa 260 working days in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1535-1539, Blockmans/Prevenier 1974 (p. 56) count circa 270 in the same town.

¹³⁴⁴ Based on the calendars in Delft, Bruges and 's-Hertogenbosch, the estimated total number of working days there was respectively 260 (§ 3.5), 245 (§ 5.5.2), 227 (§ 7.5.1). Especially in the last case, some of the feasts must have fallen on a Sunday, which was already a day off.

¹³⁴⁵ On this matter see for example Noordegraaf 1985, pp. 52-57 and Munro 2003, p. 630.

¹³⁴⁶ The fact that we have no certainty about the number of working days makes this column less reliable than the wages per day.

¹³⁴⁷ Noordegraaf/Schoenmakers 1984, pp. 111-112.

¹³⁴⁸ Number of working days unknown, but since The Hague belonged to the diocese of Utrecht, the number of working days in Delft has been used (260).

¹³⁴⁹ Noordegraaf/Schoenmakers 1984, pp. 119-120.

¹³⁵⁰ Number of working days unknown, but since Dordrecht belonged to the diocese of Utrecht, the number of working days in Delft has been used (260).

Master mason ¹³⁵¹	1526	Antwerp	9 pounds 11 <i>schellingen</i> 8 <i>denarii groot</i> Flemish a year (230 working days; = 5 <i>stuivers</i> a day)	57.50
Unskilled agricultural labourer	1530s	Bruges, Sint-Janshospitaal	6 Flemish <i>groot</i> a day (= 3 <i>stuivers</i> a day) ¹³⁵²	36.75
Assistant mason ¹³⁵³	1530-1542	Bruges	3 <i>patards</i> (= 3 <i>stuivers</i>), summer wage	36.75 ¹³⁵⁴
Mason ¹³⁵⁵	1530-1535	Bruges	6 <i>patards</i> (= 6 <i>stuivers</i>), summer wage	73.50 ¹³⁵⁶
Carpenter ¹³⁵⁷	1530s	Bruges, Sint-Janshospitaal	10 Flemish <i>groot</i> a day ¹³⁵⁸ (= 5 <i>stuivers</i> a day)	61.25
Carpenter and Mason ¹³⁵⁹	1530s	Bruges, Madeleine hospital	10 Flemish <i>groot</i> a day ¹³⁶⁰ (= 5 <i>stuivers</i> a day)	61.25
Roofer/slater/tiler (<i>tegeldemaker</i>) and Mason ¹³⁶¹	1530s	Bruges, Sint-Janshospitaal	15 Flemish <i>groot</i> a day ¹³⁶² (= 7.5 <i>stuivers</i> a day)	91.88

¹³⁵¹ Munro 2003, pp. 639-641.

¹³⁵² Number of working days unknown, therefore used the number of working days in Bruges (245). On the countryside wages were lower systematically.

¹³⁵³ Scholliers 1975, p. 312.

¹³⁵⁴ Since this was a summer wage, in winter this assistant mason would probably receive less; therefore, this figure is not reliable.

¹³⁵⁵ Scholliers 1975, p. 316.

¹³⁵⁶ Since this was a summer wage, in winter this mason would probably receive less; therefore, this figure is not reliable.

¹³⁵⁷ Verlinden 1959-1973, volume II, p. 99.

¹³⁵⁸ Number of working days unknown, therefore the number of working days in Bruges is used (245).

¹³⁵⁹ Verlinden 1959-1973, volume II, pp. 106, 110.

¹³⁶⁰ Number of working days unknown, therefore the number of working days in Bruges is used (245).

¹³⁶¹ Verlinden 1959-1973, volume II, p. 97.

¹³⁶² Number of working days unknown, therefore the number of working days in Bruges is used (245).

Mason	1539-47	's-Hertogenbosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap	5 <i>stuivers</i> a day	56.75 ¹³⁶³
Stonemason	1539-47	's-Hertogenbosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap	5 <i>stuivers</i> a day	56.75 ¹³⁶⁴
Carpenter	1539-47	's-Hertogenbosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap	5 <i>stuivers</i> a day	56.75 ¹³⁶⁵
Craftsmen ¹³⁶⁶	1540s	's-Hertogenbosch	5 <i>stuivers</i> a day (250 day a year) ¹³⁶⁷	62.50
Labourer ¹³⁶⁸	1540s	's-Hertogenbosch	3 <i>stuivers</i> a day (250 days a year) ¹³⁶⁹	37.50
Singer, minimum	1539-47	's-Hertogenbosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap	14 <i>stuivers</i> a week ¹³⁷⁰	36.40
Singer, maximum	1539-47	's-Hertogenbosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap	20 <i>stuivers</i> a week ¹³⁷¹	52

¹³⁶³ Only a few days, but converted to a whole year, the number of 227 working days in 's-Hertogenbosch a year is maintained.

¹³⁶⁴ Only a few days, but converted to a whole year, the number of 227 working days in 's-Hertogenbosch a year is maintained.

¹³⁶⁵ Only a few days, but converted to a whole year, the number of 227 working days in 's-Hertogenbosch a year is maintained.

¹³⁶⁶ Hanus 2010, p. 106.

¹³⁶⁷ Hanus 2010, p. 108, see also p. 120.

