



## Funeral consumption and social distinction in the early modern Netherlands

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## Introduction

Death was a common visitor in the lives of early modern people. People preferably died in their own beds, surrounded by the family members, friends and neighbors that would soon prepare their lifeless bodies for the grave. As death was regular and inevitable, so was the funeral. People in the early modern period considered proper burials to be of great importance, not only for the persons who had died and their salvation, but also for the community that was left behind, and was forced to deal with the loss of a member. The prominent role of religious belief in people's lives, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, made certain that religious rites, connected to the last moments before death, the funeral, and the burial of the body, were respected. Even the poor, who could not afford an appropriate funeral, were buried with attention to all proper funerary rites: their funerals were organized and paid for by the local government or the parish. Secular traditions were also carefully observed; it was thought to be important to honor the dead and comfort the grieving bereaved during communal rituals such as the procession and the funeral meal. Even though standard rituals were performed during all funerals, scholars have argued that funeral rites differed according to the wealth and status of the deceased and their families. Funerals were increasingly used to display social status in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the public and social features of the funeral became more important. From the funeral procession to the feast organized after the burial; the funeral was an important social event during which consumption represented the deceased's social position.<sup>1</sup>

From drinking coffee to gathering in coffeehouses and from wearing certain clothes to purchasing certain pieces of tableware, what kind of consumption goods and practices people purchased, performed and desired in early modern societies depended on their membership to a particular social group. Whether defined by wealth, occupation or shared culture, social positions were argued to be of primary importance for spending habits and consumption choices. After 1970 this relation between consumption and social status became a popular topic among social and economic historians: scholars were inspired to study the phenomenon in history as products were increasingly used to mark social differences in the modern world. Focusing on the general consumption patterns of social groups and especially the conspicuous consumption of the higher

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<sup>1</sup> The principal studies focusing on the subject are (in order of original appearance): D.B. Snoep, *Dood en begraven: sterven en rouwen, 1700-1900* (Utrecht 1980), P. Ariès, *Het uur van onze dood: duizend jaar sterven, begraven, rouwen en gedenken* (Amsterdam 1987), M. Vovelle, *La mort et l'occident, de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris 1983), C. Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual in early modern England* (London 1984), R. Spruit, *De dood onder ogen. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van sterven, begraven, cremieren en rouw* (Houten 1986), D. Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death. Ritual, religion, and the life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford 1997), R.A. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford 1998), V. Harding, *The dead and the living in Paris and London, 1500-1670* (Cambridge 2002), P. Bitter, *Graven en begraven: archeologie en geschiedenis van de Grote Kerk van Alkmaar* (Hilversum 2002), E. Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* (Cambridge 2005).

social orders in the increasingly commercialized and prosperous societies of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, historians concluded that as a greater amount of people gained access to a greater quantity and quality of goods, consumption became the favored way to underline one's social position.<sup>2</sup> The impact of social distinction between but also within the heterogeneous elite, middle classes and the poorer orders was argued to be of great significance in early modern century Europe. While it was argued that a person's consumer choices depended on the social group he or she belonged to, it was also suggested by scholars that consumption could be used to enhance one's social position. Especially the middle orders of society used consumption to distinguish themselves socially by copying goods and practices preferred by the highest orders of society.<sup>3</sup> Imitation of the elite to upgrade one's social standing is a phenomenon observed by historians and contemporaries in all times and societies, but is an especially interesting development to study within the dynamic communities of early modern Europe; when boundaries between elite and middle classes were progressively blurred by the increased economic wealth of the latter. As financial and social options changed, so did ambitions. Elites looked for new ways to publicly distinguish themselves, as their previously exclusive customs were imitated by inferior classes, and the middle groups redefined their social identities collectively and individually within novel economic, social, and cultural contexts. Clothing styles were copied, elite manners adopted, and particular objects put on display to establish, present, and underline (novel) membership to the highest groups of society and to profit from the privileges of upper-class life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See: N. McKendrick, J. Brewer, J.H. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London 1982), C. Campbell, *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumerism* (Oxford 1987) 6-7, 17-24, R.S. Mason, *Conspicuous consumption: a study of exceptional consumer behaviour* (Hampshire 1981) vii-xi, 12-13, 130-142, 152-161, G. MacCracken, *Culture and consumption: new approaches to the symbolic character of consumer goods and activities* (Bloomington 1990) 3-29, 31-43, 130-137, L. Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London 1988) 1-22, 191-200, J.C. Agnew, 'Coming up for air: consumer culture in historical perspective', in: J. Brewer, R. Porter, (eds.), *Consumption and the world of goods* (London 1993) 14-39, J. Appleby, 'Consumption in early modern social thought', in: Brewer, Porter, *Consumption and the world of goods* 162-173, C. Fairchild, 'Consumption in Early Modern Europe. A Review Article', in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35/4 (1993) 850-858, M. Douglas, B. Isherwood, *The world of goods: Towards anthropology of consumption* (New York 1978, 1996) vi-xv, H.T. Nijboer, *De fatsoenering van het bestaan: consumptie in Leeuwarden tijdens de Gouden Eeuw*, doctoral thesis (Groningen 2007) 10-25, 67-77, 98-121, L. Klein, 'Politeness for plebes. Consumption and social identity in early eighteenth-century England', in: A. Bermingham, J. Brewer, (eds.) *The consumption of culture 1600-1800* (London 1995) 362-382, B. Blondé, (ed.), *Fashioning old and new: changing consumer preferences in Europe (seventeenth-nineteenth centuries)* (Turnhout 2009) 71-76, J. Styles, 'Custom or consumption? Plebeian fashion in eighteenth century England', in: M. Berg, E. Eger, (eds.), *Luxury in the eighteenth century: debates, desires and delectable goods* (Basingstoke 2003) 103-115, M. Berg, *Luxury and pleasure in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford 2005). Scholars were influenced by the works of Veblen (on conspicuous consumption in *The theory of the leisure class* (Fairfield 1991), M. North, 'Material delight and the joy of living': cultural consumption in the age of Enlightenment in Germany (Aldershot 2008) 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour* 1-22, 191-200, McKendrick, *The birth of a consumer society* 3-5, 13-29, 31-33, Campbell, *The romantic ethic* 6-7, 17-24, Mason, *Conspicuous consumption* vii-xi, 12-13, 130-142, 152-161, Klein, 'Politeness for plebes', 362-382, Blondé, *Fashioning old and new* 71-76.

<sup>4</sup> Bermingham, Brewer, *The consumption of culture* 1-20, Douglas, Isherwood, *The world of goods* vi-xv, Mason, *The economics of conspicuous consumption* 132-133, Klein, 'Politeness for plebes' 362-382, Y. Kuiper, 'Adel in de achttiende eeuw: smaak en distinctie, een verkenning van het veld', in: *Virtus: bulletin van de Werkgroep Adelsgeschiedenis* 16 (Zwolle 2009) 11-15, G. Marnef, R. Vermeir, (eds.), *Adel en macht: politiek, cultuur, economie* (Maastricht 2004) 5-15, K. Vliieger – De Wilde *Adellijke levensstijl: dienstpersoneel, consumptieve en materiële leefwereld van Jan van Brouhoven en Livina de*

In this thesis the significance of socially distinctive consumption in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will be reviewed by focusing on funerals. The social importance of funerals in early modern Europe has often been touched upon by scholars, but studies focusing on funeral consumption in the context of social groups and social distinction are rare. Historians have underlined the occurrence of socially distinctive consumer behavior by focusing on personal possessions, public and private spaces, and intellectual debate, without paying much attention to the specific connection between funerary rituals and social status. Early modern burial ceremonies honoring the dead and comforting the bereaved were an extension of early modern society: therefore during these important public and communal events the social position of the deceased and their families could have been underlined by the presence, scale and costs of certain funerary rites. While a boundary between the elite and the rest of society was carefully drawn, scholars have argued that upper class customs were increasingly imitated by other social groups in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially by the prosperous middle classes. By also adopting the funeral customs of the elite, the middle orders might have attempted to upgrade their social status; either believing to be part of or aspiring to belong to the highest orders of society. It would thus be interesting and valuable to study the relation between funeral consumption and social groups in more detail, to provide a novel and valuable perspective on socially distinctive behavior in early modern Europe. In this thesis funerary costs and customs will be studied to reflect on their role in the grander process of social distinction in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. Did people use funerals to distinguish themselves socially?

While the majority of scholars focusing on death and the funeral in early modern Europe have preferred to use qualitative sources, a handful of historians have studied the quantitative data recorded in so-called death debts, a particular part of probate inventories in which the expenses dedicated to a funeral were recorded. Historians have often used probate inventories, containing information on people's possessions and wealth, to define the consumption patterns of groups and to study differences within and between social groups in time and space.<sup>5</sup> C. Gittings was the first

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*Beer, graaf en gravin van Bergeyck (ca. 1685-1740)* (Brussel 2005) 102-103, 110-116, H. van Koolbergen, 'De materiële cultuur van Weesp en Weesperkarspel in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw', in: A. Schuurman, J. de Vries, A. van der Woude, *Aards geluk. De Nederlanders en hun spullen van 1550 tot 1850* (Amsterdam 1997) 1-15, 27-29, J.A. Kamermans, *Materiële cultuur in de Krimpenerwaard in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: ontwikkeling en diversiteit* (Wageningen 1999) 1-5, H. Dibbits, 'Pronken as practice. Material culture in The Netherlands, 1650-1800', in: R.C. Rittersma, (ed.), *Luxury in the Low Countries. Miscellaneous Reflections on Netherlandish Material Culture, 1500 to the Present* (Brussels 2010) 137-158, Klein, 'Politeness for plebes' 362-382, N. Bijleveld, 'Gelijkheid en onderscheid in de adellijke begrafenisrituelen van de achttiende eeuw', in: *Virtus: bulletin van de Werkgroep Adelsgeschiedenis 16* (Zwolle 2009) 21-33, J. Verbesselt, *De adel in het hertogdom Brabant* (Brussel 1985) 133-141, 163, M. Berg, H. Clifford, *Consumers and luxury, consumer culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester 1999) 63-85, Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain* 1-22, 191-200, L. Weatherill, 'The meaning of consumption in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England', in: Brewer, Porter, *Consumption and the world of goods* 206-227, Fairchild, 'Consumption in Early Modern Europe', 850-858.

<sup>5</sup> This discussion will be briefly discussed in chapter 2, for more on the historical study of probate inventories: A. van der Woude, A., Schuurman, (eds.), *Probate inventories: a new source for the historical study of wealth, material culture and*

and most important scholar to study death debts in particular, in her work on reactions to death in early modern England. Gittings preferred probate inventories to qualitative documents, which only referred to the death and the funeral in passing and were exclusively representative of a small section of society. Death debts, she argued, were not only more broadly available but also represented a wider social range.<sup>6</sup> Three historians followed Gittings' lead and focused on death debts in the Dutch context. R.A. Maarveld, whose study of funerals in Amersfoort in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries preceded Gittings', studied the financial records of the church, devotional literature, and death debts.<sup>7</sup> Maarveld was critical of the source, stating that death debts were too complex to be used quantitatively and should therefore only be studied for their qualitative value. T. Schepens, who studied funeral rituals and costs in eighteenth century Ghent,<sup>8</sup> used death debts as quantitative source in her work, while P. Bitter, in his archeological and historical study of graves and funerals taking place in the 'Grote Kerk' of medieval and early modern Alkmaar,<sup>9</sup> concluded that death debts were a valuable source for the study of funeral rituals as well as funeral costs. While these four scholars have come to the conclusion that the data on funeral consumption found in death debts can make a valuable quantitative or qualitative contribution to the historiography of death and the funeral, not many historians have thus far followed their lead. This is partly due to the complexity of the source: the potential of death debts and probate inventories to provide the historian with valuable data on the (funeral) consumption of particular social groups is often recognized, but historians have also frequently criticized the source, pointing out problems concerning especially the definition and representation of social groups, the (local) variation of the data recorded and the possible incompleteness of probate inventories.<sup>10</sup>

In this thesis death debts, consisting of the total costs of funerals and often brief descriptions of the specific rituals paid for, will be studied to review and explore the potential of this source for historical research focusing on death and the funeral in general and concentrating on the relation

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*agricultural development* - A.A.G. Bijdragen 23 (Wageningen 1980), A.J. Schuurman, 'Probate inventory research: opportunities and drawbacks', in: *Inventaires après-décès et ventes de meubles: apports à un histoire de la vie économique et quotidienne (XVIe – XIXe siècle)* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1988) 19-28, T.F. Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, 'Boedelinventarissen', in: *Broncommentaren* 2 (1995), J.J. Voskuil, 'Boedelbeschrijvingen als bron voor de kennis in groepsvorming en groepsgedrag', in: *Volkskundig Bulletin* 13 (1987) 30-55, H. van Koolbergen, 'Ontwikkelingen in het boedelinventarissonderzoek', in: *Volkskundig Bulletin* 13 (1987) 251.

<sup>6</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 7-17.

<sup>7</sup> Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-34, 39-51.

<sup>8</sup> Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel', 344-356.

<sup>9</sup> Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 9-172, 271-284.

<sup>10</sup> This discussion will be briefly discussed in chapter 2, for more on the historical study of probate inventories: A. van der Woude, A., Schuurman, (eds.), *Probate inventories: a new source for the historical study of wealth, material culture and agricultural development* - A.A.G. Bijdragen 23 (Wageningen 1980), A.J. Schuurman, 'Probate inventory research: opportunities and drawbacks', in: *Inventaires après-décès et ventes de meubles: apports à un histoire de la vie économique et quotidienne (XVIe – XIXe siècle)* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1988) 19-28, T.F. Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, 'Boedelinventarissen', in: *Broncommentaren* 2 (1995), J.J. Voskuil, 'Boedelbeschrijvingen als bron voor de kennis in groepsvorming en groepsgedrag', in: *Volkskundig Bulletin* 13 (1987) 30-55, H. van Koolbergen, 'Ontwikkelingen in het boedelinventarissonderzoek', in: *Volkskundig Bulletin* 13 (1987) 251.

between funeral consumption and social distinction in early modern Europe in particular. Following Gittings' example, not a localized but general approach to the subject was chosen, contrary to the studies of previous scholars examining death debts in the early modern Netherlands. Over 500 funerals organized in the Dutch Republic and the Southern Netherlands between 1638 and 1800 were examined to review the manner in which funeral consumption was used to underline as well as upgrade social position. Expenses dedicated to different funerary objects and rituals recorded in the death debts were connected to the social group of a deceased to describe and define the influence of membership to a certain social group upon the presence, scale and costs of socially important funerary rituals. Studying two rarely combined fields of historiography with the use of a relatively unexplored source, this thesis aims to make a valuable contribution to more than one historical debate: underlining the importance of social distinction in early modern Europe by focusing on funeral consumption, by exploring the thus far partly neglected and partly underestimated qualitative and quantitative data recorded in death debts. Before focusing on the relation between particular funeral rituals and social status and distinction (in chapter three, four and five) and discussing in more detail the study of death debts in this thesis (chapter two), in the first chapter of this thesis the social importance of the early modern funeral will be examined.

## Chapter One. The social importance of the funeral

### 1.1 From religious to social importance

The Reformation was of great importance for the attitudes towards death and the characteristics of burial ceremonies in early modern Europe. From 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards the dominance of religion in funeral rituals, which underlined the importance of a proper death and honorable funeral for salvation, decreased.<sup>11</sup> French historian Michel Vovelle stated that a development of 'dechristianization' took place in Europe between 1500 and 1800: the militant total Christianity that dominated society declined, inspiring new attitudes toward death and the funeral.<sup>12</sup> The change in religious influence was due to the less important place of death in the Protestant religion. It was argued by scholars like Cressy and Koslofsky that the decreased importance of the doctrine of purgatory in Protestantism was responsible for the minor importance of the funeral in the Protestant religion.<sup>13</sup> The doctrine of purgatory proclaimed that after death Christians spend a certain amount of time in purgatory, in suffering, to account for sins accumulated during their lifetimes. The time spent in purgatory, before being accepted to heaven, could be offset by good works in life but also after death; by prayer and masses said in commemoration of the deceased or by leaving money to the Church and Christian charities. Contrary to the thus far dominant Catholic opinion, Protestantism proclaimed that after death the human soul was beyond intercession: prayer for the dead became obsolete as only the faith of individuals during life decided about their salvation. In the end purgatory itself was abolished: people went straight to either heaven or hell. The Protestant denial of the doctrine of purgatory changed burial rites profoundly. God decided about salvation at the moment of death and thus the funeral no longer had an important religious function and masses said were no longer of influence upon the salvation of the deceased. While it was still preached that people should be buried in an honorable manner, ideally awaiting the Day of Judgment in their undisturbed graves, rituals surrounding the funeral were thought to be of minor religious importance. The impact of the Reformation and the Protestant denial of purgatory have been debated by scholars, and some have argued that the influence of both was less invasive than often supposed: Catholic customs proved hard to extinguish and many traditions survived in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe with only minor alterations.<sup>14</sup> Vanessa Harding's

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<sup>11</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family in England 1-4*, 220-226.

<sup>12</sup> Vovelle, *La mort et l'occident*, J. Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of mortality. Studies in the social history of death* (London 1981) 2-4, 10-13, J. MacManners, 'Death and the French historians', in: Whaley, *Mirrors of mortality* 120-124, T. Kselman, 'Death in the Western world: Michel Vovelle's ambivalent epic 'La Mort et l'Occident', *Mortality* 9-2 (2004) 168-175.

<sup>13</sup> See D. Cressy's *Birth, marriage, and death* and D. Cressy, 'Death and the social order: the funerary preferences of Elizabethan gentlemen', *Continuity and Change* 5/1 (1989), but especially M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the dead. Death and ritual in early modern Germany, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Whaley, *Mirrors of mortality* 7-8, Kselman, 'Death in the Western world' 168-169, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 11-26, 34-50, 55-100, 146, 151, R. Porter, 'Classics revisited: The hour of Philippe Ariès', *Mortality* 4/1 (1999) 85-



comparison of funerary rituals in early modern Paris and London underlined the continuity before and after the Reformation. She argued that despite the religious differences between the two capitals, as London was affected by the Reformation and Paris by the Counterreformation, there were considerable continuities and similarities in funeral rituals after 1600.<sup>15</sup> Also scholars focusing on differences between funerary rituals in the Calvinist Dutch Republic and the Catholic Southern Netherlands have commented on the influence of the Reformation on burial ceremonies, while also recognizing the continued importance of Catholic funerary rituals after 1550.<sup>16</sup> Funeral expenses recorded in the death debts studied in this thesis underlined the noted divergence between Catholic and Protestant funerals: while Catholic deceased reserved a considerable portion of their funeral expenses to pay for church rituals, especially masses to support their soul, Protestants hardly spent any money on religious rites. In Protestant funerals secular funeral rituals were prioritized: relatively large sums of money were dedicated to mourning clothes and the funeral feast. Thus in the Catholic religion church rituals remained of great importance after 1600, while in Protestant regions, due to the repudiation of purgatory, secular funeral rituals became dominant.<sup>17</sup>

While religious rituals lost their meaning in Protestant countries, the social importance of funerals increased. In the historiography of death and the funeral, a popular subject after 1960, the rise of the social importance of funerary rituals was emphasized. Most scholars agreed with social historian Philippe Ariès, who argued in his groundbreaking work *L'Homme devant la mort* that European attitudes to death were increasingly secular from the Middle Ages onwards and that therefore the funeral was increasingly seen as an important social event.<sup>18</sup> While scholars have criticized Ariès' argument that funerals also became more individual and private after 1500,<sup>19</sup> the increasing social importance of funerary rituals was supported by most. The social significance of

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90, P. Den Boer 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood. Mogelijkheden tot onderzoek naar de houding ten opzichte van de dode en de dood ten tijde van de Republiek', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 89/1 (1976) 161-166, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 449-459, Cressy, 'Death and the social order', 102-407, Koslofsky, *The reformation of the dead* 2-15, 19-39, 40-77, 152-159, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family in England* 1-4, 255-275, 297-310, 348-384, R.A. Houlbrooke *Death, ritual, and bereavement* (London 1989) 25-42.

<sup>15</sup> Harding, *The dead and the living in Paris and London* 1-4, 177-206, 231-232, 255-275, 297-310, 348-384, Houlbrooke *Death, ritual, and bereavement* 25-42.

<sup>16</sup> Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 172-174, 192-194, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 39-40, 63-64, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 18-21, 24-30, 78, M. Portegies, *Dood en begraven in 's- Hertogenbosch. Het Sint-Janskerkhof 1629-1858* (Utrecht 1999) 22-27, 47-48, 209-213.

<sup>17</sup> The influence of religion on funerary rites is a topic that deserves more attention in additional research, especially in the context of multiconfessional regions. The comparison conducted in this thesis was limited and partly distorted: the number of funerals that could be compared in the context of religion was small (151) and the sample was biased in favor of Catholic funerals (118 Catholic funerals against 33 Protestant funerals). Also the fact that over 75 % of the Catholic funerals was organized in Antwerp, the only city representing the Southern Netherlands which in character differed socially, culturally and religiously from the other six towns, further complicated the sample. The relative importance of certain funeral rites in Protestant and Catholic funerals could therefore not therefore be studied in detail in this thesis, but should be focused upon in additional research as the comparison that was conducted presented interesting results.

<sup>18</sup> Ariès, *Het uur van onze dood*, Whaley *Mirrors of mortality* 7-8, Kselman, 'Death in the Western world' 168-169, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 11, Porter, 'Classics revisited' 85-90.