¹³⁶⁸ Hanus 2010, p. 106.

¹³⁶⁹ Hanus 2010, p. 108, see also p. 120.

¹³⁷⁰ Based on weekly *sangerenloon*, remunerations only for singing Vespers and Mass every week on Tuesday and Wednesday, feasts, Saturday Marian *Lof* and banquets.

¹³⁷¹ Based on weekly *sangerenloon*, remunerations only for singing Vespers and Mass every week on Tuesday and Wednesday, feasts, Saturday Marian *Lof* and banquets.

Organist	1539-47	's-Hertogenbosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap	18 <i>stuivers</i> a week ¹³⁷²	46.80
Carpenter, mason ¹³⁷³	Around 1550	Franeker (Friesland)	5 <i>stuivers</i> a day ¹³⁷⁴	65
Parish priest ¹³⁷⁵	Around 1550	Franeker (Friesland)	250 guilders a year	250
Desiderius Erasmus ¹³⁷⁶	1526	Europe	At least 789,206 Flemish pounds a year	4,735.24

9.2 Gheerkin's remunerations

To get an impression of Gheerkin's social status among the working population in the Low Countries in the 16th century, we depend on the accounts from the institutions Gheerkin worked for.

9.2.1 Delft

The first reference to Gheerkin's remunerations in Delft is in his appointment text of 3 June 1521, which says that he will receive a monthly amount of 10 Flemish *schellingen* 'boven loedt ende accidencien' plus a new tabard worth 20 *schellingen* every two years.¹³⁷⁷ Gheerkin's second appointment in Delft (1 August 1530) shows the same pattern.¹³⁷⁸ In both cases Gheerkin seems to have rented housing accommodation, for which he received an additional amount of money from the church administrators.

For Gheerkin's first appointment, it remains a mystery how much his *loedt* was.

¹³⁷² Based on weekly *sangerenloon*, remunerations only for singing Vespers and Mass every week on Tuesday and Wednesday, feasts, Saturday Marian *Lof* and banquets.

¹³⁷³ Hallema 1931, p. 170.

¹³⁷⁴ Number of working days unknown, but since Friesland belonged to the diocese of Utrecht, the number of working days in Delft has been used (260).

¹³⁷⁵ Hallema 1931, p. 170.

¹³⁷⁶ Munro 2003, pp. 639-641.

¹³⁷⁷ § 3.1.

¹³⁷⁸ § 3.3.

But from November 1524 onwards, the documents of the Nieuwe Kerk show us totals of the complete '*choerloot*', the *loot* paid to all members of the *choer*, and therefore to everyone who participated in performing the seven canonical hours.¹³⁷⁹ The total amount of *loot* was different every month, which can easily be explained by two facts: if a person did not participate, he did not receive *loot* and the number of 'performing moments' could differ from month to month (depending on feasts and foundations). The total sums vary therefore from slightly above 24 Flemish pounds a year to almost 30 pounds, being an average of at least 2 pounds a month. However, since we do not know how many people actually were on duty and the records do not mention how much each individual received, these payments do not seem to help us any further in determining Gheerkin's income as *choraelmeester* in Delft.

But there is another way, through a piece of scrap paper mentioning the *loedt* of a *zangmeester*, other singers and the sexton and his assistant in April and May 1549.¹³⁸⁰ The *zangmeester* received respectively 42.75 *stuivers* and 43.5 *stuivers*, which would come to around 26 guilders a year. The *loot* for four other singers¹³⁸¹ is a total of almost 135 *stuivers* (6.75 guilders). Together with the remunerations of the *zangmeester* and the sexton and his assistant this makes a little more than 9 guilders a month, equalling a total of about 110 guilders a year. If we compare this to the total sums of remunerations during Gheerkin's appointment mentioned above (between 144 and 180 guilders a year), and correct these figures for the numbers of singers (an average of seven a year when Gheerkin was *zangmeester*, therefore three more than in 1549),¹³⁸² it all fits and the amounts of *loot* mentioned seem to contain the payments to the singers and the sexton and his assistant only.¹³⁸³

The *zangmeester* of 1549 is to be identified as Jacob de Leeu, who was appointed 2 October 1547 as *zangmeester* and *hoogconter* and who was also responsible for the education and singing of the choirboys. According to his appointment text, he would receive 60 guilders a year, to which three more guilders could be added if he served well.¹³⁸⁴ As we saw above, part of these 60 guilders were around 26 guilders of *loedt*; the rest consisted of the fixed monthly fee, the

¹³⁷⁹ GAD 435, Inv. no. 186, fol. LXJr-LXVr.

¹³⁸⁰ GAD 435, Inv. no. 191, at the end of the manuscript (which contains information on the period 1520-1524).

¹³⁸¹ In April, in May there were only two.

¹³⁸² § 3.4.

¹³⁸³ Seven singers having 34 *stuivers* a month, plus one *zangmeester* having 43 *stuivers*, makes 168 guilders a year (the sexton and his assistant only received a few *stuivers* each month). Therefore the payments to priests and for example the organist must have been booked elsewhere, probably in the (missing) accounts of the church fabric.

¹³⁸⁴ Vente 1980, p. 88.

accidencien and extras.