<sup>19</sup> See criticism as stated in: Whaley, *Mirrors of mortality* 80-105, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 1-12, 379, 387-388, 398-414, 449-450, 476-482, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family in England* 297-310, 348-384.

burials became dominant in the eighteenth century: as the funeral was secularized and commercialized an increasing emphasis was placed upon the social status of the deceased and their families. Death was even argued to be an indicator of social change: beliefs and rituals surrounding death had an important social function and were connected to social, political and familial structures and hierarchies.<sup>20</sup> The grandeur of the rituals, the number of attendants and the overall outlook of the burial ceremonies represented the social status of the deceased.

In a pamphlet published in Leiden in 1814 the relation between funerals and social distinction was commented upon.<sup>21</sup> Writer J. van Thoir argued that traditional ceremonies, prominent in the Republic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, honored the deceased in an appropriate manner, while the early nineteenth century custom to bury the dead in more modest and simple ways did not. Although the writer admitted that part of the traditional funerals had been organized in too costly and luxurious ways, misusing the occasion underline (differences in) social position, most funerals were sincere in their display and only concerned with properly honoring the dead. Public, stately and grand funeral processions should therefore remain the custom, the writer argued: to remind all people of their own mortality and to show the deceased the right amount of respect.<sup>22</sup> While the display of social status in funeral rituals in the Netherlands was argued by some historians, and by van Thoir, to be of small importance,<sup>23</sup> other scholars and contemporaries have concluded differently: also in the early modern Dutch Republic and the Southern Netherlands funerals became increasingly socially significant. While costs and rituals partly depended on a person's religion and financial situation, social status became crucial for the amount spent on the different facets of the funeral. Scholars have argued that the growing difference between simple and luxurious funerals, between funerals of the rich and the poor, was a consequence of the increasing desire of higher social groups to underline differences in social status via funerary rituals.<sup>24</sup> An

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<sup>20</sup> Koslofsky, *The reformation of the dead* 2-15, 19-39, 40-77, 152-159, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-4, 177-206, 231-232, 255-275, 297-310, 348-384, Houlbrooke *Death, ritual, and bereavement* 25-42, J. Addy, *Death, money and the vultures. Inheritance and avarice, 1660-1750* (London 1992) 40-44, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 57-59, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 1-12, 476-482. Whaley *Mirrors of mortality* 2-4, 7-8, 10-13, Kselman, 'Death in the Western world' 168-175, Porter, 'Classics revisited' 85-90, Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 161-166. Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 11-26, 34-37, 39-50, 55-56, 60-100, 146, 151, McManners, 'Death and the French historians', 120-124, D.E. Stannard, *The puritan way of death: a study in religion, culture, and social change* (Oxford 1978), P. Chaunu, *La mort à Paris: xVIe, xVIIe et xVIIIe siècles* (Paris 1978), F. Lebrun, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux 17e et 18e siècles: essai de démographie et de psychologie historiques* (Paris 1971).

<sup>21</sup> J. van Thoir, 'Gedachten over het openlyk en plegtig begraven der lijken', (Leiden 1814) *The Knuttel Collection* number 23864.

<sup>22</sup> 'Gedachten over het openlyk en plegtig begraven der lijken', (1814) *Knuttel* 23864, 8-12.

<sup>23</sup> H.L. Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer in Nederland* (Lochem 1970) 64-74, 115-138, 154-158, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 2-3, 4-8, 10-11, 15, 22-24, 83, A. van der Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* (Amsterdam 1990) 33-48, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood.', 182-185, R.J. Hirsch, *Doodenritueel in de Nederlanden vóór 1700* (Amsterdam 1921) 105-107, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 39.

<sup>24</sup> R. Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw. Een onderzoek naar de veranderingen in het karakter van de kerkelijke begrafenis en de betekenis daarvan voor opvattingen over de dood, sterven en begraven, voornamelijk aan de hand van Amersfoortse begrafenis in de jaren 1650-1795* (Utrecht 1983) 4-5, 24-25, 28-34, 40, 45-51, T. Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel in Gent tijdens de 18e eeuw', *Oost-Vlaamse Zanten* 75/4 (2000) 347-356, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 64-74, 115-138,

important contemporary observer of funeral rituals that emphasized their relation to social distinction in the early modern Netherlands was J. Le Francq van Berkhey; poet, writer and surgeon (1729-1812). In his *Natuurlyke historie van Holland*, published in nine different parts between 1769 and 1811, Berkhey described the nature of Holland and the lifestyles and customs of the 'Hollanders' in the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In a chapter on burial rituals, printed in the third part of the work, Berkhey stated that he appreciated the Dutch tradition to bury people according to their birth, status and merit. One should be able to recognize the differences between social groups, the elite, the middle groups, and the peasant orders, when observing a funerary procession, Berkhey argued.<sup>26</sup>

## 1.2 The early modern funeral

The process of dying, death and the funeral, from a person's last moments to the construction of a grave, can be divided in five different phases. While only the public stages of the funeral were important for social distinction, all stages will be briefly described here, to underline the manner in which not just the public funeral but also other traditions and practices surrounding death were of great social importance in early modern Europe. The first phase consisted of rites performed just before the death. People preferably died at home in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. When a person lay dying, family, friends and direct neighbors were called in to say goodbye, witness the drawing up of the will and attend the actual death. In Catholic families a priest was summoned to perform the last rites and while this custom was officially abandoned in Protestantism a teacher (or 'krankenbezorger') could still be called to support the dying. Berkhey stated that in the eighteenth century the practice of calling upon a teacher or priest decreased in Dutch towns, but remained of great importance in the countryside.<sup>27</sup> It was important for early modern people to die a 'good death', following the ideal of the 'ars moriendi': specific rituals and duties, as writing up a testament, saying goodbye to family and friends and in the Catholic religion confessing to a priest, should be performed with the right decorum. A dying person should leave life in a calm manner, accepting death and prepared for its arrival. In early modern Europe there was a broad consensus of opinion on the importance and details of dying a good death, an ideal followed by all classes.<sup>28</sup>

After a person had passed, the second phase of the dying process commenced, during which the body was taken care of, the death was announced and the funeral was organized. Other actions were taken dependent on local customs: the inside and outside of the house could be decorated with

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154-158, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 2-3, 4-8, 10-11, 15, 22-24, 83, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 33-48, Den Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 105-107, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 39, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 243-244.

<sup>25</sup> G.J. van Bork, P.J. Verkruijsse (eds.), *De Nederlandse en Vlaamse auteurs van middeleeuwen tot heden met inbegrip van de Friese auteurs* (Weesp 1985).

<sup>26</sup> Francq van Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1982-1984.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem 1824-1835, 1847-1850.

<sup>28</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, ritual, and bereavement* 89, 43-61, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 36-38.

black fabric, the will could be read and people could come and visit the deceased for a last time. The preparation of the body for the grave was a private practice; done by the bereaved, neighbors or hired help (in the Netherlands referred to as 'uitkleders' or 'afleggers'). As a lavish funeral took time to organize, the bodies of the deceased elite were often embalmed to keep them from decomposing before the burial. The body was treated with a mixture of herbs and sometimes the intestines were removed by a surgeon ('chirurgijn'). The majority of bodies however were only washed and clothed in a shroud of white linen. This sheet, the 'doodshemd', was most likely already in possession of the deceased; it was often given as a wedding present. After taking care of the body it was placed in a coffin, usually made of wood.<sup>29</sup> As a mark of respect the corpse was not left alone between death and the funeral; watchers ('wakers') could be appointed to keep the body safe. Money was sometimes spent on a wake ritual, which could include the burning of candles, singing, dancing, drinking and eating to scare away the returning soul and to safeguard the deceased against evil spirits. Catholics made sure prayers were said for the deceased and sometimes a sacred ceremony was performed by a priest.<sup>30</sup>

Funerals could be organized by guilds, the parish or the local government, but customarily the deceased and the bereaved coordinated the event in private. The funeral rites chosen were always a compromise between the desired, the affordable and the feasible and as a consequence there were a lot of local and personal variations. Rituals and costs were decided upon by the bereaved in accordance to ecclesiastical ordinances and local traditions and customs, which remained quite constant over the centuries. The deceased usually left instructions in a will or other document, for instance requesting where to be buried, to which specific charities money should be donated, or commenting on the size and details of the funeral meal. But as the deceased's desires were not legally binding, the requests could be ignored. Gittings stated that often selfish motives of the bereaved, not wanting to break with tradition or desiring to underline, or even upgrade, their social status, more money was spent on the funeral than the deceased had requested.<sup>31</sup> One of the first things taken care of by the organizers of the funeral was notifying other people of the passing.

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<sup>29</sup> Harding, *The dead and the living 177-187*, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death 421-433*, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-103, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 52, 54-55, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 6-26, 27-75, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 346, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 24-30, 102-117, 152, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 275-277, 284, 336-343 Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 29-30, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 20-21, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 156-168, 187-205, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 9, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20, H. Blankestijn, H. Dekker, B. van Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen. De geschiedenis van de laatste eer in Rhenen, Ekst en Achterberg* (Rhenen 2006) 61, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 223-227, 239-241, 260-265, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie 1824-1835, 1847-1850*.

<sup>30</sup> Harding, *The dead and the living 177-187*, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death 421-433*, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-103, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 52, 54-55, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 6-26, 27-75, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 346, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 24-30, 102-117, 152, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 275-277, 284, 336-343 Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 29-30, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 20-21, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 156-168, 187-205, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 9, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 61, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 224, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie 1835-1838*.

<sup>31</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 86-89.

This was traditionally done by in person, by for instance ‘aansprekers’ and ‘doodenroepers’, but from 1650 onwards the printing of small announcements of the death and invitations to the funeral became common. Sometimes adverts were published in the local paper.<sup>32</sup> A setton or undertaker (‘lijkbidder’, ‘aanspreker’, ‘begravenisnooder’ or ‘doodenroeper’) could be hired to help with the funeral arrangements. The specific duties of an undertaker differed from place to place but in general this person was responsible for announcing the death, inviting people to the funeral, and taking care of the grave. His role became more important from the late seventeenth century onwards: undertakers started organizing the entire burial in a commercial manner and took control of the funeral arrangements of the majority of people.<sup>33</sup> Normally funerals were organized to take place during the day, but from the seventeenth century onwards other times became popular. Funerals would take place very early, but especially often late at night: In the northern and southern Netherlands nocturnal burials became popular in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>34</sup> While in England burials by night cost less than funerals taking place during the day, in the Netherlands persons paid a higher price for being buried at night: the church as well as the government instated high fines upon burials taking place outside normal hours.<sup>35</sup>

The most public part of the process of death and the funeral officially commenced with the funeral procession (‘lijkstatie’ or ‘rouwstoet’), the third phase of the process, during which the corpse was taken from the house of the deceased to the church or churchyard, the place of burial. The rituals performed during and the money spent on the public funeral rituals were related to social status and distinction: not only did people’s established social position and wealth determine what could be spent on rituals and items performed and presented, scholars have also argued that the procession, church service, grave, and funeral feast could influence the deceased’s and bereaved social status in return. Before leaving the house of the deceased, people attending the procession were often given the opportunity to extend their condolences to the bereaved and to see the

<sup>32</sup> J. Macmatters, *Death and the Enlightenment: changing attitudes to death among Christians and unbelievers in eighteenth-century France* (Oxford 1891) 284-291, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1857-1860, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 245-247, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 14, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 22-26, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 33, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 109, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 90-94, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1857-1860.

<sup>33</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 24-32, 102-117, 136-139, 152, Harding, *The dead and the living* 177-187, 194-195, S.T. Strocchia, *Death and ritual in renaissance Florence* (London 1992) 24-28, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 52-55, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 6-75, 105-107, 127-129, Den Boer, ‘Naar een geschiedenis van de dood’ 182-185, 187-189, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 256-264, 275-277, 284, 336-343, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 397, 421-433, Cressy, ‘Death and the social order’ 102-103, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 35-36, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 296-302, 324-329, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 64-74, 115-1138, 154-168, 187-205, 226-231, Macmatters, *Death and the Enlightenment* 271-274, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1855-1860, 1908-1911, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 2-3, 4-11, 15, 22-24, 83, Vink, ‘Laat-Middeleeuwse stedelijke keuren’, 33-48, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 20-21, 39, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 194-200, 226-228. Schepens, ‘Het begrafenisritueel’ 346, Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 29-30, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 61.

<sup>34</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1874-1875, Harding, *The dead and the living* 227-228, Koslofsky, *The reformation of the dead* 133-152, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 16, 43, 46-47.

<sup>35</sup> Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 237-240. Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 16, 43, 46-47, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 101-102, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1874-1875, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 248-253, 273, Bijleveld, ‘Gelijkheid en onderscheid in de adellijke begrafenisrituelen’ 27-33.

deceased one last time. When the bereaved were ready to leave a special cloth, 'doodskleed', was placed on the coffin and the order of attendants in the procession was announced, the lineup based on relation to the deceased and social status. The number of attendants varied and dependent on the presence of invitees the length of the procession differed accordingly. During the public funeral procession different types of transport could be used to give the event an exceptional look. Carriages were introduced as funerary transport in Europe in the seventeenth century and became a common though costly feature of funerals in the eighteenth century. In the Netherlands the tradition of bearers carrying the coffin on their shoulders was long seen as most honorable, but after the funeral of Stadholder Frederick Henry in 1647, during which a specially designed carriage was designed and constructed to transport the coffin, the 'lijkkoets' became increasingly popular (see Image 1.1).<sup>36</sup> The procession normally left the house around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, consisting of the coffin, carried by bearers on their shoulders or transported on a bier, cart or carriage, and the attendants, who walked or were driven in front and behind the coffin. Church bells were rung during the procession; an old tradition to announce the death and the funeral and to scare away evil spirits.<sup>37</sup>

During the procession mourning clothes could be worn by (part of) the attendants; as a formal means of respect for the deceased and a general expression of grief. The material and extent of mourning clothes worn, from a simple black ribbon around the upper arm to full outfits made of black velvet, depended on the relation of a person to the deceased but also on finances and social status. The clothes represented wealth and position, and the performance of this important and public ritual could in return positively influence social standing. The clothes were worn during the funeral but by direct bereaved also for months after the burial.<sup>38</sup> Certain objects, torches ('flambooiën') as well as boards and banners with the coats of arms of the deceased, could be presented to the public during the procession. Carrying the boards, banners and other objects during the funeral was an honorable task; in descriptions and images of funerals the names of the carriers are ever stated and usually referred to communal celebrities; members of the local government, nobility or army.<sup>39</sup> Objects and textiles used during the procession could be purchased but items

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<sup>36</sup> Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 4, 10, 14-15, 24-28, 82-84, R. Spruit, 'Begrafenisrituelen in Nederland: dodenkoetsen, lijkwagens en rouwstoeten', in: *Museummagazine Vitrine* (1993) 25, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 247-248, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1955-1958, Harding, *The dead and the living* 248-253, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 33, 40, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 183, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 219, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 125.

<sup>37</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-253, Strocchia, *Death and ritual in renaissance Florence* 24, 39-4, Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 31, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 118-121, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 438-442, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 240-244, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 135-140, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1874-1907.

<sup>38</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1861-1862, 1875-1878, H.C. Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit: materiële cultuur in Doesburg en Maassluis 1650-1800* (Amsterdam 1998) 167-168.

<sup>39</sup> Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 243-251, 273, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1874-1907, 1939-1953, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 131-135, 151-154, 166-187, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 105, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 109-112, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 60, Harding, *The dead and the living* 200-204, 235-239, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 54-55, Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 32-33, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 347-348, P. Borst, A. de Groot,

were also often rented; the cloths placed on the coffin and mourning cloaks worn by attendants were often hired from the church or from charitable institutions. Sometimes items were rented or bought from a local person or a store ('Rouw-winkel') specializing in funeral items.<sup>40</sup> In Image 1.1 three illustrations of the funeral procession of Stadholder Frederick Henry are portrayed, part of one of the many descriptions of the funeral published after the Stadholder's death in 1647. By stating the names and titles of the attendants and describing in detail the objects (coats of arms, weapons, horses) presented, the images emphasize the political and social importance of the Stadholder as supposedly presented during the funeral procession. The most important aspects of the public 'lijkstoet' are underlined in the illustrations: the number and names of attendants in their mourning clothes, the coffin as transported in a carriage, and the items presented to the public.<sup>41</sup>

The second part of the funeral, the fourth phase in the process of death, took place in or around the church: a religious ceremony was sometimes performed and the deceased was buried. A priest or preacher was either already present in the procession or joined the attendants at the place of burial; the church or the churchyard. In the Netherlands the procession walked once, twice or three times around the church before placing the coffin at the grave.<sup>42</sup> A public funeral service in church was officially only performed during Catholic funerals after the Reformation, but short services were sometimes organized during Calvinist burials as well. During these services ('lijkpredikaties') a text from the scripture, a sermon and a short biography of the deceased were read. Listeners were encouraged to contemplate their own death, the judgment of God, and heaven and hell. Scholars have argued that the service, and especially the sermon, became more personal from the late sixteenth century onwards. The 'lijkpredikaties' were often printed and sold after the funeral when they concerned the death and commemoration of a royal or noble person.<sup>43</sup> As

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J.G. Jonker-Klijn, R. Roks, *Graven en begraven in de Dom van Utrecht* (Bunnik 1997) 11. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Macmanners, *Death and the Enlightenment* 272, 284-291, G.H. Janssen, 'De stoet van de stadhouder. Over de politieke boodschap van funeraire symboliek', in: P. Wagenaar, M. Ebben, M., (eds.), *De cirkel doorbroken. Met nieuwe ideeën terug naar de bronnen. Opstellen over de Republiek* (Leiden, 2006) 15-27, G.H. Janssen, 'Political Ambiguity and Confessional Diversity in the Funeral Processions of Stadholders in the Dutch Republic', in: *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15/2 (2009) 283-301.

<sup>40</sup> Harding, *The dead and the living* 177-187, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 421-433, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-103, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 52, 54-55, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 24-30, 86-117, 152, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 275-277, 284, 336-343, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 20-21, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 156-168, 187-205, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 9, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-34, 39-51.

<sup>41</sup> Images from the funeral procession of Frederick Henry as published in 1751, P. Nolpe, 'De begrafenisstoet van Frederik Hendrik' (The Hague 1651). These and other images of the funeral procession of Frederick Henry are presented on the disc added to this thesis, on which also other (additional) images related to funeral consumption can be found.

<sup>42</sup> Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 59-61, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 64-74, 115-138, 154-158, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 2-3, 4-8, 10-11, 15, 22-24, 83, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 9-10, 22-28, 108-118.

<sup>43</sup> Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 95, Macmanners, *Death and the Enlightenment* 273-291, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 347-354, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 30-32, 136-139, Harding, *The dead and the living* 194-195, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 127-129, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 182-185, 187-189, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 256-264, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 397, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 35-36, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 296-302, 324-329, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 226-231, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1908-1911.

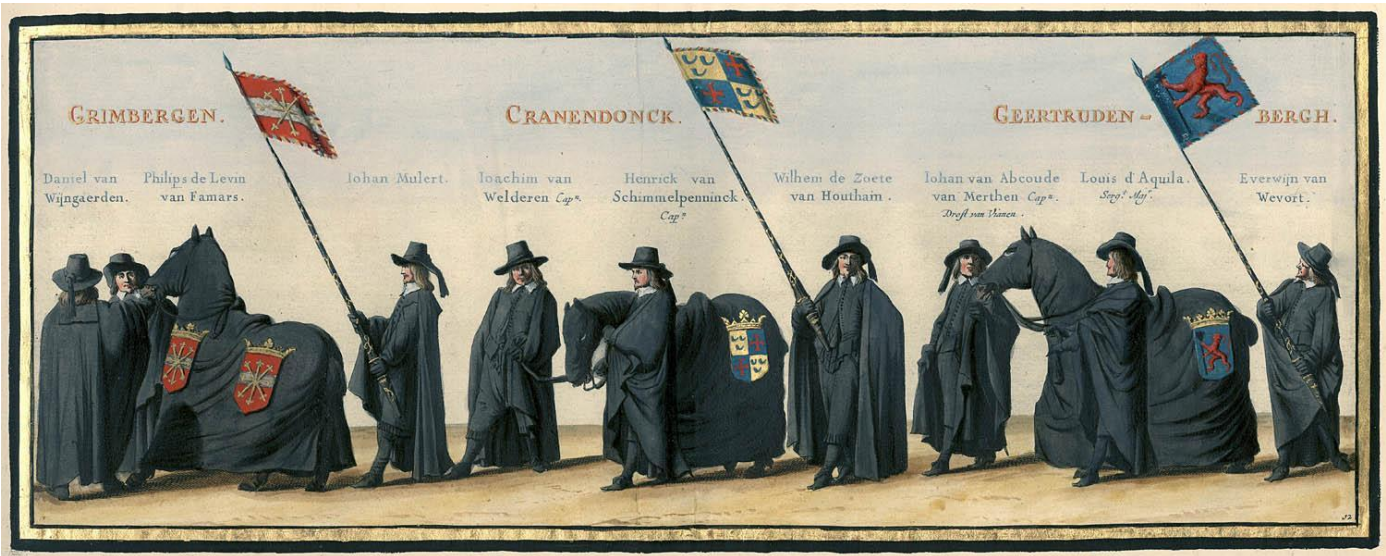


Image 1.1 Images of the funeral procession of Stadholder Frederick Henry (Delft 1647)



purgatory was abolished in Protestantism, in the Calvinist Dutch Republic masses were not usually requested to be said after death, as the soul was thought to be beyond intercession. But in the Catholic Southern Netherlands masses were frequently requested to be said in commemoration of the deceased for days, weeks, months and even years after death of a person, to positively influence the deceased's time in purgatory and their eternal salvation.<sup>44</sup>

In the early modern Christian religion it was important that people were decently buried, as their bodies should be ready for resurrection in imitation of Christ. Catholics and as well Protestants were either buried inside a church or on the graveyard surrounding a church. People preferred to be buried inside a church to safeguard their grave (physical protection) and to be close to the altar, relics and the burial places of saints (spiritual protection). The place of burial was a matter of finances. In the Middle Ages only the clergy and royals were buried inside churches, but as time passed more social groups were allowed in as long as they could pay the high price.<sup>45</sup> Officially burial in sacred ground was no longer important after the Reformation in Protestant regions but traditions remained of importance as social status became a novel significant incentive to be buried inside church walls. People of the higher social groups, who could afford a church grave, preferred to be buried close to the altar for social distinction: to underline their place among the elite. The characteristics of a deceased's last resting place were thus directly related to social status and wealth. A person's grave could positively influence social standing, as a grand and conspicuous grave was a public and undeniable token of the deceased's, and bereaved's, high place in society. Scholars have argued that graves and monuments constructed in churches to commemorate the dead became more important after 1600, erected by the higher classes of society. Varying from simple to luxurious, burial monuments became increasingly secular in character and were erected to reflect a person's social status to the public.<sup>46</sup> Despite the importance of an undisturbed grave, due to lack of

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<sup>44</sup> Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 347-356, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 31-33, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 255-272, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 66-69, 71-73, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 285, Kappelhof, 'Het verbruik na de dood' 426-435.

<sup>45</sup> Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-34, 39-51, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 82-104, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 55-56, 65-70, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 252-254, 328-383, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 449-473, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-112, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 2-11, 50-59, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 35, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 19-20, 24-25, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 74-110, 287-289, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 175-182, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 19-21, 140-143, Snoep, *Dood en begraven*, 10, 14-15, 24-28, 74-75, 82, Harding, *The dead and the living* 48-84, 119-175, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 186, 201-216, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1915-1920, 1973-1998. Borst, *Graven en begraven in de Dom van Utrecht* 9-11, 35, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 32-33, 159-160, 191-121, 131-149, 151-164, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351-352, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 82-104, E. Draisma-van Engelenburg, *Luid- en begraafgeld te Veenendaal, 1574-1812* (Veenendaal 1998), J.J. Vervloet, *Begraven in en om de kerk van Poortugaal* (Rotterdam 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-51, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 252-254, 328-383, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-421, 449-473, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 35, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 74-110, 287-289, Snoep, *Dood en begraven*, 10, 14-15, 24-28, 74-75, 82, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 186, 201-216, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1915-1920, 1973-1998, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 32-33, 159-160, 191-121, 131-164, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 82-104, Borst, *Graven en begraven in de Dom van Utrecht* 9-11, 35, Draisma-van Engelenburg, *Luid- en begraafgeld te Veenendaal*, Vervloet, *Begraven in en om de kerk van Poortugaal*. For more on tombs and burial monuments in the early modern Netherlands see: F. Scholten, *Sumptuous memories: studies in*

space bones were often removed from the ground and placed into a charnel house or in vault beneath the church to make room for new graves. Graves were anonymous for a long time: tombstones were not used regularly until the seventeenth century. The actual burial was short and simple: the coffin was placed in the grave without much ceremony.<sup>47</sup> Image 1.2 portrays the Oosterkerk of Amsterdam around 1779, where a burial was taking place. The illustration was drawn to display the interior of the church, contrary to Image 1.1, and the funeral is therefore of secondary importance and portrayed from a distance. Details of the burial are unknown, but we can observe that the second part of a funeral was taking place: a large group of people dressed in mourning clothes are present while the coffin is descended into a grave in the church. The image shows that the actual burial was a ritual performed in public, without much ceremony.<sup>48</sup> Burial inside and



**Image 1.2 Burial in the 'Oosterkerk' of Amsterdam (1770-1780)**

*seventeenth-century Dutch tomb sculpture* (Zwolle 2003) and F. Scholten, 'Good Widows and the Sleeping Dead: Rombout Verhulst and Tombs for the Dutch Aristocracy' in: *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for History of Art* 24/4 (1996) 328-349.

<sup>47</sup> Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 82-104, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 331-337, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 460-468, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103, 110-112, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 35, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 19-20, 24-25, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 74-110, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 175-182, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 55-56, 65-70, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 19-21, 140-143, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 74-75, 82, Harding, *The dead and the living* 48-84, 119-175, Borst, *Graven en begraven in de Dom van Utrecht* 9-11. Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 186, 254-255, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1973-1982.

<sup>48</sup> Image: H. P. Schouten, 'De Ooster-Kerk van Binne, tot Amsterdam. Interieur van de Oosterkerk, tijdens een begrafenis', in: *Atlas van Fouquet* (Amsterdam 1770-1780). This image can also be found on the disc added to this thesis.

churches was often discussed, as the interests of the dead often came in conflict with the interests of the living. Churchyards were not reserved places for the dead only: much secular activity took place there as well. Protests against burials inside churches emerged from 1700 onwards, pointing out the dangers for health. Burial outside communities was introduced in the Netherlands by the French in 1795 and burial inside churches was officially abolished in 1827.<sup>49</sup>

After the burial, the funeral procession retreated in the same order from the burial place back to house of the deceased and the fifth stage of the process of death, the last part of the funeral, commenced. The funeral continued in a tavern or in the house of the deceased as guests and bereaved gathered to eat and drink together: a funeral feast was organized as a reward for the attendants with the deceased as the unseen host, extending their hospitality one last time. The feast was thought to be an essential part of the burial: organized as a symbol for a return to normal life, to decrease the tension of solemnity, and to display social standing and wealth. Small snacks, bread and baked goods, were popular items to serve, but also grand sit-down meals and communal banquets were organized. The biggest expenses were dedicated to drinks: wine and beer were the common beverages served, but coffee and tea could be served as well. Berkhey stated that people usually had one or two glasses of beer or wine with a cookie ('krakeling') and sometimes a sandwich. During the eating and drinking the testament or poems were sometimes read.<sup>50</sup> After the meal, funerary gifts could be handed out to guests to commemorate the deceased: scholars have stated that gloves, ribbons and rings were popular presents.<sup>51</sup> It was customary, especially for people without heirs, to grant a part of their heritage to charitable institutions, as stipulated in their wills. But also during or after the funeral charity could be distributed. While most attendants were symbolically rewarded for their attendance with food and drinks during the funeral meal, at grand funerals the poor were invited and afterwards thanked for their presence, and prayer for the deceased, with alms in the form of money, beer, cakes or bread.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 82-104, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 331-337, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 460-468, Zeijden, *Cultuureschiedenis van de dood* 35, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 19-20, 24-25, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 74-110, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 55-56, 65-70, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 19-21, 140-143, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 74-75, 82, Harding, *The dead and the living* 48-84, 119-175, Borst, *Graven en begraven in de Dom van Utrecht* 9-11, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 186, 254-255, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1973-1982, H.W. van Helsdingen, *Politiek van de dood: begraven tijdens de Franse Revolutie 1789-1800* (Amsterdam 1987) 9-26, 31-55.

<sup>50</sup> Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 40-44, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 154-159, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103-104, 109-110, Zeijden, *Cultuureschiedenis van de dood* 40, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 120-134, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 277-281, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20-21, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 267-270, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1912, 1924-1936, L. Burema, *Voeding in Nederland van de middeleeuwen tot de twintigste eeuw* (Assen 1953), 52-56, S. Schama, *The embarrassment of the riches: and interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (London 1988) 185.

<sup>51</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 32-33, 159-160, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351-352, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 287-289, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-254, 275-294, 343-371, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103-104, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 80, Strocchia, *Death and ritual in renaissance Florence* 31-37, 46, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1915-1920, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 4, 10, 14-15, 24-28.

<sup>52</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 161-163, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-247, 263-268, 279-283, Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 44-45, A.C.M. Kappelhof, 'Het verbruik na de dood. De laatste wil in 's-

### 1.3 Social distinction

The process of death and the funeral consisted of five different phases: which of these were most reflective of social status and could thus have been used for socially distinctive purposes? The first two stages consisted of mostly private rituals, surrounding the moment of death, the preparation of the body for the grave, and the organization of the funeral. Although of social importance, as family, friends, neighbors as well as hired help organized or performed these rituals together, due to their private setting these practices were not important for social distinction. Some of these funeral practices could however be of public as well as private importance, dependent on their specific characteristics. Organization of the funeral by the family was a private matter but when undertakers were hired this was a public signal of wealth, and while a death and funeral were sometimes publicly announced in newspapers, private invitations could be sent around as well. Also charity was a funeral ritual that could be public as well as private: charitable alms were sometimes handed out to the poor during the funeral, part of public phase five, but a donation could also be extended in private. When public, these rituals were related to social distinction, but when taking place in private this relation was insignificant. Most important for social distinction, as always publicly performed, were the third, fourth and fifth phases of death which together made up the funeral. Early modern funerals consisted of the funeral procession, during which the coffin was transported from the deceased's house to the burial place, the church service, during which the deceased was religiously commemorated, the place and outward characteristics of the last resting place, which could vary between a simple grave and a pompous monument erected in church, and the funeral meal, a social gathering important for underlining hospitality and social status. Taking place in public, these phases provided good opportunities for social distinction.

But what actually characterized social distinction in early modern Europe and how could funeral rituals have been used to underline and enhance social status? While the consumption patterns of different social groups differed in character in early modern Europe, consumptive behavior was heterogeneous and never static: individuals and groups influenced each other's consumptive behavior via imitation and competition. Historians have principally focused in this context on the imitation of elite customs by the higher middle orders. McKendrick, in his work on the consumer society in eighteenth century Europe, introduced the emulation theory; arguing that the expansion of consumption habits of the elite to the rest of society was based on social imitation and class competition.<sup>53</sup> From the late seventeenth century onwards, as the middle orders attained

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Hertogenbosch (1331-1424)', in: *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 84/4 (2001) 419-436, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 293-294, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 190-191, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1937-1938.

<sup>53</sup> McKendrick, *The birth of a consumer society* 5, 9-12, 29-31, MacCracken, *Culture and consumption* 4-7, Agnew, 'Coming up for air' 23-24.

better financial positions, the higher middle classes started adopting the consumptive pattern of the elite to upgrade their social status and profit from high class privileges. Buying similar houses, hiring the same number of servants and adopting carriages as main means of transport the rich middle orders flaunted their wealth in imitation of the elite.<sup>54</sup> The theory of emulation was criticized by some scholars, who depreciated the consumptive differences between social groups, rejected the direct imitation of the elite by the higher middle groups, and argued that status competition was argued to have been more important within than between social groups.<sup>55</sup> But historians studying funerary rituals in early modern Europe have frequently advanced the argument that the middle orders copied and sometimes even surpassed the elite in social distinctive consumption. By imitating the costly funeral rituals of the elite the middle orders used funerals to emphasize and advance their social standing, an initiative which lay frequently with the bereaved, who had the most to gain.<sup>56</sup> N. Bijleveld, focusing on social distinction and funeral rituals in the eighteenth century Dutch Republic, argued that due to imitation of the conspicuous and costly funerary customs by the rich middle groups after 1650, the Dutch elite often resorted to novel and more subtle ways to distinguish themselves.<sup>57</sup> Also J. MacManners commented on the imitation of elite funeral customs by the rich middle orders, in his study on changing attitudes to death in eighteenth century France. Macmanners argued that in France the public watched narrowly to see that the decencies of rank were not infringed by families spending above their standing. While this was accepted in England, according to MacManners, in France not all pomp and class could be bought by the middle classes: people who put on funerary display unsuited for their status were ridiculed. When people were offended by false pretensions of status in funerary rituals, magistrates could even be called upon to intervene and repress a family's presumptuousness, MacManners observed.<sup>58</sup>

To study social distinction in relation to the early modern funeral, it is important to examine the public funeral rituals, which were most important for underlining social status and enhancing social position during. A primary source in which data on the socially significant practices of the funeral was recorded are the death debts; how this historical source can be used to study the relation between funerals and social distinctive behavior will be discussed in chapter two.

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<sup>54</sup> Marnef, *Adel en macht* 5-15, Blondé *Fashioning old and new* 71-72, Verbesselt, *De adel in het hertogdom Brabant* 133-141, 163, McKendrick, *The birth of a consumer society* 5, 9-12, 29-31, MacCracken, *Culture and consumption* 4-7, Agnew, 'Coming up for air' 23-24, Klein, 'Politeness for plebes', 362-382.

<sup>55</sup> MacCracken, *Culture and consumption* 4-7, J. de Vries, *The industrious revolution: consumer behavior and the household economy 1650 to the present* (New York 2008) 23, 50-51, Blondé *Fashioning old and new* 9-10, Campbell, *The romantic ethic* 1-35, 202-217, Agnew, 'Coming up for air' 24-26, Marnef, *Adel en macht* 5-15, Vlieger – De Wilde *Adellijke levenswijze* 11-40, 75-137, Berg, Clifford, *Consumers and luxury, consumer culture in Europe* 63-85.

<sup>56</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 19-26, 34-37, 55-56, 60-100, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 1-4, 220-226, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 449-459, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-407.

<sup>57</sup> Bijleveld, 'Gelijkheid en onderscheid in de adellijke begrafenisrituelen' 21-33.

<sup>58</sup> Macmanners, *Death and the Enlightenment* 284-294.

## Chapter Two. The death debts

Wolter Jan Gerrit Bentinck, a nobleman, was buried in Amsterdam in August 1781. His funeral was described in a pamphlet published in the same year. In the accompanying illustration (Image 2.1<sup>59</sup>) especially the public character of the funeral procession of Bentinck was emphasized: bystanders are pictured to make an effort to catch a glimpse of the pompous carriage transporting the coffin and the other thirteen carriages, with inside the bereaved and important invitees. A long and stately procession accompanied Bentinck's body to its last resting place; bells were ringing, carriages, coffin and attendants were clothed in black velvet, and after the procession Bentinck was buried close to the High Altar of the 'Nieuwe Kerk'.<sup>60</sup> Of the funeral meal nothing is stated but judging by the funeral procession, it must have been quite the social gathering. While one can recognize similar standard funerary practices in the majority of early modern funerals, the procession, the burial and the meal, characteristics of funerals suggest a world of difference. In



**Image 2.1 The funeral procession of Mr. Bentinck in Amsterdam (1781)**

<sup>59</sup> J. Buys, 'Afbeelding der Lykstatie van den Hoog Welgeboren Gestrengen Heere Wolter Jan Gerrit baron Bentinck', published as a separate print by Johannes Allart (Amsterdam 1781) City Archive Amsterdam number 010097002610. This image can also be found on the disc added to this thesis.

<sup>60</sup> 'Echt relaas der lijkstatie en begraafenis van den wel edele hoog welgeboren gestrenge heer Wolter Jan Baron Bentink', (Amsterdam 1781) *The Knuttel Collection* number 19620.

March 1653, a Thomas Lanies was buried in Algarkirk (Lincolnshire, England). His grave on the churchyard was paid for by the parish, as was the bell-ringing during the short funeral procession and the meal organized after his burial; consisting of bread, butter and beer.<sup>61</sup> While every member of a community desired to be buried respectably, funeral rituals differed according to the social status of the deceased. Funerals were supposed to represent the place of the deceased individual in the community and funerary rituals therefore corresponded to the structure of the social order. Not just the social position of the person who had passed, but also the reputation of the family of the deceased was connected to the funeral: the right gradations of status were supposed to be observed in funerary behaviour, grandeur and hospitality. While standard rituals were performed during all funerals, the scale of the rites and the presence of extraordinary rituals depended on social position: the higher a person's social groups the grander the scale and costs of their funeral.<sup>62</sup>

The argued variation of the occurrence and scale of funeral rituals per social group will be reviewed in this thesis by focusing primarily on the financial aspects of the funeral. Scholars have argued that the financial impact of funerals was great and that funerary expenses were on the rise after 1600. The social importance of the funeral in early modern Europe was confirmed by the costs of funerals and funerary rites: scholars have argued that people often spent more than they could afford to have an appropriate funeral. Only after considering what kind of funeral was suitable, finances were considered and funerals were usually arranged without taking the debts of the deceased into account.<sup>63</sup> It was generally thought that the often great costs of a funeral paid off in terms of its positive influence upon personal and familial dignity. Not just impressing the crowds (people of lower social groups), but also impressing each other (persons of the same social group) via funerary consumption became increasingly important in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>64</sup> *"In some respect an Elizabethan peer had his finest hour only after he was dead..."*<sup>65</sup>, argued L. Stone, who studied English aristocratic lifestyles in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early seventeenth centuries. Stone stated that noble men and women often recorded in their last wills that they insisted on being buried

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<sup>61</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 61.

<sup>62</sup> Bijleveld 'Gelijkheid en onderscheid in de adellijke begrafenisrituelen' 19-33, Kuiper, 'Adel in de achttiende eeuw' 16-18.

<sup>63</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 42, 50, 55-57, 60-100. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294. Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 449-459, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-407, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 2-11, 50-59. Schepens 357-356, Den Boer 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 184-189, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, 'Gedachten over het openlyk en plegtig begraven der lijken', (1814) *Knuttel*, 9-10.

<sup>64</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 42, 50, 55-57, 60-100. 42, 50, 55-57, 60-100, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 435-459, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-407, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 2-11, 50-59, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel in Gent tijdens de 18e eeuw' 357-356, Den Boer 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 184-189, V. Harding, *The dead and the living in Paris and London, 1500-1670* (Cambridge 2002) 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, 'Gedachten over het openlyk en plegtig begraven der lijken', (1814) *Knuttel*, 8-12.

<sup>65</sup> L. Stone, *The crisis of the aristocracy, 1558-1641* (London 1978) 260.

according to their social status.<sup>66</sup> Scholars focusing on the subject in the Dutch context came to the same conclusion. For instance P. Bitter argued, in his work on funerals taking place in early modern Alkmaar, that the elite never failed to underline the smallest differences in social position by overspending on funeral rituals.<sup>67</sup> Despite a general rejection of pomp and luxury, large sums were often spent on funerals, especially by the aristocracy. Funerals of the elite could take a month to organize, could cost as much as a year's income and were frequently very sumptuous events. With an increasingly dominant social function, the pomp of funerals of the elite reflected the hierarchical structure of European societies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>68</sup> Funeral consumption in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mirrored general consumptive patterns; the higher orders of society spent most extraordinarily on goods and practices, proving time and time again their ability to do so and thus the legitimacy of their membership to the upper class. But while the elite dedicated the greatest amounts of money to their funerals, proportionally the lower orders of society spent most extensively on funerary rituals. The middle and higher classes spent more in absolute terms but funeral costs affected the budgets of the poorer groups more heavily.<sup>69</sup> H. Deneweth argued that in Antwerp the lower classes spent up to 5,4 % of the average value of their assets on death debts<sup>70</sup> and Gittings stated that those with the least wealth in England paid even more: 12 % to 20 % of their estate was used to pay for their funeral.<sup>71</sup>

Before investigating in more detail the costs and related socially distinctive function of funeral rituals, in this second chapter the value of death debts for the study of the noted variation of funeral costs per social group will be discussed. How can this quantitative source be used to study in early modern funeral consumption in relation to social distinction? While qualitative sources, primary as well as secondary, were used as well, this thesis aims to review and underline the general functionality of the (financial) data found in death debts for the early modern history of death and the funeral and the value of the source for the study of consumption in relation to social distinction in particular, by focusing on funeral costs. The majority of scholars focusing on death and the funeral in early modern times have used qualitative primary sources, such as wills, literary and theological writings, and images to study the subject. Demographic data and death debts were only used by

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<sup>66</sup> Stone, *The crisis of the aristocracy* 260-267, 786.

<sup>67</sup> Bitter *Graven en begraven* 271.

<sup>68</sup> Bijleveld 'Gelijkheid en onderscheid in de adellijke begrafenisrituelen' 19-33, Kuiper, 'Adel in de achttiende eeuw' 16-18.

<sup>69</sup> H. Deneweth, 'From barter to the international capital market: financial strategies of Antwerp households, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', First Draft as presented at the *NWP Conference: Households as agents of change?* (Antwerp 2011) 14, Borst, *Graven en begraven in de Dom van Utrecht* 11, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 42, 50, 55-57, 60-100, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 344-356, Den Boer 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood.', 184-189, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-34, 39-51, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 74, 78, 82-83, Kselman, 'Death in the Western world' 168-175.

<sup>70</sup> Deneweth, 'From barter to the international capital market' 14.