The *accidencien* must be translated as ‘additional income’, which probably means the remunerations for feast days. This income consisted of 100 *stuivers*, 50 coming from the church fabric and 50 from the parish priest and the *getijdenmeesters* together.¹³⁸⁵ For three other feasts (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost) extra payments were made. To celebrate the feast of St Cecilia, the musicians’ patron, the singers received an amount of 6 *groot*.¹³⁸⁶

If we combine these figures with the figures we have on Gheerkin de Hondt, and if we assume he also received around 43 *stuivers* a month in *loot*,¹³⁸⁷ we are able to make the following – estimated – overview of Gheerkin’s remunerations:

Table 9.2 Gheerkin’s estimated remunerations in Delft

Duties	Remunerations	In guilders a year
Fixed monthly fee	10 <i>schellingen groot</i>	36
<i>Loot</i> (based on Jacob de Leeu’s <i>loot</i>)	± 43 <i>stuivers</i> a month	26
<i>Accidencije</i> (feasts)	100 <i>stuivers</i> a year	5
Christmas, Easter, Pentecost	6 Flemish <i>groot</i> each	0.45
Feast of St Cecilia	6 <i>groot</i>	0.0025
Total		± 67 guilders

This total amount of 67 guilders a year corresponds generally to the yearly income of *zangmeester* Jacob de Leeu mentioned in the church records in 1547. In addition, Gheerkin received a tabard worth 20 schellingen every two years and an amount for his house rent.¹³⁸⁸ Furthermore, he probably received extra income from private

¹³⁸⁵ Vente 1980, p. 81 (GAD 435, Inv. no. 156, fol. XLIXr-v). See also: § 3.5.

¹³⁸⁶ § 3.4.

¹³⁸⁷ This is not certain, since there are almost twenty years between Gheerkin’s appointment and Jacob de Leeu’s. But it is defensible, since as we shall see in ’s-Hertogenbosch, the remunerations of a *zangmeester* there were very stable during the 1520s, 1530s and 1540s. Of course, we cannot be certain the 43 *stuivers* were De Leeu’s remunerations every month, but this is only to make a reconstruction of how much Gheerkin could have received, since official and complete figures are now missing.

¹³⁸⁸ The house rent is 7 Rhine guilders (§ 3.1), probably for a year. Scholliers 1960, p. 164 concludes that a labourer (bricklayer) in the expensive 1540s in Antwerp spent almost 18 per cent of his income on rent a year. The 7 guilders Gheerkin received on house rent

foundations,¹³⁸⁹ but exact figures are missing.

9.2.2 Bruges

A similar but slightly different situation appears in Bruges. Both the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft and the Sint-Jacobskerk in Bruges were parish churches where the seven canonical hours were sung every day. Therefore, the package of tasks Gheerkin had to fulfil in both churches would be about the same and the remunerations should be comparable.

The foundation charter of 1424 gives us more detailed information.¹³⁹⁰ As in Delft, in Bruges the payment system was partly based on *loot*, in Bruges called *brievekins* or *billetkins* (small letters). A special scribe (*tafeldragher*) was appointed to write down who was present at every service. Here it is explicitly stated: each payment is according to presence. The payments were written down per month for the total group, so we do not know how much Gheerkin received individually.¹³⁹¹ But the foundation charter gives us an overview of its members and a distribution code for the payment of the group:

- ☛ The *Commuun* consists of one parish priest, ten priests and four vicars;
- ☛ The four vicars are the sexton of the church, the schoolmaster, the subschoolmaster and the cantor, the last one instructing the children how to sing;
- ☛ The parish priest will receive a remuneration of two parts, the priests of one part and the vicars of half a part. But if the parish priest is not present himself, his substitute will receive a full part, like each of the ten priests.

With a residing parish priest, this makes a total of originally fourteen parts to be distributed. However, from 1424 onwards, several changes were made, because the fact is that appointment texts of several *zangmeesters* from the end of the 15th century up to and including the 1540s show us that the *zangmeester* received twice as much as in 1424, at least nominally (while the purchasing power must have

are about 10 per cent of his total (estimated) remunerations in Delft. The 20 schellingen for clothing every two years are about 5 per cent of his income a year.

¹³⁸⁹ § 3.6.

¹³⁹⁰ § 4.6.

¹³⁹¹ OCMW-B, Rekening Commuun 1532/33 (fol. [XXXVI]v), 1533/34 (fol. XXXVIIv), 1534/36 (fol. XXXVIIv and XXXIXr), 1536/37 (fol. XXXVIIv), 1537/39 (fol. XLr and XLv). The account from St John 1539 to St John 1540 is missing. The next account starts at Christmas 1540 (until Christmas 1541).

diminished in the course of that period).¹³⁹² This is also true for the schoolmaster.¹³⁹³ Furthermore, we find priests having half a *pitantie* instead of a whole one, most likely simply because there were not enough parts to share.¹³⁹⁴ Finally, we know for sure that in Gheerkin's time the parish priest was not resident¹³⁹⁵ and therefore only received one part instead of two. Altogether, it seems safe to conclude that there were still fourteen parts to be divided and Gheerkin had one of them.¹³⁹⁶

The total amount of remunerations for the entire group was rather constant, at an average of nearly 940 pounds *parisis* a year.¹³⁹⁷ For Gheerkin this meant an average of nearly 34 guilders a year. According to the church accounts (church fabric, *Commuun* and *Dis*) separate payments were made for several feasts and foundations. Therefore we are able to make a list of remunerations (Table 9.3).¹³⁹⁸

This overview can only be seen as an indication and is probably not complete or even contains wrong amounts. For example, it is not always clear from the different church accounts if the amounts mentioned in the payments for private foundations were paid directly to the singers or through the *Commuun*, church fabric or *Dis*.¹³⁹⁹ Furthermore, we have to take into account that payments for private foundations might sometimes have been made directly by the founders or their heirs to the performers. And finally, we do not always know exactly how many singers had to share an amount.