<sup>71</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 42, 50, 55-57, 60-100.



some of these socio-cultural historians; quantitative data was neglected by most.<sup>72</sup> Adversely, the majority of scholars studying consumption and material culture from a socio-economic perspective preferred to work with quantitative material: probate inventories were often used when focusing on consumptive patterns in the context of social groups.<sup>73</sup> In this thesis the value of the quantitative death debts, recorded in probate inventories, for the study of funeral consumption and its relation to social groups will be explored. The number of expenses dedicated to and the costs of funeral rituals as recorded in death debts will be studied to reflect on the relation between social distinction and funeral consumption in the early modern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## 2.1 Death debts

A probate inventory ('boedelbeschrijving' or 'staat van goed' in Dutch) is a list of possessions, movable and immovable goods, belonging to a person, household, company or institution. The most common reasons for the drafting of a probate inventory were the death of a person, a marriage, or a bankruptcy. The drafting of probate inventories was often enforced by the state, to provide a certain form of protection to children, creditors and marriage partners and to supervise custodians of under-aged children. Inventories were also drafted for personal and practical reasons, for instance to provide an overview of the inheritance to avoid or resolve conflict between inheritors. In general the middle groups are best represented in the inventories, followed by the wealthiest sections of society. Only a small amount of inventories can usually be connected to the poorest orders.<sup>74</sup> In probate inventories drafted after death, which will be the primary focus of this thesis<sup>75</sup>, all assets and debts of a deceased person were recorded. The death debts were a special category of debts in the inventory, generally listing money spent during the sickness leading up to death (expenses owed to for instance the doctor or apothecary) and the costs of the funeral. The length of and degree of detail found in the death debts is variable: while in some inventories only a total sum was recorded, in others the funeral costs were specified in detail, from the amount of particular foodstuffs and drinks consumed at the funeral meal to the exact number of bearers hired to carry the coffin during the procession.

In total 506 funerals, organized between 1638 and 1800 in six towns in the Dutch Republic (Weesp, Medemblik, Doesburg, Maassluis, Maasland and Lichtenvoorde<sup>76</sup>) and one city in the

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<sup>72</sup> For instance the works of Ariès, *Het uur van onze dood* (Amsterdam 1987), Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* (Oxford 1997), Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* (Oxford 1998), Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* (Houten 1986).

<sup>73</sup> For instance the studies of Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain* (London 1988), T.F. Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft: bezit en bestaan van rijk en arm in een periode van achteruitgang* (Hilversum 1987) Dibbitts, *Vertrouwd bezit* (Amsterdam 1998), Nijboer, *De fatsoenering van het bestaan* (Groningen 2007), Kamermans, *Materiële cultuur* (Wageningen 1999).

<sup>74</sup> Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, 'Boedelinventarissen', 5-13, 32-39, Koolbergen, 'Materiële cultuur van Weesp' 16-18, 37-44., Dibbitts, *Vertrouwd bezit* 1, Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft*, 94-97, Kamermans *Materiële cultuur* 37-44.

<sup>75</sup> All Antwerp death debts studied by H. Deneweth were drafted after death. Of the death debts of the Meertens Database selected 87 % was drafted after death.

<sup>76</sup> For their location in the Netherlands see the map portrayed in Appendix 2.

southern Netherlands (Antwerp), of which the details were recorded in death debts, were examined in this thesis (see Table 2.1).<sup>77</sup> The funerals and death debts were selected on the basis of available material and developments in funerary customs. Probate inventories have only been preserved in greater quantities from 1630 onwards and the year of the first funeral (1638) has been taken as a starting point. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century funeral rituals changed profoundly, as burial in church was prohibited in 1827, and the Dutch Republic developed from the Batavian Republic into a Kingdom between 1795 and 1815, which altered society both politically and socially. Therefore 1800 seemed to be a logical end point of the study. The 162 years were subdivided in three time periods: 1638-1700, 1701-1750 and 1751-1800. The probate inventories of the northern cities were taken from the Meertens Institute Estate Inventory Database, constructed in the last decades by the P.J. Meertens institute and supervised by H. Dibbits. Of the 3000 inventories in this database, drafted between 1600 and 1900 in four regions in the Netherlands, 1216 contained death debts (41 %). The 553 death debts of two regions drafted between 1638 and 1800, were selected: from the Achterhoek (Doesburg and Lichtenvoorde) and Holland (Maassluis, Maasland, Medemblik, and Weesp). These regions and cities were chosen due to the quality and quantity of the death debts and inventories, as recorded in the Meertens database, and their location in the Dutch Republic, situated in different parts of the Republic (the northern and southern part of the province of Holland and in the eastern part of the Republic).<sup>78</sup> Antwerp was selected as a southern representative in the thesis because the possibility to use H. Deneweth's database of Antwerp probate inventories presented itself. Deneweth is currently studying probate inventories as recorded in seventeenth and eighteenth century Antwerp, focusing on the financial strategies of early modern households.<sup>79</sup> Deneweth's first results were based on a random sample of Antwerp inventories from 1660 (54 inventories) and 1780 (51 inventories).<sup>80</sup> Of the 105 inventories studied by Deneweth, 89 contained death debts (85 %).

The Meertens and Deneweth databases were constructed with dissimilar aims in mind, which complicating the combined study of both in this thesis. While the Antwerp probate inventories were selected by Deneweth on the basis of the financial data recorded in them and the availability of certain details on the households of the deceased, the Meertens database was constructed more randomly and by a larger group of scholars, processing all of the data found in different kinds of probate inventories preserved in four regions of the Netherlands. The probate inventories found in the Meertens and Deneweth databases were thus not selected with special attention to death debts. From the first selection, of 642 inventories in total, death debts therefore had to be omitted due to issues of incompleteness: taxation was sometimes absent or incomplete, or the death debts were

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<sup>77</sup> See also Appendix 1, presenting the funeral and funeral costs per town and period.

<sup>78</sup> For their location in the Netherlands see the map portrayed in Appendix 2.

<sup>79</sup> Deneweth, 'From barter to the international capital market.' 2-3, 5-6, 33-35.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem* 9-10, 14, 21.

judged to be untrustworthy, due to miscalculations or the dominant presence of non-funerary items. Just over 500 death debts proved to be valuable for examination, and thus the recorded consumption of 506 funerals will be studied in this thesis (see Table 2.1).

Period	Place							Total N
	Doesburg	Lichtenvoorde	Maasland	Maassluis	Medemblik	Weesp	Antwerp	
1638-1700	16	1	0	25	0	9	42	93
1701-1750	8	20	11	39	18	22	0	118
1751-1800	27	23	48	56	52	45	44	295
<b>Total N</b>	51	44	59	120	70	76	86	506

From the 1970's onwards an increasing amount of scholars have used probate inventories in their historical studies: focusing on consumption, wealth and material culture. Historians have studied the material culture and consumptive practices of individuals and groups and argued that social status, belonging to or aspiring to belong to a certain social group, as well as place of residence greatly influenced people's material culture.<sup>82</sup> In the Introduction it was already noted that a handful of these scholars have studied the death debts in particular, focusing on the quantitative and qualitative data on funeral consumption recorded in this part of the inventory.<sup>83</sup> Despite its possibilities for research, the probate inventory as a historical source was also critically examined. As more scholars started studying its contents, problems of regional and temporal variety, specification, completeness, representativeness and interpretation were acknowledged and discussed.<sup>84</sup> Studying only a particular section of the probate inventory in this thesis, the death debts, certain issues were of no influence, while other noted problems were encountered and specific issues occurred. It is unknown why not in all probate inventories death debts were recorded: it could be that funeral costs long paid for (due to long time past between death and the drafting of the inventory), consciously omitted due to a variation of reasons, or too small to be of importance. The issue of variation in specification has often been discussed by historical scholars focusing on probate inventories and death debts in their research, and proved to be significant problem during the study conducted in

<sup>81</sup> See also Appendix 1, presenting the funeral and funeral costs per town and period.

<sup>82</sup> Van der Woude, Schuurman, *Probate inventories* 1-22. Koolbergen, 'Materiële cultuur van Weesp' 1-15, 27-29, Kamermans, *Materiële cultuur* 1-5, Voskuil, 'Boedelbeschrijvingen als bron', 30-55, Van der Woude, Schuurman, *Probate inventories* 19-31, Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 1-7, 19-21, Dibbits, 'Pronken as practice', 137-158, Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft* 11-19, 103.

<sup>83</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 7-17, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-34, 39-51, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel', 344-356, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 9-172, 271-284.

<sup>84</sup> General discussions of the flaws and values of probate inventories for historical research can be found in: Van der Woude, Schuurman, *Probate inventories* 1-22, Schuurman, 'Probate inventory research' 19-28, J. de Vries, 'Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early modern Europe', in: Brewer, J., Porter, R. (eds.), *Consumption and the world of goods* (London 1993) 104-106, Vries, *The Industrious Revolution* 126, Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour* 3-4, 28, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 234-236, Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, 'Boedelinventarissen' 5-11-13, 32-39, 49-59, Voskuil, 'Boedelbeschrijvingen als bron', 30-55, Koolbergen, 'Ontwikkelingen in het boedelinventarisonderzoek', 251, A. Schuurman, 'Aards geluk. Consumptie en de moderne samenleving', Schuurman, de Vries, van der Woude, *Aards geluk* 13-27, Koolbergen, 'Materiële cultuur van Weesp' 6.

this thesis. The death debts selected for study in this thesis were not specified equally: sometimes only a total sum was stated, and when multiple expenses were recorded and specified, their number and detail differed. While some death debts contained up to twenty observations, others consisted of only one; variations in specification which could not be directly connected to local contexts, the costs of a funeral or specific funeral rituals, or the goods and practices paid for. A selection of well specified death debts and expenses was constructed to be able to study the costs and rituals. Of the 5580 expenses recorded in the 506 death debts just over 77 % (4299 observations) were specified and the majority of expenses of the dataset could therefore be connected to a certain funeral practice performed or an item rented or purchased for the funeral. Major and minor codes were used to study the occurrence and costs of different funerary objects and rituals in the dataset. After categorizing the expenses independently, a total of 382 totally specified funerals (76 % of the total number of funerals) were focused upon to discover how often, in what manner and in connection to which costs the rituals were concurrently recorded in the funerals. An example of the variation in specification of the death debts of the dataset is given in Table 2.2. The death debts of Pietertje Sente de Jongh and Maria van den Heuvel are presented as recorded in the inventories, including

Death debts of married woman Maria van den Heuvel († 4-4-1743 Weesp, high social group)*		Death debts of widow Pietertje Sente de Jongh († 12-6-1711 Maassluis, low social group)*	
<b>Funeral rituals and objects</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Funeral rituals and objects</b>	<b>Costs</b>
Paid to 3 'undressers'	7,5	For taking care of the body to the 'afleggers'	6,3
Paid to 14 bearers	52,0	For carrying the body to the bearers	6,3
Paid to 2 undertakers	14,0		
Paid to person leading the procession	1,5	To the sexton	15,6
Paid to the undertakers in Amsterdam	9,0	To the person of prayer ('bidder')	3,2
For bringing friends to Weesp by boat	6,0		
For the passage	1,7		
For tolls	1,5		
For boat going an extra distance	1,2		
For a tip to the captain's helper	1,0		
For the tax of burial with stamps	35,2	For the right of burial to the secretary of Maassluis	3,2
Paid to the servants of justice	1,0		
For serving wine to the orphanage for the poor	5,0		
For making the coffin to the carpenter	14,0	For the coffin to carpenter Arent Uytendoorn	9,0
Paid to 'doodgraver' Christoffel Wolters	19,7	To 'grafmaker' Huijbregt van der Gaagh	3,0
For the small notifications of death	10,5		
For wine at the funeral to Nicolaas van marken	14,0	For delivered beers to Arij Schoonhoven	8,0
For wine to the widow of Matthijs van Herwaarde	14,8		
For visits to doctor Dirk Schouter	4,5		
For medicine to apothecary Guilliem Stapelmoer	2,5		
For mourning textiles to the 'rouwwinkelier'	8,5	For delivery of several goods	3,9
For the stamp on the 'leesceel'	2,5		
<b>Total</b>	<b>227,6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>58,3</b>

\* Data taken from the Meertens Database, inventories with Code new 48 (Maassluis 1711) and 682(Weesp 1745) were used.

costs, expenses and details referring to different practices and objects connected to the process of death and the funeral. Table 2.2 shows the variation in specification and length of the death debts: even when death debts were specified the number of expenses recorded as well as the details of the rituals and objects paid for could differ greatly. The total and specific funeral expenses stated in Table 2.2 also give a first perspective on the divergence in funerary costs and rituals per social group: the total costs of the funerals as well as for instance the expenses dedicated to the bearers of the coffin differed. Much more money was spent on the funeral of high class woman Maria van den Heuvel than on the burial of peasant Pietertje Sente de Jongh.

In addition to specification issues, other challenges were faced when studying the death debts of the dataset. The completeness of the death debts studied here, a common problem encountered when researching probate inventories, was a second issue: funeral debts could have been omitted, already paid for, or still forthcoming. That in certain death debts not all costs of the funeral were recorded is underlined by expenses recorded as 'pro memorie': forthcoming costs were listed in the death debts under this label as a reminder of expenses of which the total costs were still unknown. For example in the death debts of Willem Pronk, who died in Weesp in 1760, it was recorded that doctor van der Eijden had not delivered the bill for his services yet and thus the costs of the doctor were marked 'pro memorie' and amounted to zero guilders in the death debts.<sup>85</sup> Also when items were already in the possession of the deceased, family members or borrowed for free, or when practices were performed by people without charge, these objects and rituals were not recorded in the death debts. Common funerary rituals could therefore be omitted or appear to be of smaller importance than they actually were because infrequently recorded in the data. While funeral expenses could be missing, non-funeral costs could be added to the death debts. Expenses made during sickness of the deceased before death are regularly found in the specified death debts; a percentage of the costs of funerals were thus spent on non-funeral items or services.<sup>86</sup> When taxation of (part of) the observations was missing or when an inventory and death debts appeared to be incomplete, it was removed from database.

In this thesis the regional diversity, discussing consumption in seven differing contexts<sup>87</sup>, was an issue: the importance of certain rituals and the size and character of social groups differed per town. The choice has been made here to use quite a large database of funerals, instead of focusing in detail on funerary consumption in one or two localities, to provide a more general overview of

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<sup>85</sup> When referring to specific death debts as recorded in the Antwerp (Deneweth) and Meertens databases, the name of the town as well as the Code new (Meertens) or the Identification code (Deneweth) are given in the footnotes. With these codes the probate inventory, death debts, and deceased referred to can be easily found and reviewed in both databases. The death debts of Willem Pronk can thus be found in the Meertens database: Weesp 594.

<sup>86</sup> Labeled with code 0-0-3 in the dataset, 329 observations referred to non-funeral items and services, 8,2 % of the total costs. Most observations were listed in the death debts of Maassluis (100), followed by Weesp, Maasland and Medemblik (71, 64, 58).

<sup>87</sup> For the locations of the seven studied towns in the Netherlands see the map portrayed in Appendix 2.

funeral consumption and social distinction in the Netherlands. Lastly the problem of representativeness is important to note, despite being of small influence in this thesis. The overrepresentation, common in probate inventory research, of the middle social groups was of minor importance in this thesis as in the sample of probate inventories selected for study, based on the inclusion of funeral costs, differences were small: 37 % represented the middle orders, against respectively 31 % and 32 % of the lower and higher social groups.

## 2.2 Costs and rituals

The death debts prove to be a rich source for quantitative data on funeral consumption. The study of the 506 funerals in this thesis shows that death debts are a fruitful source for historical research concentrating on early modern funeral consumption; the total costs of funerals, as well as the occurrence, specific costs and qualitative details of particular funerary objects and practices can be found in this section of the probate inventory. In Table 2.3 the number of funerals and the total funeral costs of the 348 death debts that could be connected to a social group, a selection which will be further discussed in the next part of this chapter, are presented. Studying the total costs of funerals per social group, Table 2.3 shows that the higher the social group the more money was dedicated to the funeral. Deceased of the low social group paid a median of 64,4 guilders for their funerals. Costing exactly this amount, the funeral of Jan Heerdink, buried in Doesburg in 1761, could be seen as exemplary of the lower orders. A coffin was bought for 5,3 guilders, 16 guilders was spent on church services (ringing of bells and the 'lijkklaken') and the funeral meal was organized for 14,1 guilders, consisting of bread, meat and wine.<sup>88</sup> The high social orders paid on average over 3 times more than the lower social groups: 221,7 guilders (median costs). The funeral of Cornelis Pieterszoon de Jongh, member of the high social group and buried in Maasland in 1800, cost 226 guilders. The

Social group	Funerals		Costs in guilders				
	N	%	Total	%	Median	Min	Max
<b>Low</b>	107	30,8	8552,6	14,5	64,4	4,0	454,7
<b>Middle</b>	130	37,4	18576,1	31,6	114,3	6,0	571,1
<b>High</b>	111	31,9	31733,3	53,9	221,7	1,6	2241,9

coffin, purchased for 32,5 guilders, was accompanied by bearers during the procession, paid 18 guilders as a group. The funeral was partly organized by 'aansprekers' (undertakers) paid 9 guilders, and meat, bread, cheese, baked goods, coffee, tea, beer, spirits and tobacco were consumed at the

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<sup>88</sup> Doesburg 1916.

funeral feast (81 guilders).<sup>89</sup> The middle social group is placed in the middle with a median of 114,3 guilders, 1,8 more than the lower orders and 1,9 times less than the elite. Buried in Doesburg in 1754, Willem Allart's funeral cost 103,9 guilders and could be seen as exemplary of a typical middle class funeral. Bells were rung for 10 guilders during the procession which transported the coffin (purchased for 18 guilders), accompanied by 12 bearers, who were each paid 2,5 guilders (30 guilders in total) and covered by a special cloth (rented for 6 guilders), to the grave. The funeral meal after the burial consisted of wine, beer and baked goods ('krakelingen'), costing in total 21 guilders.<sup>90</sup>

Not only the total costs of funerals but also the number of expenses dedicated to and costs of funeral rituals were recorded in the 382 specified death debts of the dataset. In Table 2.4 an overview is given of the most important and most frequently recorded funeral rituals in the death debts. Firstly the absolute number of cost items is given: this refers to the number of times a funeral

Ritual	Cost items		Costs in guilders				
	N	Relative	Total costs	Relative	Median	Min	Max
<b>Objects</b>	896	20,8 %	13290,5	25,9 %	7,5	0	300
Textiles	471	11,0 %	7339,3	14,3 %	5	0	300
Coffin	373	8,7 %	4968,7	9,7 %	10,2	0,2	55,8
<b>Feast</b>	1115	25,9 %	9506,5	18,5 %	4,8	0	206,3
<b>Church</b>	355	8,3 %	5515,5	10,8 %	9,0	0	519,1
<b>Services</b>	1103	25,7 %	12531,3	24,4 %	6,3	0	140
Body-care	253	5,9 %	1774,3	2,3 %	7	0,2	94,1
Bearers	214	3,8 %	5100,5	6,7 %	16,8	0,2	140
<b>Documents</b>	86	2 %	885,9	1,7 %	6,2	0,1	53,8
<b>Charity</b>	50	1,2 %	2394,4	4,7 %	6	0,5	1779,9
<b>Government</b>	321	7,5 %	3366,6	6,6 %	6	0	61,7
<b>Grave</b>	267	6,2 %	3285,8	6,4 %	6,6	0,2	204,1

ritual or object was recorded in a separate and specified expense in the death debts. The percentage presents the part of the total number of cost items found in specified expenses of the death debts that was dedicated to a certain ritual. Secondly the absolute and relative costs of the rituals are stated: total costs are stated in guilders and the percentage presents the part of the total specified funeral costs of the death debts that was spent on to the ritual. Median, minimum and maximum costs are added to provide extra information on the costs of the different rituals.<sup>91</sup> Some of the public and socially significant practices and objects belonging to the third, fourth and fifth phases of

<sup>89</sup> Maasland 2166.

<sup>90</sup> Doesburg 1899.

<sup>91</sup> The median, not the official average, have been chosen to interpret and compare costs because high exceptions, very costly expenses, often distorted the average. By using the median this problem is avoided.

the funeral were infrequently found or even absent in the dataset. The minor occurrence and absence of certain significant rituals can partly be explained by the specific financial characteristics of the death debts. The death debts only consist of specific *expenses* of rites and the total *costs* of a funeral; rituals that were performed for free, by neighbors, friends or family out of obligation or love, and objects that were used without charge, already in the possession of the deceased, the family or loaned for free from acquaintances or institutions, were not recorded. These non-monetary objects and practices might have been of great importance for the socially distinctive character of the funeral, but as the rituals were gratis they could be studied with use of the death debts. While data on some of the public rituals was missing in the death debts, some of the socially insignificant phases of death and the funeral were often found in the dataset. It lays beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail the quantitative and qualitative data found in the death debts in connection to all five phases of the process of death and the funeral. Some of the private phases of death and the funeral, not connection to social distinction, will however be briefly discussed here to show what kind of valuable data can be found in death debts, which can and should be used for the history of the funeral in general. The public and social rituals that were conspicuously absent in the dataset as well as interesting data on private rituals found in the death debts will be briefly discussed below.

Rituals taking place during the second phase of death and the funeral can be found frequently in the death debts. The private ritual of taking care of the body was regularly recorded in the death debts: in over 57 % of the specified funerals the practice was found. The median costs for body-care were 7 guilders, but could extend up to a maximum of 94,1 guilders. Scholars have argued that traditionally neighbors were obliged to take care of the corpse, not receiving a monetary reward, but that it became increasingly normal to hire people to take care of the corpse in the eighteenth century.<sup>92</sup> Studying the occurrence and costs of the practice in the death debts shows that the neighbourly obligation to take care of the body differed per region. In the majority of death debts drafted in the province of Holland preparing the body for the grave was part of the commercial market: money was spent on hiring people to perform the practice. In other towns the ritual was still a non-monetary practice: in Doesburg and Antwerp<sup>93</sup> expenses on preparing the body for burial were much less frequently found and less costly, while in Lichtenvoorde the ritual was not mentioned at all

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<sup>92</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie 1824-1835, 1847-1850*.

<sup>93</sup> The small importance of this and other rituals in Antwerp funerals is partly explained by a relatively high proportion of undefined costs. The majority of rituals in the Antwerp data are named and taxed (charity, church costs, coffin) but some were given more general labels and could be in this way be hiding rituals conspicuously absent in the dataset. An explanation of the variety of costs and occurrence in the Northern Netherlands could be that in some local contexts proportionally more bodies were embalmed, connected to the relatively large presence of elite groups. But looking at the occurrence and costs per social group, we can see that the rituals occurred evenly in all three social groups and that the average amount of money spent on taking care of the body did not differ much between these groups. Embalment of the body by the rich can thus not explain the local variety of costs.



in the death debts.<sup>94</sup> The importance of neighborly obligation after someone died might still have been of great prominence in some local contexts (the east of the Dutch Republic), while gradually becoming part of a monetary and commercialized market in others (Holland).

The custom to hire people for the practice might also have slowly trickled down the social ladder and expanded from the city to the countryside in the eighteenth century, as argued by Berkhey.<sup>95</sup> Studying the development of the ritual in time, we can observe a sharp increase of occurrence of and costs spent on hiring people to take care of the body per town; this suggests that the neighborly obligation to take care of the corpse was slowly taken over by the market. Gradually body-care after death was commercialized in the Netherlands; more people in different contexts started paying people to take care of the dead. The occurrence of the ritual increased in all localities between 1638 and 1800 without exception. But the example of Maasland shows the commercialization of the rituals was far from completed: in this agrarian town in Holland hired as well as neighborly support existed side by side. In more than 80 % of the funerals taking place in Maasland in the eighteenth century persons were hired to take care of the body and to perform other tasks, while tips were extended to neighbors for the same practices as well.<sup>96</sup> What can be concluded from the study of this private practice, in combination with data on the rituals of hiring undertakers<sup>97</sup> and bearers<sup>98</sup>, is that while in some of the towns of the dataset people were hired and paid to perform these funerary rituals, via the market, in other places the practices were still part of communal and non-monetary traditions. The neighborly tradition of taking care of the body was slowly disappearing and taken over by the market at different paces: first in Holland, then in other

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<sup>94</sup> G.A. Noordzij underlined the importance of the assistance of direct neighbors ('naburen') in Lichtenvoorde between 1750 and 1850 as well as the role of the 'scholteboer', the most prominent farmer in the neighborhood. At funerals this wealthy farmer performed a ceremonial function and was responsible for a number of funerary rituals. His reward was never monetary: he played his role as being an essential part of his social status and prestige in the neighborhood. For more see: G.A. Noordzij, *Wonen tussen woeste grond: Lichtenvoorde 1750-1850*, Scriptie Geschiedenis Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Amsterdam 2000) 86-91.

<sup>95</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie 1824-1835, 1847-1850*.

<sup>96</sup> Maasland could be described as a highly developed agrarian village, with almost 60 % of its inhabitants working in the agrarian sector, which had more in common with the eastern town of Lichtenvoorde, where around 75 % of the inhabitants were farmers, than other towns in Holland, that were more focused on fishing, industry and trades. That Maasland's economy had a different focus than most other towns in Holland can be recognized in the death debts: funerary practices and rituals were often differed from the other Holland towns studied and had more in common with funerary customs prevalent in Lichtenvoorde. Neighborly obligation, connected to taking care of the body as well as bearing the coffin during the funeral procession, and the funeral feast were of great significance before and during the funeral. What should be studied in more depth in additional research, is that not only regional (Holland, the eastern Dutch Republic, the Southern Netherlands) but also local context (economy, society, culture of different town) greatly influenced the process of death and the funeral. Customs and contexts influencing funerals in the Netherlands did thus not only vary between, but also very much within the different regions and provinces. For more on Maasland see: D.J. Noordam, *Leven in Maasland: Een hoogontwikkelde plattelandssamenleving in de achttiende en het begin van de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 1986), 17-18, 20-31, 40-61, 86-87, Noordzij, *Wonen tussen woeste grond* 2-9, 54-79, Dibbits, Doelman 'Slapen op het platteland' 332-348.

<sup>97</sup> The assistance of an undertaker, and his specific tasks and title, was also connected particular local contexts. In Maasland and Maassluis undertakers, referred to as the 'grafmaker' and 'lijkbidder', were most often paid for completing multiple tasks before and during funerals. In Medemblik, Weesp and Doesburg the undertaker was referred to as the 'doodgraver' or 'aanspreker' in the death debts.

<sup>98</sup> This ritual will be further discussed in chapter four.

parts of the Republic. The subject should be studied in more detail in additional research, as it could provide an interesting and novel view upon the commercialization of traditional rituals. The divergence of private rituals per town underlines the important influence of local contexts and customs upon rituals surrounding death and the funeral, which can be recognized when studying other funerary rites as well.<sup>99</sup>

After taking care of the body, the deceased was placed in a coffin. In early modern Europe people were usually buried in a coffin, made in every shape and size, constructed from different kinds of wood and increasingly adorned from the 1650 onwards.<sup>100</sup> In 84,8 % of the specified funerals money was spent on the coffin, with a median of 10,2 guilders. The cheapest coffin of the data cost 1,5 guilders (made for a child), while for the most costly coffin, made of oak, 55,8 guilders was paid.<sup>101</sup> Standard costs were connected to the construction of a coffin: most frequently 7, 8, 20, 22 or 24 guilders was spent, expenses that might have been related to the type of wood used. While the number of expenses dedicated to coffins is quite similar in the different social groups of the dataset, in costs the differences between the social groups are apparent: the expenses dedicated to the coffin increased per social group with a conspicuously steady pace. The coffin of Gerbrecht Jacobse Schipper, a peasant who died in Weesp in 1764, was made by carpenter Frans van Abswoude and cost 7 guilders, while Willemetje Leendertsdochter van den Eijck, a wealthy widow who died in Maassluis in 1756, was buried in a coffin constructed by carpenter Jacob van der Gaag for the price of 28 guilders.<sup>102</sup> The variation found in the ritual of burying the deceased in a coffin is therefore almost entirely explained by the influence of social groups.

Published between death and the funeral, public notifications of death were significant for social distinction. In the seventeenth century the printing and publishing of notifications of death became increasingly common: small announcements, lengthy invitations and public adverts were sent around or published in the local paper.<sup>103</sup> For Alida Elisabeth van der Poordt, who died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1744 in Weesp, letters as well as notes were printed; 19 guilders was spent on “... *het drukken van brieven en begrafenisbriefjes...*”<sup>104</sup>. The practice of printing announcements, adverts and invitation was infrequently recorded in the death debts: in 36 of the specified funerals of the dataset,

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<sup>99</sup> In Maasland and Maassluis undertakers, referred to as the ‘grafmaker’ and ‘lijkbidder’, were most often paid for completing multiple tasks before and during funerals. In Medemblik, Weesp and Doesburg the undertaker was referred to as the ‘doodgraver’ or ‘aanspreker’ in the death debts.

<sup>100</sup> Handles could be connected to the side (‘handvaten’ or ‘hengsels’), nails could be used to form letters on the top (‘kopspijkers’ or ‘ijzerwerk’), and coffins could be decorated with fabric on the in- and outside.

<sup>101</sup> Even smaller expenses were dedicated to the construction of a small coffin for bones (‘beenderen kistje’), costing between 1,8 and 5 guilders and recorded four times in the death debts.

<sup>102</sup> Maassluis 257.

<sup>103</sup> Macmanners, *Death and the Enlightenment* 284-291, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1857-1860, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 245-247, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 14, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 22-26, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 33, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 109, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 90-94.

<sup>104</sup> Weesp 741.

all taking place after 1731, expenses on letters and notes were recorded; with expenses varying between 0,9 and 76,4 guilders, with a median of 7,3 guilders. Expenses on adverts, poems and placards were only sporadically found. Commemorating the death of Francois van de Zanden, who died in 1779, an advert was published in the Gazette of Antwerp for just over 28 guilders.<sup>105</sup>

As a public means of social display, much attention was paid to the characteristics of the funeral procession, the third phase of the process of death and the funeral. But as the segments of this first part of the funeral were recorded separately, the funeral procession could not be examined as a whole, also because some of the socially significant rituals taking place during the procession were conspicuously absent in the death debts. The number of or expenses dedicated to attendants, coats of arms presented, and the carriages or other wheeled transportation used were absent or only sporadically found in the death debts. Also religious rituals, despite their importance of social distinction, were difficult to study in the death debts. The church played a central role in early modern Dutch funerals, renting out objects, preparing the grave and sometimes performing a public church service during the fourth phase of the process of death and the funeral.<sup>106</sup> In the majority of the death debts however expenses made to church or clergy for bells rung during the procession, graves hired or purchased, and masses said were not specified and recorded under one label.<sup>107</sup>

While expenses on graves, part of the fourth phase of death, were recorded in the death debts, expenses were difficult to single out as frequently part of a combined sum paid to the church or the undertaker. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, scholars have argued, the church became a field of competitive display and conspicuous consumption in the construction of personal and familial tombs, monuments and burial chapels by the rich and the famous.<sup>108</sup> Ostentatious graves and monuments were often discussed in contemporary publications. Contemporary critics emphasized the importance of social distinction in the construction of graves by criticizing the erection of extraordinary burial monuments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, built to underline and especially to enhance the social position of a deceased and their families.<sup>109</sup> Graves and monuments could not be studied in the context of social groups and distinction with the use of the death debts. Graves were only sporadically recorded separately and funerary monuments were not recorded at

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<sup>105</sup> Antwerpen 047.

<sup>106</sup> Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 59-61, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 64-74, 115-138, 154-158, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 2-3, 4-8, 10-11, 15, 22-24, 83, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 9-10, 22-28, 108-118.

<sup>107</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 82-104, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 331-337, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 460-468, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103, 110-112, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 54-55, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 35, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 19-20, 24-25, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 74-110, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 175-182, Blankestijn, Dekker, Laar, *Begraven in Rhenen* 55-56, 65-70, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 19-21, 140-143, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 74-75, 82, Harding, *The dead and the living* 48-84, 119-175, Scholten, *Sumptuous memories* 9-41, Scholten, 'Good Widows and the Sleeping Dead' 340-349.

<sup>109</sup> See for instance: 'Over het opregten van pragtige Tombes en gedenktekenen in kerken', in: *Nederlandschen Spectator* (1752) article 101, 185-192.

all. As the construction of funeral monuments was most probably ordered some time before or after the funeral, costs and details were not recorded in the death debts. If expenses dedicated to the construction of a monument were described, they were most likely to feature in a different section of the inventory (the immovable property).<sup>110</sup>

Charity was of religious importance in early modern Europe, as well as interpreted as a status enhancing part of the funeral. By distributing alms to the poor during the fifth and final phase of the process of death and the funeral, the deceased and bereaved showed generosity, an important stately virtue, and the financial ability to dedicate (large) parts to good causes.<sup>111</sup> The most often found manner of extending money to charitable causes during the funeral recorded in the death debts was via certain funerary rituals. Money was indirectly dedicated to charity when one paid for the attendance of clergymen taking care of the poor ('the aalmoezeniers'<sup>112</sup>) during the funeral procession or when one hired mourning textiles or clothes from charitable institutions. Despite its social and religious importance, charitable gifts were not recorded frequently in the death debts, probably because money dedicated to charity was normally recorded in wills or other documents dealing with the heritage.

### 2.3 Social groups

To study the relation between social distinction and funeral consumption on the basis of the death debts, social groups had to be defined for deceased of the dataset. The social groups of large part of deceased under discussion were defined on the basis of wealth and connected to one of three social groups. The first group represents the lower orders of society; owning no real property or financial assets, with a total wealth under 2000 gulden or paying the lowest levy of burial tax (up to 3 guilders). The second social group, the middle classes, paid 6 to 15 guilders in burial tax, might have owned real property and financial assets but could not live of their estates, and had a total wealth between 2000 and 12.000 guilders. With a total wealth of at least 5000 guilders, an ability to live of their estates due to their financial assets and property, and levied for the highest burial tax (30 guilders): the elite of the early modern Netherlands is represented by social group three. In total 348

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<sup>110</sup> In her work on the material culture of Delft, Wijsenbeek showed that graves were part of the immovable property in the inventory, sometimes owned by a family for decades. See: Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft* (Hilversum 1987) 130-131.

<sup>111</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 161-163, Harding, *The dead and the living* 218-219, 240-247, Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 44-45, Kappelhof, 'Het verbruik na de dood' 130-132, 419-436, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 350, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 293-294, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 130-132, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 190-191.

<sup>112</sup> It is not entirely clear whether the 'aalmoezeniers' taking care of the poor or the poor themselves attended the funeral procession in return for a charitable gift. More about this charitable custom, only recorded in death debts of funeral taking place in Antwerp, and the 'aalmoezeniers' (connected to the 'Kamer van Huisarmen' founded in Antwerp in 1540) can be found in a small booklet on monuments in Antwerp: *Open Monumentendag: Zorg* (published by the City of Antwerp in 2009, pp. 5-11, ([http://www.antwerpen.be/docs/Stad/Bedrijven/Stadsontwikkeling/SW\\_Burgers/MonumentenzorgDocs/OpenMonumentendag2009webbrochure.pdf](http://www.antwerpen.be/docs/Stad/Bedrijven/Stadsontwikkeling/SW_Burgers/MonumentenzorgDocs/OpenMonumentendag2009webbrochure.pdf)).

funerals and deceased (69 % of the total number of funerals) could be studied in the context of social groups and social distinction (see Table 2.3). Social groups were represented quite equally in the dataset, each connected to around one third of the specified funerals: most funerals, 130, belonged to the middle group, followed by the high social group, 111 funerals, and then the lower orders, with 107 funerals.<sup>113</sup>

While the potential of probate inventories to study the relation between social groups and consumptive patterns was often discussed by scholars, dividing social groups on the basis of wealth, income, occupation, size of household, gender and marital status was also argued to be risky, as boundaries between groups were often unclear and complex in early modern societies. Scholars have not only debated if it was fruitful to connect probate inventories to different social groups but also what method of organization was the most reliable. Consumption was argued by some scholars to be most dependent on wealth, for instance Wijsenbeek stated that possession of goods was most dependent on wealth and income,<sup>114</sup> while other scholars have argued that occupation should be seen as most important variable influencing social identity and material culture; Weatherill stated for example that profession should be seen as the most reliable variable influencing the material culture of social groups.<sup>115</sup> Defining social groups was an especially interesting challenge in this thesis due to the great regional diversity of the death debts, which influenced the availability of personal information and the social and economic contexts of the deceased. Available variables differed per town and as social groups often differed per community in the early modern period as well, groups were defined per town on the basis of wealth and income. As it lay beyond the boundaries of this study to use additional sources, the social group categorization constructed here was based on groups defined in more specialized studies and on a burial tax recorded in the death debts. The death debts of Lichtenvoorde could not be studied in the relation to social groups: the deceased of this

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<sup>113</sup> The slight overrepresentation of the middle classes is due to the dataset itself, probate inventories are generally biased in favor of the middle groups of society, and because of choices made in the definition of the three social groups: while one amount of burial tax paid was assigned to the elite (30 guilders) and the lower orders (3 guilders), the middle groups were linked to two levies of the tax: 6 and 15 guilders.

<sup>114</sup> Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, 'Boedelinventarissen' 70-71, Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft* 103-106.

<sup>115</sup> Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain* 208-213. Despite the fact that for Maasland, Lichtenvoorde, Medemblik, Maassluis and Weesp occupations, with HISCO classification, were available, this variable was not studied separately to define social groups in these cities. While burial taxes remained surprisingly constant in the Dutch Republic during the period under discussion, the connection of occupations to a certain amount of income and social group could have varied per locality and time period, and this makes the variable difficult to use. A thorough study into this matter was beyond the aim and scope of this study and classifying the persons into social groups only according to basic and scattered statements on occupation, as recorded in the probate inventories, would provide an unreliable image. In Antwerpen, Maassluis and Doesburg occupations were studied by Deneweth and Dibbits when constructing social groups, and by using their categories occupations were indirectly taken into consideration in these cities. In addition the influence of cultural groups, local contexts, and personal characteristics, as age, education and gender, upon social groups was noted and discussed by historians. See: Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 8-9, H. Dibbits, E. Doelman 'Slapen op het platteland: boedelbeschrijvingen uit Maassluis (1665-1900) en Maasland (1730-1900)', in: *Volkkundig Bulletin* 19 (1993) 350, Van der Woude, Schuurman, *Probate inventories* 22-24, 30.

town proved too complex to define socially, as not many other studies have focused on the small community and expenses on the burial tax was not recorded in the death debts of this town.

To define the three social groups on the basis of wealth firstly social groups as constructed by scholars H. Dibbits and H. Deneweth were adopted. Deneweth used the wealth of the persons in her Antwerp database to define their social status, focusing on different variables found in the probate inventories. Here her division in three wealth groups was adopted for all of the Antwerp death debts and deceased.<sup>116</sup> Wealth and income were also studied by Dibbits: in her study focusing on Doesburg and Maassluis Dibbits combined wealth and income with other variables, found in the probate inventories as well as additional documents, to define social groups.<sup>117</sup> The three social groups constructed by Dibbits were adopted in this thesis: just over 76 % of the funerals taking place in Doesburg and Maassluis could thus be connected to a social group. While Deneweth's three groups could be coupled directly to the three groups as defined in this thesis, the social groups defined in Dibbits' work differ slightly from the groups constructed and used here. By adding data from other documents, not just utilizing the information found in the inventories, Dibbits was able to define her social groups more narrowly.<sup>118</sup>

Historians studying social groups and consumption in the Netherlands have often chosen to use the burial tax *Middel op Begraven* to define social groups in their research, as this tax was argued to be a relatively reliable source for defining social groups.<sup>119</sup> The burial tax and its conditions could vary slightly per region, but the tax was generally levied according to the same regulations in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch Republic. The tax had to be paid directly after death and the altitude of the levy depended on the wealth, and sometimes also on the income and occupation, of the person who had died. The burial tax classified persons into five classes: people had to pay 0 guilders, 3 guilders, 6 guilders, 15 guilders or 30 guilders, according to their assets at the moment of their death.<sup>120</sup> The amount of burial tax that was recorded to be paid in the death debts can thus give

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<sup>116</sup> The definition of social groups in Deneweth's work was done by wealth criteria per year. Deneweth's first social group, the lower orders of Antwerp society, owned no real property nor financial assets. The middle orders, owned real property and/or financial assets but could not live off their estates. The upper middle groups and the elite, social group 3, could theoretically live off the income of their real property or financial assets. Deneweth argued that to be able to live off their estates, earning around 320 guilders a year (income of a master mason), people had to hold a capital value of 6400 guilders in 1660 (5% interest rate) and 9150 guilders in 1780 (3,5% interest rate). People with property and assets above 6400 and 9150 guilders were thus placed in group 3. See: Deneweth, 'From barter to the international capital market', 1-36.

<sup>117</sup> The social groups constructed by Dibbits were based on multiple variables (found in probate inventories and local government documents) and were divided in three categories: smaller classes (wealth below 2000 guilders), middle classes (wealth between 2000 and 5000 guilders) and rich classes (wealth above 5000 guilders). More on the construction in: Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 9, 19, 344-359.

<sup>118</sup> While the wealth of persons belonging Dibbits' middle social group was estimated between 2000 and 5000 guilders and the wealth of the elite above 5000 guilders, here the wealth of the second and third social groups were defined in a broader manner: 2000 to 12.000 guilders for the middle groups and above 5000 guilders for the third social group.

<sup>119</sup> For instance Wijnsbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft* 103-105, 115, 139, Kamermans *Materiële cultuur* 49-50, and Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 271-284.

<sup>120</sup> The people belonging to the 'pro deo' class, did not have many assets: their total wealth was less than 600 guilders (this boundary could differ), while the wealth of the second class was estimated to be below 2000 guilders. Paying 6 guilders the

us a good indication of the wealth and consequently the social status of the deceased.<sup>121</sup> In Maassluis, Medemblik, Weesp and Maasland the burial tax was recorded frequently in the death debts: in 160 of the 325 funerals taking place in these towns, 49,2 %, the burial tax was found and the deceased of these funerals could thus be connected to a certain social group.<sup>122</sup> In her work Wijzenbeek has examined the convergence between actual wealth, lifestyle and occupation of people and the amount of burial tax levied by the local government when they died. While she did observe convergences between the amount of tax paid and the actual social positions of persons, the overall conclusion of her examination was positive.<sup>123</sup> The *Middel op begraven* again proved its reliability in this thesis: the majority of amounts charged and recorded in the death debts was in convergence with the social statuses and funeral costs of the deceased.<sup>124</sup> The exceptions and convergences, noted by Wijzenbeek and observed in this study, show that one should be careful using the *Middel op Begraven* when defining social groups, as the burial tax can sometimes be deceiving when it comes to a person's actual wealth. But the relatively small number of convergences underlines the value of the burial tax for defining social groups: in most cases the amount charged by the local government was directly related to a deceased's actual wealth, income and occupation, and consequently their social status. In additional research however, when focusing on a smaller selection of funerals or funeral taking place in one or two localities, social groups could and should be defined more narrowly, correcting possible local variations of the burial tax and using additional sources to determine deceased's social position.