¹³⁹² § 5.4.

¹³⁹³ RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 237, fol. LXXXIIJv-LXXXIIIJv (heer Martin de Raedt, 5 December 1517) and RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 21, fol. 11r (heer Mecghiel Porret, 22 July 1538). Both men received half a *pitantie* for themselves and another half for (maintaining and teaching) the choirboys. See also § 5.6.

¹³⁹⁴ Appointment texts according to RAB, Inv. no. 88, nr. 21.

¹³⁹⁵ In the foundation texts from the period Gheerkin de Hondt worked at the Sint-Jacobskerk, the man is consequently called *stedehouder vanden prochipape* ('substitute of the parish priest', see § 5.6 for the foundations texts).

¹³⁹⁶ See also the discussion in § 5.6.

¹³⁹⁷ OCMW-B, Rekening Commuun 1532/33 (fol. [XXXVIJv]), 1533/34 (fol. XXXVIIJv), 1534/36 (fol. XXXVIIJv and XXXIXr), 1536/37 (fol. XXXVIIJv), 1537/39 (fol. XLr and XLv). The account from St John 1539 to St John 1540 is missing. The next account starts at Christmas 1540 (until Christmas 1541).

¹³⁹⁸ See for an overview of the liturgical duties of Gheerkin de Hondt: § 5.5.7.

¹³⁹⁹ For example the payment to *die vanden commune* in the Bitebloc foundation for singing Vespers for Trinity Sunday. This could either mean 'to the *Commuun* to pay its members' or 'to the members of the *Commuun* directly'. Because of this, only the payments that can clearly be derived from the accounts as paid directly to the singers are mentioned in the overview above. Although it always concerns small amounts, the total amount a year might have been substantial.

Table 9.3 Gheerkin's estimated remunerations in Bruges

Duties	Remunerations	In guilders a year
<i>Distributions</i>	67 Parisian pounds	33.50
Passion on Palm Sunday and Good Friday ¹⁴⁰⁰	4 <i>groot</i>	0.10
All Souls Day ¹⁴⁰¹	3 <i>groot</i>	0.08
Extra foundations for feasts: ¹⁴⁰²		
- Our Lady's Visitation (foundation Jacop Bieze)		
* <i>canter</i> for his motet ¹⁴⁰³	8 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
* 2 <i>canters</i> in the choir ¹⁴⁰⁴	2 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
* <i>zanghers</i> for singing Mass	4 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
- Cosmas & Damianus		
* <i>cantre</i> for his motet	8 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
- Nativitatis Johannis Baptiste (foundation Jan Waters)		
* <i>cantre</i> for his <i>recht</i> (right) / motets	6 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
- Our Lady Presentation (foundation widow Jan Claijes)		
* 2 <i>canters</i> in the choir	2 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
* <i>ghezellen vander</i> <i>muussyke</i>	2 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
* <i>cantre</i> for his motet	6 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
Total	38 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	0.90

¹⁴⁰⁰ RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 27, Rekening kerkfabriek 1532 (fol. 213r), 1533 (fol. 242r), 1534 (fol. 267v), 1535 (fol. 298v), 1536 (fol. 328v), 1537 (fol. 359r), 1538 (fol. 388r), 1539 (fol. 414v). The amount mentioned is for the entire group of singers and is 2 *schellingen groot* every year. In § 5.6 I concluded that there were probably six to eight adult singers employed at the same time. In the same chapter (§ 5.5.3) it became clear that the foundations of Philips Biteblock and Donaes de Moor demanded at least six mature singers. I therefore divided the total amount of remunerations for the group by six, since there must have been at least six singers.

¹⁴⁰¹ RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 27, 1532 (fol. 215v), 1533 (fol. 242r), 1534 (fol. 268r), 1535 (fol. 299v), 1536 (fol. 329v), 1537 (fol. 360r), 1538 (fol. 389v), 1539 (fol. 416v). See Appendix 3, 1532, 2 November. The entire group received 18 *groot*; if we assume there were six singers, they each received 3 *groot*.

Foundation Willem Humbloot and Katheline Damhouders ¹⁴⁰⁵	3 <i>schellingen groot</i>	0.90
Foundation Philips Bitebloc and Adriane van Beversluys (Mass Trinity Sunday) ¹⁴⁰⁶		
- <i>ghezellen vanden muusijcke</i> for singing Mass	2 <i>schellingen parisis</i>	
- <i>zanghers</i> for 2 motets	1 <i>schelling parisis</i>	0.08
<i>Ommegancs</i> ¹⁴⁰⁷	2.8 <i>groten</i>	0.07
Total		± 35.5

Gheerkin's remunerations in *lood* seem to be higher in Bruges than in Delft. That also goes for the money he received for his clothing: in Delft he got 20 *schellingen* every two years, in Bruges it was 16 *schellingen* every year.¹⁴⁰⁸ This would match the environment: Bruges was a very wealthy city, with a large international community, and with six churches having professional singers. Besides, the church of Sint-Jacob was situated in the richest part of town and was well-to-do; the singers

¹⁴⁰² OCMW-B, Rekening Commuun 1532/33 (fol. XXXVJr-XXXVIJr), 1533/34 (fol. XXXVIJr-XXXVIIJr), 1534/36 (fol. XXXVIJr-XXXVIIJr), 1536/37 (fol. XXXVIJr-XXXVIIJr), 1537/39 (fol. XXXVIIJr-XXXIXv). The account from St John 1539 to St John 1540 is missing. The next account starts at Christmas 1540 (until Christmas 1541). Again, I divided total amounts between six singers.

¹⁴⁰³ It remains unclear what exactly is meant by this: did the *zangmeester* have to select or even compose a motet, or was it for a performance and therefore for the entire group (he would of course not be able to sing a motet by himself)? Since the group of singers is mentioned separately in this text, the first option is chosen here. See on this matter also (for the Sint-Donaaskerk): Blackburn 1973, pp. 567-569.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Gheerkin could be one of them, but this is not certain of course. Since the amount is very small anyway, I added it to the list.

¹⁴⁰⁵ See § 5.5.3 and Appendix 8. RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 27, Rekening kerkfabriek 1533 (fol. 240r), 1534 (fol. 265r), 1535 (fol. 296r), 1536 (fol. 326r), 1537 (fol. 355v), 1538 (fol. 385r), 1539 (fol. 412r).

¹⁴⁰⁶ See § 5.5.3.1. OWMW-B, Rekening Dis 1532/33 (fol. LXIXr), 1533/34 (fol. LXVJv), 1534/35 (fol. LXVIIJv), 1535/36 (fol. LXVIIJv), 1536/37 (fol. LXXr), 1537/38 (fol. LXXr), 1538/39 (fol. LXXr).

¹⁴⁰⁷ See § 5.5.6. The payments for the total group of singers were between 16 and 18 *groten* (RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 27, Rekening kerkfabriek 1532 (fol. 186v, 187v, 188rv, 190r, 192r). Again, I divided the total between six singers.

¹⁴⁰⁸ § 5.1.

therefore would have to be dressed properly.

Nevertheless, the total amount of Gheerkin's remunerations in Bruges are about half of his remunerations in Delft. The difference is mainly to be explained by the fact that in Delft Gheerkin received a fixed amount of 36 guilders every year. None of the appointment texts of *zangmeesters* in Bruges specifically refers to such a basic salary. But, the total amount of about 35.5 guilders which can be derived from the church accounts simply cannot have been all there was.

This is somewhat confirmed by an appointment text dated 17 June 1515, which sums up the total remunerations of the organist:¹⁴⁰⁹

Table 9.4 Remunerations of the organist in 1515

Duties	Remunerations a year	In guilders a year
Daily <i>Lof</i> of the Sacrament and weekly Mass of the Sacrament	2 Flemish pounds	12
High feasts (church fabric) ¹⁴¹⁰	30 <i>schellingen</i>	9
<i>Commuun</i>	3 Flemish pounds	18
Half a <i>pitantie</i>	3 Flemish pounds	18
Masses and other offices by guilds and crafts and 'altars'	25 <i>schellingen</i>	7.5
church fabric	3 Flemish pounds 5 <i>schellingen</i>	19.5
Total	14 Flemish pounds	84

This would mean that the organist would receive more than twice the sum the *zangmeester* received, which is highly unlikely, because the *zangmeester* was the leader of the entire group and was expected to earn the highest salary.

What strikes one most in the above table, is the division of the 14 pounds in tasks, because none of the appointment texts of the *zangmeesters* which have come down to us gives us such a clear scheme.¹⁴¹¹ The appointment text of the organist of 1515 shows us that 'half a *pitantie*' is worth 18 guilders. Above, we have calculated

¹⁴⁰⁹ § 5.6.

¹⁴¹⁰ In the accounts of the church fabric of the 1530s called *wedden en sallaris* (RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 27, fol. 209r, 239v, 264v, 295v, 325v, 355r, 384v, 411v).

¹⁴¹¹ This could have to do with the sources of the texts. The appointment texts of the *zangmeesters* come from a general resolution book for the church fabric, the *Commuun* and *Dis*, whereas this appointment text comes from the archives of the *Commuun* alone.

that Gheerkin's whole part would be about 33.50 guilders. This was an estimate, and comes very close to the *pitantie* of the organist. Consequently, it is very tempting to assume that the amounts mentioned under '*Commuun*' and 'church fabric', together 37.5 guilders, would represent a fixed monthly fee, like the fixed fee Gheerkin received in Delft, because these two amounts are the only ones not earmarked in the list and therefore are 'general' sums.