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third class earned between 200 and 400 guilders a year or had a total wealth between 2000 and 6000 guilders. The fourth class's assets came to a total of 6000 to 12.000 guilders, or people earned between 400 and 800 guilders a year. The fifth class, paying 30 guilders in tax, was either paid over 800 guilders a year or had a total wealth of over 12.000 guilders. Bitter has argued that the height of the burial tax was often based on a person's external exposure of wealth, as having a home in the country, a carriage and personnel, rather than on diligent overviews of his or her assets and debts.

<sup>121</sup> The 'Middel op Begraven' was not instated until the late seventeenth century; the first reference to the tax made in the death debts under discussion was recorded in 1711 in Maassluis. But as for Maassluis the groups constructed by Dibbits were available and as in Medemblik and Maasland no death debts were available before 1700, the relatively late instatement of the burial tax did not prove to be of great influence upon the possible connection of funerals and deceased to social groups in this study. Only the 9 funerals taking place in Weesp before 1700 were excluded from categorization. In the death debts additional money was recorded to be paid for the so-called 'zegel' (stamp) tax, connected to the burial tax; as printed on official documents. Unfortunately the stamp tax, also assigned according to wealth, was too random and varied too much between the towns to be used in this study. Additional research should however use this indicator of a person's social group when focusing on one or two localities.

<sup>122</sup> The deceased of the Maassluis' death debts were defined in Dibbits' study as well as categorized on the basis of the *Middel op Begraven*. To solve this issue the group as defined by Dibbits was given priority over the group based on the burial tax, to make sure no costs or observations were counted twice.

<sup>123</sup> In the third, fourth and fifth classes of the *Middel op Begraven* convergences between taxes levied and actual wealth and lifestyle were sometimes observed by Wijzenbeek: some people were estimated to belong to a higher class while others were asked to pay more than their wealth indicated, due to their occupation or debts. The wealth of the people belonging to the first two classes however was estimated correctly in the majority of cases; zero or three guilders was asked to be paid by people with a total wealth below respectively 300 guilders and 2000 guilders.

<sup>124</sup> When comparing the social groups defined by Dibbits and with the use of the burial tax for the town of Maassluis some convergences did present themselves: relatively small fees could be levied in the supposedly richest groups and high fees were sometimes charged while people belonged to the poorer groups of Maassluis' society. Some exceptions were also noted when studying the burial taxes and funerals in other towns: persons belonging to the lower orders sporadically spent a fortune on their funeral, while some supposedly rich deceased were buried for under 50 guilders.

Despite its complexities, it can be concluded that death debts are a fruitful source for the historical study of the early modern funeral in general, and its relation to social distinction in particular. Despite challenges connected to the local variation of the dataset, the use of two different databases, and variation in specification of the death debts, 382 complete and specified funerals were selected and thus the detailed expenses dedicated to socially important funeral practices recorded in these death debts could be studied. The majority of these 382 funerals could also be related to three different social groups, defined on the basis of wealth, which made the study of funeral rituals and costs in relation to social distinction possible.

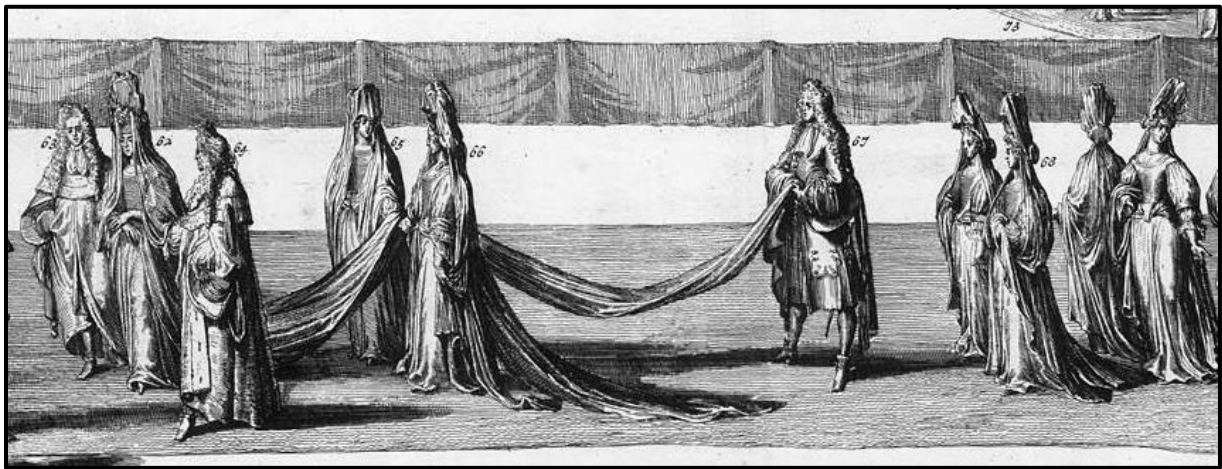
But to what extent can death debts provide valuable data on the process of social distinction in early modern Europe? As funeral consumption was only one of many ways to distinct oneself socially and as only a selection of funeral rituals can be studied with the use of the death debts, one could conclude that the study conducted in this thesis can only make a very minor contribution to the historiography of socially distinctive consumption. But the exploration of a relatively unexplored source in this study concentrating on two historical subjects rarely combined, the early modern funeral and consumption in relation to social groups, actually shows the value of the death debts for historical research focusing on these different topics. Despite the complexities of the source and the issues concerning the definition of social groups, 348 specified funerals could be studied in connection to evenly represented social groups, which makes the dataset used a rich and valuable one. The data on funeral rituals and costs recorded in the death debts is anything but perfect, as not all funerary practices and objects were found or recorded in a useful way, but nevertheless the death debts provide a great amount of valuable quantitative as well as qualitative data on the early modern funeral in general and its connection to social distinction in particular. Overall it can thus be concluded that while studying funeral consumption and social distinction with the use of death debts can be challenging, in the end the study of the source owes up to its great potential.

The public funeral rituals that were best recorded in the death debts and most important for social distinction, namely mourning clothes, bearers accompanying the coffin, and the funeral meal, will now be concentrated upon. The occurrence, costs and importance of these funeral rituals for social distinction will be discussed in chapters three, four and five.



## Chapter Three. Mourning clothes

Mary Stuart, Mary II of England, died of smallpox in December 1694. After an elaborate funeral, Mary was buried in Westminster Abbey, London, on the fifth of March 1695. As Queen of England and wife of Stadholder William III, Mary's death received much attention in the Netherlands: numerous pamphlets were published describing her life, last moments and funeral.<sup>125</sup> In Image 3.1<sup>126</sup> part of an image printed in one of these pamphlets published in the Netherlands in the late seventeenth century is portrayed: it depicts Princes Anne, Mary's daughter, and other persons taking part in the funeral procession. What stands out in the image is the mourning dress of the guests, and



**Image 3.1 Detail and description of the funeral procession of Maria Stuart (London 1695)**

of Anne in particular (the second person portrayed on the left). Anne is described in the pamphlet as the supreme mourner<sup>127</sup> and the mourning clothes she was depicted to wear underline this title: the size, long train and decoration of Anne's mourning cloak, her black outfit and the special hat she wore were extravagant, specially made, and pictured in the pamphlet in detail. Also the mourning clothes of the other attendants were portrayed with care: the women following Anne, duchesses and countesses of English estates, were clothed in long black mourning cloaks and wore conspicuous hats, while the three men accompanying Anne and carrying the train of her mourning cloak, a duke, earl and chamberlain respectively, wore similar wigs, shorter cloaks and white collars. The variation, grandeur, and detailed depiction of the mourning dress Anne and guests wore during the funeral of

<sup>125</sup> A selection of publications: S. Gruterus, *Funeralia Mariae II Britanniarum* (Haarlem 1695), H. Nahuys, *D'algemeene heerschappy des doods, verthoont in een lijk-reden, over d'alderbeklagelijkste dood en begravenisse van [...] Maria, koninginne van Groot-Brittannien* (Rotterdam 1695) *The Knuttel Collection* number 14177, T. Lakeman, *Hizkiaas dood en koninklike-lijkstacy. Verklaard en toegepast in een predikatie op de eygen dagh der begravenisse van Maria Stuart* (Hoorn 1695) *The Knuttel Collection* number 14165.

<sup>126</sup> R. Hooghe, *Het overlijden en de lijkstatie van Maria II Stuart, koninging van Engeland* published by Pieter Persoy (Amsterdam 1695) Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-76.279 (Muller 2905/10b). Also used as illustration in the work of S. Gruterus, *Funeralia Mariae II Britanniarum* (Haarlem 1695). See also the additional images on the cd, portraying other pictures and descriptions of the funeral and funeral procession of Mary Stuart.

<sup>127</sup> Anne was literally described as the person wearing the most extensive mourning clothes: 'de Opperste Rouwdraagster'.

Mary Stuart exemplifies the importance of the ritual of wearing of mourning clothes during early modern funerals. By investing in full mourning outfits, styled according to the latest trends, by hiring mourning cloaks for all attendants, and also by decorating house, church, coffin and transport with black mourning cloths, the bereaved expressed their grief and dedication to the deceased in a public manner, simultaneously underlining their wealth and social status by overspending on textiles and especially mourning clothes.

When variation in funeral rituals is discussed in the literature, details concerning mourning textiles are most frequently commented on by scholars. Differences in mourning clothes were apparent during early modern funerals, not only concerning the fabric, style and decoration of the clothes but also who was wearing mourning dress in what manner: from direct relatives to all attendants to the funeral, sometimes even including the poor asked to accompany the procession, whose expression of grief could vary from wearing a simple black ribbon around the upper arm to dressing up in the full mourning attire, as the women pictured in images 3.1, including a long cloak and specially decorated hat. Scholars have argued that the extent of mourning dress, the number of people wearing mourning clothes, and the style and material of the mourning textiles was dependent on finances and as well as the social status of the deceased and their families.<sup>128</sup> Some have even argued that as social status considerations increased in importance, expenses on mourning clothes expanded in costs and as well as variation in the eighteenth century, related to the increased desire to underline social distinctions in funeral rituals.<sup>129</sup> The number and kind of clothes hired or purchased for a funeral was directly and strongly related to the social position of the deceased and bereaved: the higher their status and the greater their wealth, the more money was spent on mourning dress. Scholars have suggested that the mourning textiles and clothes worn could be of significant influence upon the social position of the family of the deceased. Mourning clothes thus not only represented the social position of bereaved and deceased, but also could have influenced their social status: by overspending on mourning outfits people might have attempted to upgrade their social positions. In this chapter expenses on mourning textiles and clothes as recorded in the death debts will be discussed to find out if the occurrence and costs of this funeral ritual in the dataset supports the theory, put forward by scholars and underlined in primary writings and images discussed in the first part of the chapter, that mourning clothes were representative of social status as well as bought, hired and worn for social distinctive purposes.

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<sup>128</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Strocchia, *Death and ritual in renaissance Florence* 24, 39-44, Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 31, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 118-121, 131-149, 151-164, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 438-442, 449-459, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 240-244, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 135-140, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-407, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 4, 10, 14-15, 24-28, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-4, 14-34, 39-51, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1861-1862, 1875-1878, Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 167-168.

<sup>129</sup> Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-5, 14-34, 39-51.

### 3.1 Mourning clothes in eighteenth century writings

In Dutch magazines and pamphlets published in the eighteenth century the custom of wearing mourning clothes after a death was discussed regularly: while some writings focused on the practice in general terms, discussing its increased occurrence and high costs, other writings discussed in particular the connection of this funeral ritual to social status and social distinction. An example of a general discussion of the practice is the conversation printed in a 'Noordhollands schuitpraatje' (*Conversation on a barge in Northern Holland*) published in Amsterdam in 1794<sup>130</sup>, in which Jacob and Krelis, two men from the countryside, discussed mourning clothes with an 'Amsteldammer', a person from Amsterdam, while travelling from Amsterdam to Hoorn on a barge ('schuit'). In the 'praatje', a type of pamphlet in which realistic everyday conversations about a current topic were printed<sup>131</sup>, Jacob asked the Amsteldammer what new custom was represented by wearing a ribbon around the left arm, having heard that this ritual was connected to mourning for a king. The Amsteldammer answered that if the custom was indeed connected to mourning for a royal person, of which he was unaware, it would be ridiculous that such a great number of people should have taken up to the ritual frequently, as royal deaths only occurred rarely.<sup>132</sup> The comment initiated a discussion about the wearing of mourning clothes: the Amsteldammer disapproved of the practice, arguing that the costly ritual obliged people to spend much more than they could afford to make sure that the whole family could dress up in appropriate mourning clothes. While the ritual was supposed to be about grief, remembrance and spiritual values, people were increasingly focused on its external presentation, especially in the towns of Holland, as in the countryside more simple customs were still prevalent. Krelis questioned the Amsteldammer's opinion of mourning clothes; should it really be judged improper to show one's grief by wearing mourning dress? The Amsteldammer answered that when people spent inappropriately great sums the custom was indeed improper: in this way 'rouwdragen' was no longer a representation of grief but only performed out of vanity and pride. When Krelis nonetheless stated that he would certainly adopt the ritual if it became common in the countryside, the Amsteldammer commented that this was exactly the curse of this novel custom, and of unnecessary fashions in general: while people reluctantly adopted proper behavior, unfavorable but fashionable manners were hastily and generally accepted without rational thought.<sup>133</sup>

When the ritual of wearing mourning clothes during and after the funeral was discussed in eighteenth century Dutch writings, especially the connection of this practice to particular social

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<sup>130</sup> 'Noordhollands schuit-praatje, over het tegenwoordig courant-nieuws, het plaatsen van rouwbrieven in het zelve, en de nieuwe manier van rouwdraagen' (Amsterdam 1794), *The Knuttel Collection* number 22346.

<sup>131</sup> C.W. Dingemans, *Rap van tong, scherp van pen: literaire discussiecultuur in Nederlandse praatjespamfletten (circa 1600-1750)* (Utrecht 2008) 11-12.

<sup>132</sup> 'Noordhollands schuit-praatje' (1794) *Knuttel* 22346, 1-11.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem* 12-16.

groups and to social distinctive behavior was commented upon often. In the 'Netherlandish Spectator' a Dutch magazine published in the mid-eighteenth century in which contemporary customs were criticized,<sup>134</sup> the wearing of mourning dress by specific social groups was discussed more than once. Exemplary is a letter published in the magazine in 1750,<sup>135</sup> in which a certain A.H argued that the novel custom of providing servants with mourning clothes after the death of the head of a household made no sense at all. Mourning dress was supposed to be an external sign of grief, and therefore personnel should be exempt from the ritual, as servants did not experience the same grief as the bereaved. Not just servants, the writer added, but all people undeserving of performing the ritual, due to their low social positions, should refrain from wearing mourning dress. The middle classes in particular should stop imitating the elite in this and other ways: the middle groups should refrain from riding in the same carriages, employing the same amount of servants, and should especially refrain from copying elite funeral rituals.<sup>136</sup> A second exemplary debate that focused on mourning clothes in relation to social groups and distinction was published in a series of pamphlets around 1750, after the death of William IV.<sup>137</sup> After the passing of the Stadholder regulations were made public about the right manner of wearing mourning clothes in honor of the late William. But what was insufficiently stated, the writer of the first pamphlet argued,<sup>138</sup> was who should perform the ritual: the majority of the people were free to decide if they should dress up in mourning clothes in remembrance of William. The result was that persons of low rank imitated the mourning dress of the elite: middle class men not obliged by birth, rank or position to wear mourning attire, and even their women and children, put on mourning clothes. The writer disapproved of this development, as it inspired and forced more and more people to participate, despite their low social standings and financial situations. Wearing mourning clothes might be interpreted as showing one's love for the House of Orange, but was actually connected to a dedication to imitate and attempt to belong to the upper classes, springing from a desire for personal glory.<sup>139</sup>

In response to the 'Comments on the wearing of mourning for his royal Highness', a 'Modest Reflection'<sup>140</sup> was published in the same year. It was stated that it was improper for a nobleman, when wearing full mourning dress, to allow and provide his personnel with the same mourning

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<sup>134</sup> D.M.B. Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht: sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum 1998) 31-38.

<sup>135</sup> 'Brief van A.H. over het rouwgeeven aan de Dienstboden, en het antwoord van den Spectator', *Nederlandschen Spectator* (1750) article 48, 169-176.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibidem* 179-176

<sup>137</sup> 'Aanmerkingen aangaande het rouw dragen over zyne Doorluchtige Hoogheid' (Den Haag 1751), *The Knuttel Collection* number 18334, 'Zedige Reflectien over de Aanmerkinge op het draagen van den Rouw' (Den Haag 1751), *The Knuttel Collection* number 18335, and 'Antwoordt aan den auteur der zogenaamde Zedige Reflectien over de Aanmerkinge op het draagen van de rouw' (Den Haag 1751), *The Knuttel Collection* number 18336.

<sup>138</sup> 'Aanmerkingen aangaande het rouw dragen' (1751) *Knuttel* 18334, 2.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem* 1-3.

<sup>140</sup> 'Zedige Reflectien' (1751), *Knuttel* 18335.

clothes, as social distinction in external appearance was annulled in this way. People's arrogance and pride often made them dress above their stations, but only the elite and people in government positions should dress up in full mourning outfits. The writer stated that every person should feel grief about the Stadholder's death and show it in public, but each according to their own social position. People should act according to their personal honor and status, in particular the middle classes. The death of Stadholder William IV should be honored with humility, and not by imitation of the mourning clothes of the higher classes.<sup>141</sup> A feisty answer to the 'Modest Reflection' was published in 1751.<sup>142</sup> The writer warned the 'Modest Gentleman' of the reflection: if his argument was made known to more people he might be in physical danger, targeting the middle classes in this manner, and his family might have to wear mourning clothes because of it. The writer argued that it was not improper for people of all social groups to wear the same mourning clothes: in a Republic citizens were not only free to do and wear what they liked, they were also equal in social status. In addition the writer stated that mourning clothes should not be worn to underline differences in status, but to show internal grief for the death of the Stadholder: and why could this not be shown in the same manner by a nobleman and his servant? The pamphlet concluded that if the writer of the reflection really desired to distinguish himself, he should decorate his face and hands by putting them in a barrel used for dyeing clothes black, as this practice of distinction would surely not be copied by the middle groups.<sup>143</sup>



**Image 3.2 Funeral procession in The Hague (1732)**

That the custom of wearing mourning clothes, as well as decorating objects with black textiles during the funeral, was frequently performed and important for social distinction is also underlined by images of funeral processions published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

<sup>141</sup> 'Zedige Reflectien' (1751), *Knuttel* 18335, 1-5.

<sup>142</sup> 'Antwoordt aan den auteur der zogenaamde Zedige Reflectien' (1751), *Knuttel* 18336.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibidem* 1-14.

Image 3.2<sup>144</sup> provides an example of the practice in the early modern Netherlands: the attendants to the funeral portrayed all wear similar mourning dress, and the carriage, coffin and horses featuring in the procession are decorated with black textiles. The mourning dress of the attendants consisted of dark hats with veils of lace attached to them, white pieces of textile worn around the neck, and long dark mourning cloaks, as can be recognized in image 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 displayed earlier in this thesis as well. By wearing mourning clothes the attendants to the funeral procession distinguish themselves from the bystanders pictured in the image, expressing their relation to the deceased and internal grief over the passing, as well as underlining the social status of the deceased and bereaved, who were able to provide all attendants to the funeral with full mourning outfits, a costly and socially importance gesture.