But the church documents of the Sint-Jacobskerk in Bruges do offer us another indication of the total remunerations a *zangmeester* could earn: already in 1502 *zangmeester* Jan Raes was complaining that he could easily make 132 guilders a year outside the city of Bruges.¹⁴¹² From then on he was given a whole *pitantie* worth 18 guilders a year instead of half a one. The 1515 text of the organist already indicates that half a *pitantie* seemed to have been doubled by then to 18 guilders, which is confirmed by the fact that in the 1530s, Gheerkin's whole *pitantie* was indeed double this amount. The question is if Jan Raes was exaggerating in 1502 with his statement about the 132 guilders.

We are able to do a double check. As we shall see in the next paragraph on 's-Hertogenbosch, the weekly payments from the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap show us that the *zangmeester* received 1.5 times the remuneration of an organist. If we multiply the 84 guilders the organist received in 1515 by 1.5, the outcome is 126 guilders, which nicely agrees the allegation by Jan Raes.

We also have the rule in the foundation charter of 1424 that the members of the *Commuun* would receive 20 *schellingen parisis* together for every day they sang the seven canonical hours and the High Mass. We know for sure that in 1424 the seven canonical hours were by far not sung on all days of the week, which actually was the situation in the 1530s, but let us assume that this rule was still valid by that time and the amount was still the same.¹⁴¹³ It would mean that the complete group of servants would receive all 365 days of the year 20 *schellingen parisis*, equalling a little more than 13 guilders for each member of the *Commuun* per year.¹⁴¹⁴ This would not be unreasonable for only singing the seven canonical hours and a High Mass.¹⁴¹⁵

Altogether, we may conclude that Gheerkin must have earned in Bruges

¹⁴¹² Converted from 22 Flemish pounds mentioned in the document (RAB, Inv. no. 88, no. 237, fol. XXJv-XXIJr: heer Jan Raes, 09 January 1502).

¹⁴¹³ This is of course dubious, but the least we can expect is that it cannot have become less, since the *pitantie* also clearly had become higher.

¹⁴¹⁴ 365 Parisian pounds a year, divided into 14 parts, one pound equalling half a guilder.

¹⁴¹⁵ Compared to the other liturgical obligations mentioned in the foundation charter and taking into account that the remunerations had been at least doubled nominally between 1424 and the 1530s, since they were clearly doubled between 1502 and the 1530s.

(much) more than the about 35.5 guilders we can reconstruct from the church accounts and foundation texts and that his total remunerations might have come close to about 130 guilders a year.

9.2.3 's-Hertogenbosch

In 's-Hertogenbosch we have the very rich accounts of the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap. In these accounts there is a yearly item *sangerenloon*.¹⁴¹⁶ The accounts always start on the Saturday before the feast of St John the Baptist (24 June). The *sangerenloon* was paid every week on Wednesday, probably after Mass. The first item sums up the names of all the musical servants, starting with the *zangmeester*. Gheerkin received 27 *stuivers* every week, an amount remaining constant in all the years he worked in 's-Hertogenbosch. Extra payments were made a few times a year, all listed under the general account item *Uitgaven van allerhande zaken*.¹⁴¹⁷ Altogether Table 9.5 gives a list of payments per year.¹⁴¹⁸

As we already saw in Chapter 7, from 1542 onwards, Gheerkin received 34 guilders a year from the Broederschap for maintaining the choirboys (and perhaps an equal amount from the chapter).¹⁴¹⁹ Since it is not clear how much of this amount covered the direct costs for food, housing and clothing of the boys and how much was the reward and therefore free disposable income for Gheerkin, the 34 guilders are left out in the above overview. For the same reason the payment for his hood/tabard¹⁴²⁰ and extra payments for travelling costs and compositions¹⁴²¹ are left out too.

¹⁴¹⁶ BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 130, fol. 225r-227v (1539/40), fol. 296r-298v (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 54r-56v (1541/42), fol. 128r-131v (1542/43), fol. 195r-197v (1543/44), fol. 261r-263v (1544/45), fol. 329v-333v (1545/46); Inv. no. 132, fol. 49r-53v (1547/48); Inv. no. 133, fol. 251r-254v (1546/47).

¹⁴¹⁷ Like in Bruges, some of these payments were made to the entire group of musicians. For this overview, an average of eight is taken (based on § 7.3).

¹⁴¹⁸ Based on the accounts 1540/41 up to and including 1546/47. See § 7.1 for the duties Gheerkin fulfilled for the Broederschap.

¹⁴¹⁹ § 7.1.

¹⁴²⁰ § 7.3. BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 30, fol. 211r-v (1539/40), 283r (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 36v-37r (1541/42), fol. 109r-110r (1542/43), fol. 178v-179v (1543/44), fol. 244v-245r (1544/45), fol. 315v-316v (1545/46); Inv. no. 133, fol. 234v-235r (1546/47).

¹⁴²¹ § 7.1.

Table 9.5 Gheerkin's remunerations at the 's-Hertogenbosch Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap

Duties	Remuneration in guilders
Weekly payment	70.20
Singing <i>O Salutaris Hostia</i> weekly ¹⁴²²	0.09
To treat the guest singers during the July procession ¹⁴²³	0.09
4 general memorial services and 4 Masses at 1 <i>stuiver</i> ¹⁴²⁴	0.20
Memorial services Sworn Brethren at 0.5 <i>stuivers</i> ¹⁴²⁵	0.08
Feast of Our Lady's Presentation ¹⁴²⁶	0.04
Total	70.70

The question again is: was this all? I believe so. The accounts of the Broederschap are highly detailed and complete, therefore it is not to be expected that there were other payments to the singers than mentioned above. Of course, there is always the possibility that there were private foundations from members of the Broederschap, paying the singers directly. But the 70 guilders Gheerkin received for singing, give us a very good indication of the total remunerations he received from the Broederschap.