Not only the popularity and high costs of wearing mourning clothes was reflected upon in eighteenth century Dutch writings, the ritual was also discussed in the context of social groups and social distinction. The imitation of elite funeral customs by the rest of society, especially by the higher middle groups who could afford to pay the high costs of the rituals and aspired to upgrade their social status by adopting them, was commented upon: which social groups should be wearing mourning dress, and especially which social groups should not, was discussed in many publications. That the performance of the ritual was used as an excuse to discuss the proper behavior and consumption of different social groups in society underlines the relevance of this funerary custom, and funeral consumption in general, in the context of socially distinguishing behavior. The frequent appearance of mourning clothes in early modern writings as well as in images of funeral processions demonstrates the significance of the ritual in seventeenth and eighteenth Netherlands and suggests that the custom was a regular topic of discussion, with persons criticizing the overspending on mourning clothes and the adoption of mourning dress by particular social groups. If mourning clothes were also frequently found in the death debts, in connection to high expenses, specific social groups, and socially distinctive behavior, will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

### 3.2 Mourning clothes in the death debts

Taking a step back from the comments and critiques of contemporaries, here the funeral ritual of mourning clothes will be studied as recorded in the death debts. The fabric of a mourning outfit, the decoration of a mourning cloth covering the coffin, and the number of mourning clothes worn by attendants was argued to be of great importance for social distinction: can this theory be supported by the data found in the death debts? Expenses on mourning clothes were studied

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<sup>144</sup> B. Picart, 'Ceremonies funébres comme on les fait à la Haye, et en quelques autres villes de la Hollande' (Den Haag 1732), *Atlas Van Stolk* (Amsterdam 18<sup>e</sup> eeuw) number 50614 (24). This image can also be found on the disc added to this thesis.

together with the cost items related to mourning textiles, as frequently the purpose of textiles bought or hired was not recorded in the death debts. Mourning textiles in general were frequently found in the data: in 49 % of the specified funerals money was spent on this ritual, often referred to as 'de rouw', and of the all specified cost items 11 % referred to mourning textiles (see *Textiles*, Table 2.4). While median costs were relatively small, 5 guilders, relatively the ritual was costly. When people spent money on this decorative, public and socially important practice they did so properly: over 14 % of the total specified costs were spent on 'de rouw'. From a mourning skirt made of silk (0,5 guilders) to money spent on the design and production of a cloth to place over the coffin during the procession (219 guilders), expenses on mourning textiles varied greatly. On mourning clothes worn during the funeral of Herman Crabbenborgh for instance, who was buried in Lichtenvoorde in 1721, a total of 97,3 guilders was spent, while at the funeral of Gommar van Ranst, who died in Antwerpen in 1660, 9 guilders were dedicated to the decoration of house and altar with black cloth.<sup>145</sup>

Time period	Absolute		Relative*	
	Cost items (N)	Total costs in guilders	Cost items	Total costs
<b>1638-1700</b>	103	1433,8	18,5 %	23,4 %
<b>1701-1750</b>	117	2631,0	12,1 %	19,7 %
<b>1751-1800</b>	251	3289,8	9,0 %	9,7 %

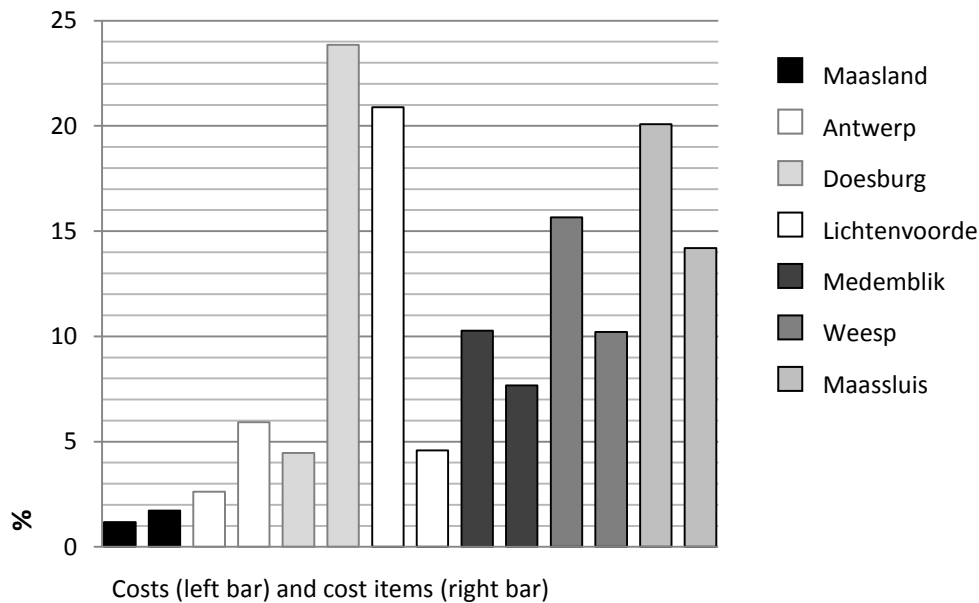
*\* Number of cost items dedicated to and total costs spent on the ritual as percentage of total specified cost items and total specified costs as recorded in the death debts per time period.*

Studying the ritual's development in time, it is striking that while in absolute terms the number of cost items and total costs increased between 1638 and 1800, relatively the expenses dedicated to textiles and especially the total costs of the ritual decreased greatly. Table 3.1 presents the absolute costs and items and relative importance of both. The percentages show the relative attention paid to and relative costs spent on the ritual: the number and costs of expenses related to mourning textiles are presented as percentages of the total specified costs and items recorded in the debts per time period. Scholars have argued that the ritual became more important in the eighteenth century, but the death debts do not underline this observation. Despite a steady increase in absolute terms, relatively the funeral ritual greatly decreased in importance between 1638 and 1800. This could partly be due to the local variation found in the dataset: per town the relative importance of mourning textiles differed, as is presented in Graph 3.1. In Holland mourning clothes were very significant: of the specified costs of funerals 10 % to 20 % was dedicated to mourning textiles and clothes and between 7 % and 15 % of the cost items of funerals organized in the towns of Holland

<sup>145</sup> Antwerpen 91, Lichtenvoorde 2649.

referred to the ritual. Agrarian Maasland was an exception in this region: only 1,2 % of the costs and 1,7 % of the cost items of the death debts of this town were dedicated to mourning textiles.<sup>146</sup> In the east of the Dutch Republic the ritual was approached in varying ways. In Doesburg attention to the practice was immense (23,9 % of the cost items could be connected to the ritual), but costs were relatively low: only 4,5 % of the total specified costs were dedicated to mourning textiles.

**Graph 3.1 Relative costs and cost items (% of total specified costs and cost items) dedicated to mourning textiles per town**



In Lichtenvoorde the situation was reversed: not many people spent money on ‘de rouw’, according to the death debts, but when people did dedicate money to mourning textiles they did so properly: almost 21 % of the total specified costs referred to mourning textiles. In Antwerp mourning textiles were of minor importance: 2,6 % of the total specified costs and 5,9 % of the cost items recorded in the death debts referred to the ritual.<sup>147</sup> We can conclude that while in Holland, with the exception of Maasland, spending money on mourning textiles was a regularly performed and significant funeral practice, outside this region the importance of the ritual depended on specific local contexts.

In Table 3.2 the cost items and the total costs dedicated to mourning textiles in the death debts are presented in absolute numbers and guilders per social group. The percentages present the

<sup>146</sup> Maasland’s economy had a different focus than most other towns in Holland and this can be recognized in the death debts: funerary practices and rituals were often differed from the other Holland towns studied and had more in common with funerary customs prevalent in Lichtenvoorde. Mourning textiles were thus less important in Maasland than in other towns in Holland studied in the dataset.

<sup>147</sup> This is partly due to the generally diverging characteristics of Antwerp in comparison to the other towns of the dataset. As the only southern city, cultural, social but especially religious contexts were very different in Antwerp and this presents itself in the death debts. On the other hand the often small percentages of occurrence and costs of certain rituals is partly explained by a relatively high proportion of undefined costs. Some of rituals in the Antwerp data were given general labels and could be in this way be hiding rituals, like mourning textiles, conspicuously absent in the dataset.



relative attention paid to and relative costs spent on the ritual: the number and costs of expenses related to mourning textiles are presented as percentages of the total specified costs and items recorded in the debts of the three social groups. In the middle social group expenses on mourning textiles were recorded most frequently, 208 cost items, and relatively this social group groups spent the greatest part of their funeral budget on this funeral ritual: 18,2 % of total specified costs. In absolute terms the high social group's expenses on mourning textiles were most costly. With only 88 cost items the low social group paid the least attention to mourning textiles, although relatively the costs still make up 10,1 % of their total funeral expenses. It can be concluded from the death debts that expenses on mourning textiles were relatively high, and as suggested in the literature and primary sources the high social group spent most extravagantly on the ritual. But the amount of money dedicated to the ritual by the middle social group, with more cost items and higher relative costs, is conspicuous: their frequent and grand expenses on this funeral ritual could be related to social distinction, via imitation of the traditional customs of the elite. By overspending on mourning textiles and in particular mourning clothes, the middle orders might have attempted to positively distinguish themselves socially and upgrade their social status. The phenomenon of 'na-yver', imitation, commented upon in the pamphlets may thus be underlined by the great expenses of the middle class on mourning clothes as recorded in the death debts: a considerable part of the middle social group could have overspent on mourning textiles for socially distinctive purposes: to present themselves as part of the elite.

Social group	Absolute		Relative*	
	Cost items (N)	Total costs in guilders	Cost items	Total costs
Low	88	1486,4	9,3 %	10,1 %
Middle	208	5390,8	14,0 %	18,2 %
High	177	6633,9	12,4 %	14,5 %

*\* Number of cost items dedicated to and total costs spent on the ritual as percentage of total specified cost items and total specified costs as recorded in the death debts per social group.*

Despite their regular occurrence in the death debts, expenses dedicated to mourning textiles and clothes in the dataset were infrequently specified. While the purchase of textiles for the funeral was often recorded, details on its purpose, material, decoration, quantity and quality were absent in the majority of expenses. There is also no way to know if mourning textiles were used and if funeral clothes were worn during the funeral that were already in the possession of the deceased, bereaved and attendants. In the part of the probate inventory in which the possession of clothes is recorded,

mourning clothes were relatively infrequently recorded but not completely absent.<sup>148</sup> The great expenses dedicated to hiring and purchasing mourning clothes recorded in the death debts and the sporadic appearance of mourning dress in the clothing section of the probate inventories suggests however that the references to the clothes in the death debts give a good representation of the attention given and costs dedicated to the ritual during early modern funeral. A last complication encountered when studying the references to this ritual in the death debts was the infrequently statements stating for whom the clothes were purchased or hired and for what period of time the clothes were worn after the funeral itself. It can thus not be established if only family members or also less important attendants to the funeral were dressed in mourning. And if clothes were purchased to be worn by the principal mourners for weeks, months or even years after the funeral itself, showing their grief and dedication to the deceased, this explains, or at least places in perspective, the sometimes extravagant costs dedicated to mourning dress. Additional research, studying this important funeral ritual in more detail, should pay more attention to these issues.



**Image 3.3 Attendants of the funeral procession of Frederick Henry (Delft 1647)**

All kinds of mourning clothes can be found in the death debts; from gloves and hats to stockings for children and dresses for maids. Especially particular pieces of clothing connected to mourning were recorded regularly: for instance 'lamfers' (veils made of transparent lace connected to mourning hats), 'beffen' (white textiles worn around the neck and connected to a person's collar), and 'rouwbanden' (ribbons worn around the upper arm but also used to decorate hats and other pieces of clothing). When Theodora Holten died in Doesburg in 1697, for example, a pair of gloves, a hat and 'lamfer', a mourning cloak, several stockings, a pair of mourning shoes, a skirt, camisole, and pants was purchased for the funeral for a total of 22,6 guilders.<sup>149</sup> Image 3.3 portrays some of these

<sup>148</sup> See the Meertens Database, labels 16 ('rubriek' women's clothing) and 18 ('rubriek' men's clothing).

<sup>149</sup> Doesburg 1800.

mourning items: the hats with ‘lamfers, the large cloaks and the white collars. The image underlines that bereaved and guests attending a particular funeral wore similar mourning clothes: all attendants depicted are clothed in exactly the same outfit.<sup>150</sup> To study the socially distinctive function of mourning clothes in more detail, a frequently found item in the death debts was focused upon. While in many death debts of the dataset expenses on mourning textiles and clothes were only partly specified or referred to the ritual in unspecified terms, ‘de rouw’ or ‘rouwgoed’, expenses dedicated to mourning cloaks, ‘rouwmantels’, rented to be worn during the funeral were frequently recorded separately, making up 10 % of the category of mourning textiles. The mourning cloak could be purchased, but was in most cases rented from an institution, the church or private persons to be worn during the funeral by all or part of the attendants. The cloaks usually cost between 0,3 and 0,4 guilders a piece, but due to the varying number of cloaks rented, according to the number of attendants wearing them during the funeral, expenses dedicated to the cloaks varied greatly and could be grand. While in Doesburg in 1788 for instance, during the funeral of Ida Charlotte Verspijk, only four cloaks were worn by the direct bereaved, rented for 1,2 guilders in total, for the funeral of a Willemtje Leendertsdochter van der Eijck, a widow buried in Maassluis in 1756, 155 cloaks were rented to be worn by all attendants, amounting to a total of 55,2 guilders.<sup>151</sup>

Social group	Cost items		Costs in guilders				
	N	%	Total	%	Median	Min	Max
Low	6	14,6	91,9	9,2	12,3	0,3	40,0
Middle	14	34,1	309,6	30,9	26,2	0,3	44,3
High	21	51,2	599,6	59,9	26,8	1,2	55,2

Of the 47 funerals in which expenses dedicated to mourning cloaks were recorded, 41 could be connected to a social group: the results are stated in Table 3.3. With a median of 17,9 guilders, mourning cloaks were quite an expensive funeral ritual: as regularly great numbers of cloaks were hired the total expenses of the practice could be considerable. Studying expenses on the cloaks per social group, it is apparent that the higher the social group the more frequently cloaks were rented: only 12,8 % of the cost items were related to the lower orders, while 44,7 % of the expenses could be connected to the elite. Due to the more frequent occurrence of mourning cloaks in funerals of the higher social groups but also due to the greater number of attendants wearing them, the expenses on ‘rouwmantels’ increased steeply per social group. Only 9,2 % of the total costs dedicated to cloaks were paid by the low social group, 30,9 % was accounted for by the middle groups and 59,9 % of the

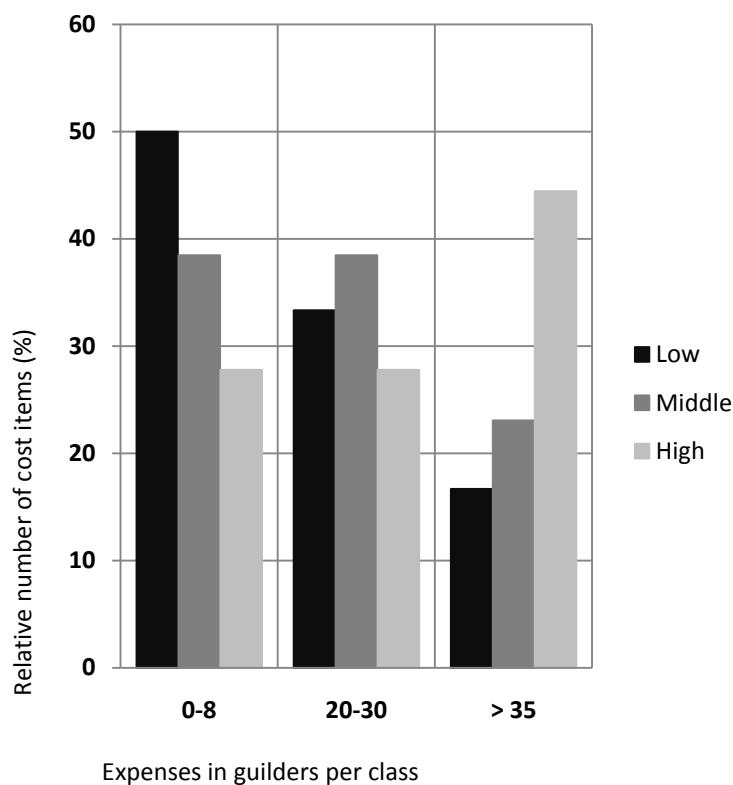
<sup>150</sup> Detail of I. Commelin, ‘De Laaste Lyckplicht van Zyn Hoogheit’, in: *Frederick Hendrick van Nassauw: Prince van Orangien, Zyn leven en bedryf* (Amsterdam 1651) second part, p. 215. See the full image on the disc added to this thesis.

<sup>151</sup> Doesburg 1978.

total costs was spent by the elite. The median costs tell us that on average the high and middle social groups paid around the same amount of money on hiring cloaks, setting themselves apart from the lower orders. While for the funeral of Pieter Post, a middle class merchant in wood who died in Maasland in 1766, 94 mourning cloaks were rented for a total of 23,2 guilders, for the elite burial of Trijntje Verhoude, organized in Maassluis in 1744, 58 'rouwmantels' were hired for a total of 37,6 guilders. In both cases the cloaks were rented from Adrianus Ridderis, for 0,4 guilders per cloak.<sup>152</sup>

Deceased and bereaved of the three social groups either spent less than 8 guilders on mourning cloaks, choosing the cheapest option, between 20 and 30 guilders, the middle price range, or more than 35 guilders, the most expensive option. These three types of expenses on mourning cloaks, pictured in Graph 3.1, may have been related to the number of attendants wearing them: only the direct bereaved, worn by the entire family, or provided for all attendants to the funeral. The clustered expenses were found in the death debts of all social groups, but the higher the social group the more attendants were generally dressed in mourning cloaks, thus the higher the price dedicated to the ritual. While in the lower orders 50 % of the expenses on cloaks fell within the cheap range, of the middle and high groups respectively 38,5 % and 27,8 % spent less than 8 guilders on mourning

**Graph 3.2 Expenses on mourning cloaks per social group<sup>153</sup>**



<sup>152</sup> Maasland 2127, Maassluis 249.

<sup>153</sup> Of the expenses of the low social groups on mourning cloaks 100 % fell within the three classes, of the expenses on mourning cloaks of the middle and high social group respectively 92,9 % and 85,7 % fell within the three classes.

cloaks. Graph 3 shows that in the most expensive range the positions of the social groups were reversed: while only 16,7 % of low social groups and 23,1 % of the middle orders spent more than 35 guilders on cloaks, 44,4 % of the elite chose the most expensive option. The different types of expenses dedicated to mourning cloaks thus underline that money dedicated to 'de rouw' steeply increased per social group, as more attendants to the procession were provided with mourning cloaks during the funerals of the higher social orders.

The funerary tradition to provide also servants with mourning clothes after the passing of an important member of a household was often commented upon in primary publications. The death debts underline the contemporary observations on the costliness and as well as social distinguishing features of this funeral ritual. Between 3,6 and 128 guilders was spent on the 'rouw' of personnel in eleven death debts, with a median of 25 guilders. After the death of Dirk Brouwer for instance, who died in Medemblik 1713, 50 guilders were spent on mourning clothes for the maid and manservant.<sup>154</sup> The practice was never referred to in the context of the lower orders; only the middle classes and the elite spent money on the mourning dress of servants. But while the occurrence of the ritual was similar in the middle and high social groups, costs differed greatly. The middle groups accounted for just over half the cost items, but more than 80 % of the total costs of the ritual was spent by this social group. According to the death debts the middle orders thus spent substantially more on mourning clothes for their personnel than the higher groups; a phenomenon that could have been related to the imitation of traditional elite customs by the increasingly wealthy top of the middle orders. To socially distinguish themselves within their own social group and aspiring to belong to the elite, the middle groups could have spent great sums of money on the mourning dress of their servants, devoting much more money to the ritual than the higher social groups they imitated.

After studying a selection of Dutch eighteenth writings discussing the custom and examining the ritual in the death debts, it can be concluded that mourning textiles, and in particular mourning clothes, were of great significance for social distinction. Especially the divergence between the minor occurrence and costs of mourning clothes in the lower orders on one hand, and the grand expenses dedicated to the practice in the middle and higher social group on the other, stands out. Despite the challenges faced when studying the ritual in the death debts, as expenses were often recorded without much detail on quality, quantity, and precise purpose of the textiles purchased or hired and the fact that people could have worn mourning clothes already in their possession, the frequently hired mourning cloaks could be studied in relation to social distinction in detail. It was apparent that in all three social groups people could chose between a cheap, moderate and expensive option when

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<sup>154</sup> Medemblik 1213.

devoting money to mourning cloaks. But the higher the social group, the more often the expensive option was preferred: to dress all attendants, and sometimes even the servants, in mourning cloaks was a customary in the higher social groups. The relatively great expenses of the middle social group dedicated to the mourning clothes are conspicuous, spending just as much and sometimes even more than the elite on the ritual. The wealthy middle orders seem to have attempted to distinguish themselves socially by wearing certain mourning clothes: by overspending on this public and socially important ritual the middle social groups could thus have aspired to upgrade their social position, a phenomenon which was often discussed in contemporary writings. To find if other funeral rituals were also used for social distinctive purposes, we now turn to a second socially significant funeral practice: bearers accompanying the coffin.

## Chapter Four. Bearing the coffin

As a public means of social display, a demonstration of wealth for the local community to witness, much attention was paid to the characteristics of the funeral procession. The number of bearers consorting the coffin was an important segment of the procession: while the coffin of a deceased could be placed on a carriage or cart, bearers were always present during the funeral. Their role was to accompany the coffin during the procession and to carry it the whole or at least the first and last steps of the way from house to the grave. Although their task was practical, as the coffin had to be transported to the grave, the role, number and dress of the bearers was representative of social status. Amalia van Solms, wife of Stadholder Frederick Henry and mother of Stadholder William II, died in The Hague in 1675. Her funeral was an extraordinary event: many important guests featured in the grand funeral procession that preceded Amalia's burial in the 'Grote Kerk' in Delft. Her lead coffin was covered by a large and luxurious velvet cloth and carried by twelve captains of her personal guard, who were assisted in carrying the heavy coffin by twenty-seven bearers. These 'professional' bearers, dressed in stately mourning clothes, were citizens of the city of The Hague, officially appointed to perform this special task during Amalia's funeral.<sup>155</sup> While Amalia's coffin could have easily been carried by six men, many more bearers were hired for the task: a total of 39 bearers carried and accompanied the coffin of this noblewoman from the court in The Hague to the church of burial in Delft.

Scholars have argued that the number of bearers hired to carry the coffin was directly connected to the social position of the deceased and bereaved. Also the monetary rewards extended to the bearers and the kind of dress provided for them to wear during the funeral was related to social status and wealth. People from higher social groups hired more bearers, who were dressed in more extravagant mourning clothes and who were paid higher rewards for their services.<sup>156</sup> Bearers were therefore a significant socially distinguishing feature of the funeral: the bearers accompanying the coffin underlined, for all to see, the social status of the deceased and their families. In addition, in the same manner as mourning clothes, it was suggested by scholars and contemporaries that if a deceased was carried by a great number of extravagantly dressed bearers, this could positively influence the social position of the bereaved. The funeral practice could thus have been used by

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<sup>155</sup> J. Dols, 'Lykpredicatie Op de Begravenisse van Hare Hoogheit, Mevrouw de Princesse Douariere D'Orange' (The Hague 1675), *The Knuttel Collection* number 11409, P. van Balen, 'Lyk-predicatie op't salig af-sterven van [...] de prinsesse douariere d'Orange' (The Hague 1759) *The Knuttel Collection* number 18728.