¹⁴²² 14 *stuivers* for the entire group of musicians. BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 130, fol. 270v (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 24r (1541/42), fol. 96r (1542/43), fol. 165v (1543/44), fol. 234r (1544/45), fol. 302r (1545/46); Inv. no. 133, fol. 224r (1546/47).

¹⁴²³ 14 *stuivers* for the entire group. BHIC 1232, Inv. no. 130, fol. 270v (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 23v-24r (1541/42), fol. 96r (1542/43), fol. 165v (1543/44), fol. 234r (1544/45), fol. 302r (1545/46); Inv. no. 133, fol. 224r (1546/47).

¹⁴²⁴ Inv. no. 130, fol. 272r, 275r-v, 284r-v, 288r (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 25v-26r, 29v, 37v-38r, 44rv (1541/42), fol. 99r-v, 102v, 112r, 119v-120r (1542/43), fol. 168r-v, 170r-v, 181r-v, 186r (1543/44), fol. 236r, 238r-v, 246v-247r (1544/45), fol. 300r-v, 305v-306r, 308v-309r, 318r-v (1545/46); Inv. no. 132, fol. 16r-v (1546/47); Inv. no. 133, fol. 226v-227r, 228v-229r, 236v-237r (1546/47).

¹⁴²⁵ Of course these remunerations depended on how many members died. The 3.5 *stuivers* a year are therefore an average of the years 1540-1547. Inv. no. 130, fol. 273r-v, 273v, 274r, 274v-275r, 275r (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 43r (1541/42), fol. 104r, 113v, 114r (1542/43), fol. 175r, 175v-176r, 177v-178r, 183v (1543/44), fol. 237r, 242r (1544/45), fol. 305r (1545/46); Inv. no. 133, fol. 229v, 238v, 239v, 240v (1546/47).

¹⁴²⁶ Foundation by Aert vander Cluyten: 3 *ort* (= $\frac{3}{4}$ *stuiver*). Inv. no. 130, fol. 276v (1540/41); Inv. no. 131, fol. 31r (1541/42), fol. 103v-104r (1542/43), fol. 171v-172r (1543/44), fol. 239r (1544/45), fol. 309v (1545/46); Inv. no. 133, fol. 229v (1546/47).

The other confraternity Gheerkin worked for was the Sacramentsbroederschap.¹⁴²⁷ As we have seen, the accounts from this confraternity as well as the duties the singers had to fulfil are not completely clear. Nevertheless, based on the accounts we have, we can make an estimate of Gheerkin's remunerations:¹⁴²⁸

Table 9.6 Gheerkin's estimated remunerations in 's-Hertogenbosch, Sacramentsbroederschap

Duties	Remuneration in guilders
Mass of the Holy Sacrament on Thursday at 0.5 <i>stuiver</i> a week	1.30
Corpus Christi: '4 short Vespers' and Mass at 6.5 <i>stuivers</i>	0.33
Masses in the octave of Corpus Christi at 1 <i>stuiver</i> per Mass	0.30
Memorial service members Monday after the octave of Corpus Christi	0.10
Singing during <i>tcruys te richten</i> ('raise the cross'), and to <i>tcruys neder te leggen</i> ('put the cross down'), 4 x a year at 1 <i>stuiver</i>	0.20
Total	2.23

Remarkable is the low amount of 0.5 *stuiver* each singer received for singing a weekly Mass. Compared to the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap this is very small, even if we take into account that for the Sacramentsbroederschap Vespers were sung every week as well. This could indicate that the weekly Mass of the Holy Sacrament was sung in chant, instead of the more complicated polyphony. But why was the entire group of singers needed then and why would this Sacramentsbroederschap buy an expensive book from Petrus Alamire, suggesting that polyphony was sung? Clearly the Sacramentsbroederschap did not want to be inferior to the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap. The only conclusion can be that this was not all the singers received; they probably got paid from someone else, for example the *wasmeester*, who perhaps wrote his own accounts.

This conclusion is more or less confirmed by the accounts of 1556-1559. Here we read that on the four payment days a year for singing the weekly Mass *heer Jan sangmeester* (Jan van Wintelroy) received 35 *stuivers*. This makes a total of 7 guilders

¹⁴²⁷ § 6.5.

¹⁴²⁸ I want to stress that this remains an estimate, since the accounts are fragmentary and not very specific; besides, they vary in every volume. See the discussion in § 6.5 and § 7.5.3.

a year. This is still only 10 per cent of his remunerations at the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap,¹⁴²⁹ but already more than the poor 1.30 guilders the *zangmeesters* between 1520 and 1555 received.

We miss the accounts of the chapter of Sint-Jan, but we may assume that Gheerkin's remunerations were a multiplication of the ones he received from the Broederschap. Although the fact that the chapter and the Broederschap appointed singers together suggests they were equal, this cannot have been the case, because the workload for the chapter was much heavier than for the Broederschap. The duties for the chapter must have come close to the duties for the Sint-Jacobskerk in Bruges and the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft, based on singing the seven canonical hours plus a High Mass every day of the week, adding several types of liturgical ceremonies, as we have seen. The tasks Gheerkin had to fulfil for the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap were 'just' a surplus.

If we assume that Gheerkin's remunerations in Bruges came close to 130 guilders a year, we may also assume that the 's-Hertogenbosch chapter paid him at least that same amount. According to the status of the church (being a collegiate church)¹⁴³⁰ and the fact that it served both as collegiate and parish church (the only parish church in town) having many liturgical activities within its walls demanding professional singing, it is highly likely that Gheerkin received more in 's-Hertogenbosch than in Bruges. Adding his income from the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap and the Sacramentsbroederschap brings us to the conclusion that he at least earned 200 guilders a year, but probably more. Thus transferring to 's-Hertogenbosch was definitely a career move that was not only based on a more prestigious position, but also on financial considerations.

¹⁴²⁹ The *sangerenloon* from the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in the same period mentions a weekly sum of 28 *stuivers* for *zangmeester* Jan van Wintelroy, only one *stuiver* more than Gheerkin received in the 1540s and therefore comparable.

¹⁴³⁰ It is reasonable to assume that a collegiate church might have paid more than a parish church.

9.3 The financial position of a *zangmeester* in the Low Countries

Of course, 's-Hertogenbosch was Gheerkin's last known position, and by that time he had already been a *zangmeester* for more than twenty-five years. But as far as we are able to follow his career steps, they show an upward trend. In Delft Gheerkin had an income of at least 67 guilders a year, to which we have to add a yearly amount for house rent and money for clothing. In his next position, as *zangmeester* in Bruges, Gheerkin probably already received double the amount in remunerations, namely 130 guilders a year. And in his last known position, as 's-Hertogenbosch *zangmeesters* Gheerkin most likely received more than 200 guilders a year.

Now that we have made an estimation of Gheerkin's remunerations, we may compare them to other men working in the Low Countries. In general we may conclude from Table 9.1 above, that a skilled worker usually received an average of 5 *stuivers* a day and that the wages were rather stable during the period 1520-1550.¹⁴³¹ A yearly income then depended on the number of days he was able – or even allowed – to work. Another conclusion we may draw is that working with one's hands did not yield as much as working with one's mind.¹⁴³²

The same Table 9.1 shows us that a singer for the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch could earn between 50 per cent and 75 per cent of the remunerations a *zangmeester* received; an organist's salary was about two-thirds of a *zangmeester* income. Since the payments to the musicians of the Broederschap only represent a part of their total remunerations (because they also worked for the chapter), we may assume that their total remunerations came to a total of at least 100-150 guilders a year.¹⁴³³ Compared to the craftsmen having 5 *stuivers* a day, at an average of 250 days a year, and therefore 62.50 guilders a year, singers and organists had a nice income.

Hanus has calculated a Gross Urban Income per capita for 's-Hertogenbosch in

¹⁴³¹ Confirmed for Holland by Noordegraaf/Schoenmakers 1984, p. 23, concluding wages started to rise from 1540 onwards; confirmed for the southern Low Countries by Verlinden 1965-1973, volume II, p. 88, stating that a long period of stable wages ended in 1558; confirmed for 's-Hertogenbosch by Blockmans/Prevenier 1974, p. 56, noticing that in the first four decades of the 16th century wages were remarkably stable.

¹⁴³² Also proven by Van den Hoven van Genderen 2003, pp. 406, 409, 421: a canon of the Utrecht Oudmunster in the period 1520-1528 received 7.9 times more than a shed assistant and 3.8 times more than a chief stonemason (one of the best paid labourers). The Oudmunster was one of five Utrecht collegiate churches; their canons received by far the highest remunerations.

¹⁴³³ 50 to 75 per cent of Gheerkin's estimated 200 guilders.

the final year Gheerkin worked there, namely 1547/48.¹⁴³⁴ In that year the average income in 's-Hertogenbosch was 32.9 guilders a year. A few years later, in 1552/53, this income had risen to 44.10 guilders a year.¹⁴³⁵ Blondé had already made a graphics of professions and the wages of the 1552/53 taxes, from which we may conclude that the income of 25 per cent of the population was higher than 125 guilders a year.¹⁴³⁶ As we have seen above, the estimated remunerations of *zangmeester* Gheerkin de Hondt were at least 200 guilders a year, but probably more. And this does not include surpluses for clothing and rent,¹⁴³⁷ which skilled workers did not receive, and possible additional income, for example for composing. Therefore, in income, Gheerkin belonged to the higher middle class of 's-Hertogenbosch, his last known position as *zangmeester*. But to get and stay there, he had to pay a price: he worked seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year.

¹⁴³⁴ Hanus 2010, pp. 123-129, based on house rent levies.

¹⁴³⁵ Based on general levies.

¹⁴³⁶ Blondé 2004, p. 62. The clergy is no part of these graphics, since they were not taxed. Among the 25 per cent 'big earners' were the pharmacists, cloth merchants, wine merchants and hoteliers.

¹⁴³⁷ Estimated at 15 per cent of his income each year and therefore rather substantial.