<sup>156</sup> For example in: Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 105, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 6-75, 109-112, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 24-30, 102-121, 131-154, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 421-438, Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe* 2, 54-59, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 226-228, 243-245, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1874-1907, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-45, 187-239, 263-268, 273-283, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 275-277, 284, 336-343, Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 20-21, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 156-168, 187-205, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 4, 9-15, 24-28, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-5, 14-34, 39-51.

certain social groups and individuals to upgrade their social status. If and how the Undertakers' Riot, contemporary images of funeral processions, and expenses dedicated to bearers in the death debts underline the relation between bearers and social status and in addition the socially distinctive function of bearers in the early modern Netherlands will be discussed in this chapter.

#### 4.1 Images and the Undertakers' Riot

The important, public and social role of bearers during funeral processions in the early modern Netherlands was underlined by images printed as well as events taking place in this region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Images displayed in earlier chapters, Image 1.1, Image 1.3 and Image 4.1, emphasize that bearers were customarily present during funeral processions and the two examples portrayed here show in addition the social importance of bearers and the relation between social groups and the expenses dedicated to this ritual. The social importance of bearers in general, and their connection to social distinction in particular, is secondly underlined by the regulations and events surrounding the Undertakers' Riot, taking place in Amsterdam in 1696.

In his *Natuurlyke Historie van Holland*, Francq van Berkey did not only describe funerals and funerary customs in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch Republic, he also showed them. In his chapter on funeral rituals a drawing named '*De Byzondere Nationaale Lykstatien der Hollanderen*' portrayed the dissimilarities between six funeral processions of different social groups.<sup>157</sup> The picture provides an interesting contemporary view on how funeral processions differed per social group and underlines the importance of social distinction during this public part of the funeral. In Image 4.1 the picture is displayed, in color and black and white. Bearers can be recognized in all funeral processions depicted by Berkhey, who stated that the attendance of a great number of bearers was important for underlining social status.<sup>158</sup> In the elite procession (A) the coffin is accompanied by twelve bearers: two on each side of the coffin, one behind and one driving the carriage, and six walking in front of it, with one carrying the deceased's coat of arms. The coffin of a middle class man, in procession B, is carried by twelve bearers on their shoulders, while in procession C the small coffin of a child is carried by only one bearer. The coffin placed on a sleigh in procession D is accompanied by four bearers, two walking beside it and two leading the way. All the bearers depicted during the first four processions, representing the high and middle social groups, are dressed in formal mourning attire. In the two processions representing the peasantry (E and F), bearers might be present, as the carts of procession E are driven by four men and eight men carry the coffin on their shoulders in procession F, but this is difficult to determine as the men are all

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<sup>157</sup> '*De Byzondere Nationaale Lykstatien der Hollanderen*', in: Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1959. The images can also be found on the disc added to this thesis.

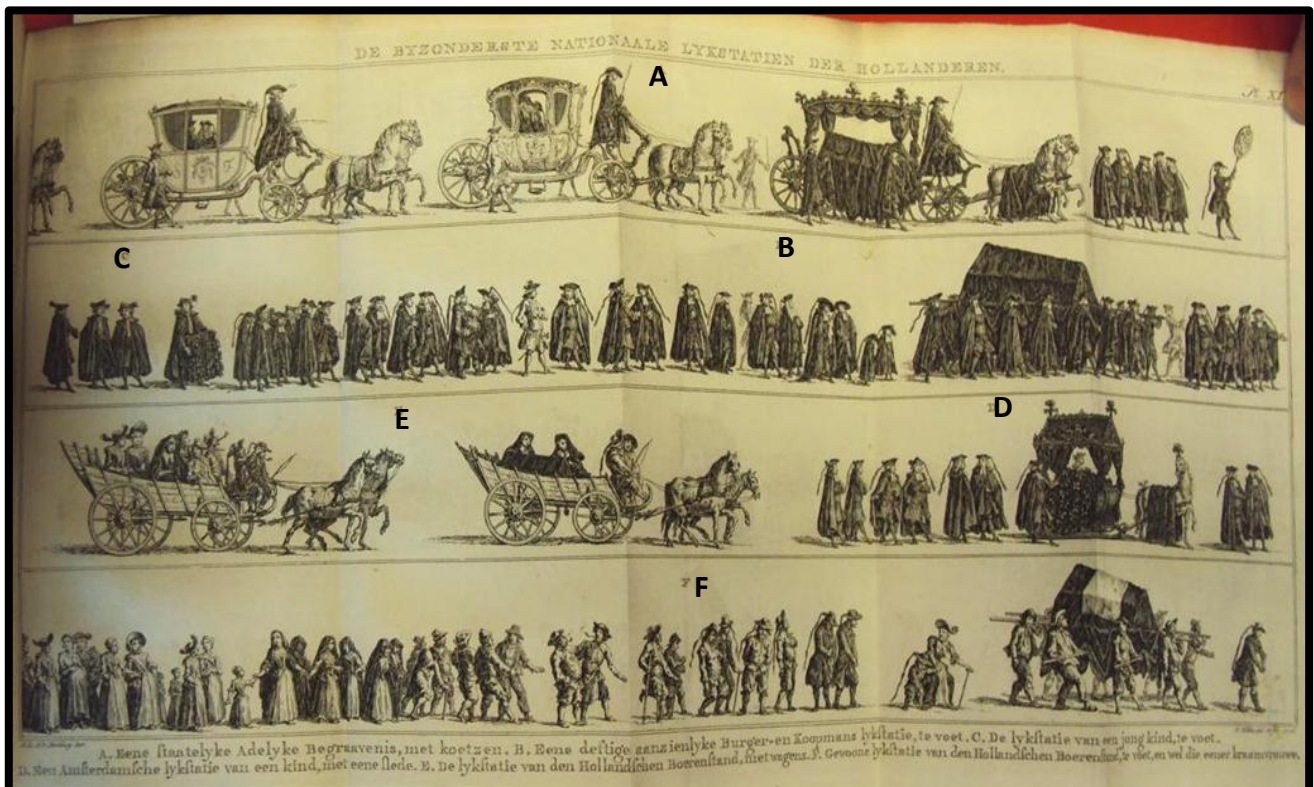
<sup>158</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1887.





**Image 4.1 De Byzondere Nationaale Lykstatien der Hollanderen (Natuurlyke History van Holland - Berkhey)**

- A. 'A stately elite funeral with carriages.'
- C. 'Funeral procession of a young child, by foot.'
- E. 'Funeral procession of the peasantry of Holland, with carts.'
- F. 'Regular funeral procession of the peasantry of Holland, by foot, of a woman who died in childbirth.'
- B. 'Distinguished middle class funeral procession, by foot.'
- D. 'Funeral procession of a child in Amsterdam, with sleigh.'



dressed in normal and colorful clothes. The bearers of the latter two processions might have been neighbors or family members performing the task for the day, not officially hired nor monetarily rewarded for carrying the coffin. In addition to the differences in bearers, the funeral processions depicted by Berkhey varied also in mourning clothes and transport. While stating in his work that the bereaved should be dressed in mourning dress according to their relation to the deceased, Berkhey argued that the ritual was often exploited to underline wealth and social status.<sup>159</sup> The attendants of the elite and middle class processions (A, B, C and D) are all depicted to wear the same mourning clothes, including hats, cloaks and 'beffen'. During the two processions representing the peasantry (E and F) only a small number of attendants wear mourning dress, probably the directly bereaved. The same differences between the processions can be observed when focusing on the types of transport. In the elite funeral carriages were used to transport the coffin and the attendants, while during the other processions the attendants are walking, with the coffin being carried by bearers and once placed on a sleigh. Only in procession E attendants and the coffin were transported in carts.

According to Berkhey, funeral processions in general, and the number bearers featuring in them in particular, differed per social group.<sup>160</sup> In addition to mourning dress worn and the type of transport used, the number and attire of the bearers attending the coffin was one of the most important differing characteristics of the public and socially important procession: while the elite and (high) middle class hired a great number of bearers and dressed them in the same mourning clothes as the other attendants, during the funerals of the lower social groups bearers wore normal clothes and might not have been hired at all: the task of driving the carts and carrying the coffin could have been performed by neighbors or family members.

As a public event the procession was of great social importance: the mourning clothes worn, the coats of arms displayed, the number of bearers, and the scale of attendance, including the presence of particular persons, were strongly related to the social position of the deceased and bereaved.<sup>161</sup> Image 4.2<sup>162</sup> portrays a pamphlet published after the death and funeral of Dutch hero Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter, who died in 1676. De Ruyter was an admiral in the service of the

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<sup>159</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1861-1864.

<sup>160</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Strocchia, *Death and ritual in renaissance Florence* 24, 39-4, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 118-121, 131-149, 151-164, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 379-392, 412-416, 421, 438-442, 449-459, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 240-244, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 135-140, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 102-407.

<sup>161</sup> Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 200-239, 263-268, 273-283, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 421-438, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 6-26, 27-75, 109-112, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 346-354, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 24-30, 102-121, 131-149, 151-164, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 275-277, 284, 336-343 Spruit, *De dood onder ogen* 20-21, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 156-168, 187-205, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 4, 9-15, 24-28, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 226-228, 243-245, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 105, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 1-5, 14-34, 39-51, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1874-1907, Scholten, *Sumptuous memories* 26-41.

<sup>161</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1887.

<sup>162</sup> J. Luyken, *Begrafenis van De Ruyter* (Amsterdam 1685) Amsterdam Museum, inventory number A46842. This image and other images of the funeral of De ruyter can be found on the disc added to this thesis.



Image 4.2 Pamphlet depicting and describing the funeral of Michiel de Ruyter (Amsterdam 1677)



20 Het Lijk was behangen met acht volle Blaoenen, van achteen perfoonen onder het rouw-kleedt gedragen, die van 18 andere verpooft wierden.

21 De Admiralen van Nes.

22 Evertzen.

23 Schepels.

24 En de Vice Admiraal Vlugh, in plaats van den Admiraal Star, hielden de vier hoeken van 't Baer kleet.

25 En de Zee-Capiteynen, Schey, Tol, Elsevier, Broeder, Minne, Uytterwijck, Boes, de Munnick, Swart, Schey de Jonge, van der Duffen, van Zijl, Decker, Megang, Teyloos, en Abcoude, gingen rontom het Lijk, 't Baer kleedt dragende.

Dutch navy, famous for his important role in the Anglo-Dutch wars. On the eighteenth of March 1677 de Ruyter was buried in the 'Nieuwe Kerk' in Amsterdam, his elaborate funeral, including a long and stately procession, was described and depicted in the pamphlet of Image 4.2. What stands out in the image is the number of attendants: in the pamphlet hundreds of them are portrayed. In the description of the funeral it is stated exactly who attended the funeral, with the numbers pictured in the image corresponding to detailed descriptions of the people present. For instance number nineteen referred to Lord Manaert, carrying a board with coat of arms, and number twenty-six presented the noble Lord Constantijn Huygens and deputies of the Prince of Orange. Also the names of the bearers carrying the body are stated in the description of the procession. The number of bearers portrayed in the image is high: no less than eighteenth bearers, dressed in full mourning dress, carried the coffin from the house of de Ruyter's widow to his grave in the 'Nieuwe Kerk'. In Image 4.2 the coffin and bearers as portrayed in the pamphlet are depicted separately, and the part of the description in which the bearers are described is presented as well. The text states that in total 36 persons were assigned to take care of the coffin: the principal 18 bearers carrying it on their shoulders were supported, and if needed substituted, by 18 others. What is remarkable is that the bearers were not 'professionals': the eighteen principal bearers stated by name in the description were all admirals or captains serving in the Dutch navy. That the task of bearing the coffin was not performed by hired men but by colleagues of the deceased was partly due to relatively early date of the funeral: scholars have argued that it was still quite common in the seventeenth century to have neighbors or other acquaintances carry the coffin, out of obligation and respect for the deceased.<sup>163</sup> The pamphlet emphasizes the importance of traditional, and probably non-monetary, funeral practices in the late seventeenth century: that no bearers were hired during de Ruyter's funeral shows that even during processions of important people, who could afford to hire bearers, personal bearing of the body remained of significance longer than often supposed. That important members of the navy carried the body and were addressed by name in the pamphlet underlines not only that it was an honorable task to carry the coffin, but also that it was important to make known to the wider world which significant people had performed the task. The pamphlet describing and depicting de Ruyter's funeral thus underlines in different ways the social importance of the presence, as well as the number, clothing and also the identities, of bearers during early modern funeral processions.

The decision of the Amsterdam city council to regulate the practice of bearing the coffin in 1696 and the Undertakers' Riot ('Aansprekersoproer') that followed, emphasizes the important function of bearers in the early modern Dutch funeral, and in particular its connection to social

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<sup>163</sup> We will return to this topic in 4.2 (see also chapter 2 and: Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 4, 10, 14-15, 24-28, 82-84, Spruit, 'Begravenisrituelen in Nederland', 25, Bitter, *Graven en begraven* 247-248, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1955-1958, Harding, *The dead and the living* 248-253, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 33, 40, Den Boer, 'Naar een geschiedenis van de dood' 183, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 219, Portegies, *Dood en begraven* 125.

distinction and imitation of funerary customs between social groups. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1696 Amsterdam's city council published an ordinance about the bearing and burying of the dead.<sup>164</sup> The act ordained that only bearers and undertakers ('aansprekers') appointed by the local government were from that moment onwards allowed to help organize a funeral and to carry or accompany the dead during funeral processions. The act also introduced other regulations: a new tax on burials was instated, a job description was given of appointed undertakers and bearers, stating their earnings and appropriate dress, and fines were mentioned, which would be instated if the new commandments were not followed. In the introduction of the act its instatement is explained by referring to the contemporary high costs of funerals: the expenses on funerary rituals were ever increasing due to imitation of elite customs by other social groups.<sup>165</sup> After publication of the act, heavy rioting erupted in Amsterdam. The instatement of government appointed undertakers and bearers meant that many people would lose their jobs and the installment of a government tax indicated that burial costs would increase. Burgomasters were harassed, houses sieged and possessions plundered.<sup>166</sup> After days of rioting the government gave in: on the first of February 1696 a notification was issued that abolished the earlier act.<sup>167</sup> As all new commandments were withdrawn, people were ordered to return to their homes in peace.

The Undertakers' Riot underlines the social importance of bearers accompanying the coffin during early modern Dutch funeral processions. The Amsterdam council's attempt to regulate the ritual of carrying and accompanying the body during the procession, focusing on the number of bearers, their monetary rewards and their dress, suggests that many people overspend on the ritual in the seventeenth century and that bearers had a socially distinctive function. What can be concluded from the ordinance is that the government was concerned about rising funeral costs, due imitation of elite customs by especially the middle orders, in particular extraordinary expenses connected to bearers and undertakers. While the inhabitants of Amsterdam mainly protested against the instatement of a general burial tax, the riot that followed also underlines the importance of employment connected to death and the funeral and the significant value of traditional funeral customs in the lives of many early modern people. The images discussed above demonstrate the Amsterdam government's attempt to put a halt to overspending on bearers, which in their view occurred out of a desire to imitate elite funeral customs, was not uncalled for: great numbers of bearers were hired, clothed and paid to accompany a coffin to its last resting place to underline the wealth and social status of a deceased and bereaved.

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<sup>164</sup> 'Keure en ordonnantie op het dragen en begraven van doden, binnen de stad van Amsterdam, en de jurisdictie van dien' (Amsterdam 1696) *The Knuttel Collection* number 14236.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem* 3-15.

<sup>166</sup> M. Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge 2005) 153-158.

<sup>167</sup> 'Notificatie' (Amsterdam 1696) *The Knuttel Collection* number 14236 B.

## 4.2 Bearers in the death debts

In a great number of the funerals of the dataset references to bearers accompanying the coffin to the grave were found (see *Bearers*: Table 2.4). Studying their monetary rewards, we can conclude that in exactly 50 % of the specified funerals bearers were recorded to have been paid for their services. In the death debts expenses between 0,2 guilders, for one bearer, and 140 guilders, paid for the services of 20 bearers, were recorded, with median costs of 21 guilders. Almost 10 % of the total specified costs of the funerals of the death debts were dedicated to the ritual. Often an unknown number of 'dragers' (bearers) was recorded to be paid for their services, but in 76 death debts the exact number of bearers hired was stated. The numbers varied, between 8 and 28 bearers, but in most funerals 12 or 14 bearers were hired to accompany the body. Not only the number of bearers hired, also their monetary rewards differed. Bearers were paid between 0,5 and 7 guilders per person for their role in the funeral, with the majority of total expenses for a group of bearers varied between 12 and 84 guilders. Generally the rewards increased slightly when a greater number of bearers was hired; for 12 bearers 2,5 to 3 guilders was paid per bearer, while 14 bearers were most often paid 3 guilders each. Exceptionally high rewards were sometimes extended to the bearers as well: for instance in the death debts of Willemetje Leendertsdochter van der Eijck, who died in Maassluis in 1756, it was recorded that 7 guilders was paid per person to the 28 bearers of her coffin.

Studying the ritual per town it is clear that there were important local variations, connected to the importance of neighborly support and obligation. While in some towns of the dataset neighbors or family members carried and accompanied the coffin out of obligation and respect, without receiving a monetary reward, in other localities men were hired and paid to perform the task, as the ritual was increasingly commercialized from 1650 onwards.<sup>168</sup> The local variation of cost items and costs related to the ritual in the death debts is presented in Graph 4.1. In Medemblik, Maassluis and Weesp 47 to 75 % of the death debts recorded that money was spent on bearers: in Holland bearers were thus frequently hired, between 12 % and 21 % of total specified costs was spent on bearers and 5 % to 14 % of the cost items referred to the practice. With only 1,6 % of specified cost items and 2,3 % of specified costs referring to the ritual, only in Maasland hired bearers were of minor importance: it is probable that in this town in Holland, as in Lichtenvoorde, neighbors performed the practice for a small tip or for free. While in Antwerp expenses on bearers were scarcely found in the death debts<sup>169</sup>, and in Lichtenvoorde they were absent, in Doesburg money was spent regularly on hiring bearers: 9 % of specified cost items and over 10 % of specified

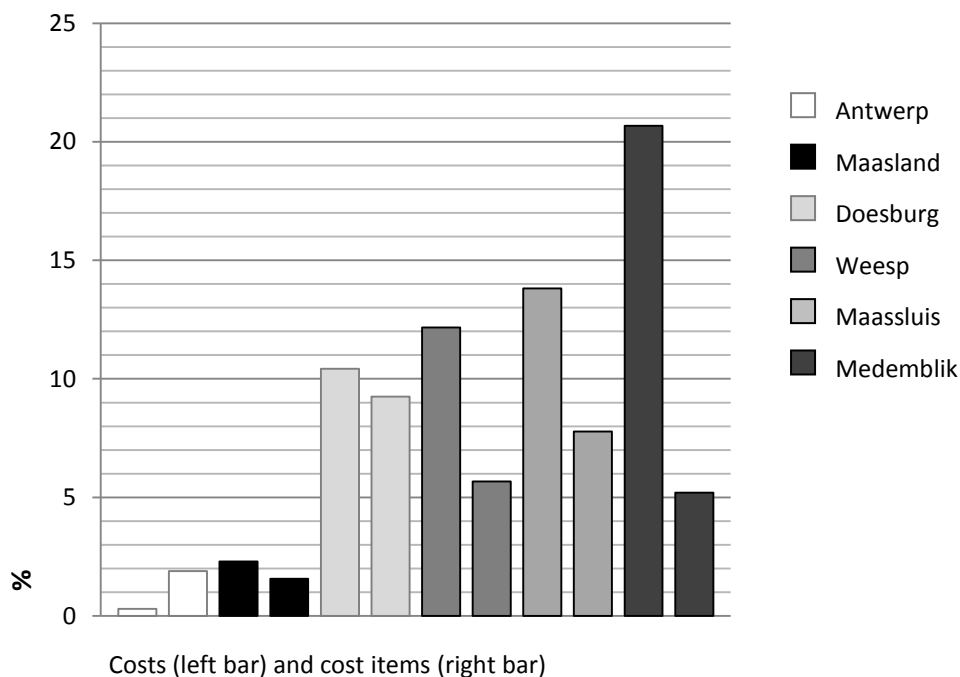
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<sup>168</sup> Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1884-1887.

<sup>169</sup> This is partly due to the generally diverging characteristics of Antwerp in comparison to the other towns of the dataset. On the other hand the often small percentages of occurrence and costs of certain rituals is partly explained by a relatively high proportion of undefined costs.

costs of the Doesburg death debts were dedicated to the ritual. The funeral ritual of bearers can therefore be connected to the varying local obligations of neighbors and relatives during burial ceremonies, extending their support without receiving monetary reward, as discussed in chapter two. In Holland the ritual was often paid for, the practice was commercialized, while in the eastern parts of the Netherlands neighbors or relatives frequently carried the body for free. Antwerp, Doesburg and Maasland were the exceptions to this development, probably due to Maasland's agrarian and village-like, Doesburg's urban, and Antwerp generally differing character.<sup>170</sup>

**Graph 4.1 Relative costs and cost items (% of total specified costs and cost items) dedicated to bearers per town**



That the ritual of bearing the coffin, like the practice of taking care of the body and preparing it for the grave, was increasingly commercialized from 1650 onwards is supported by the development of the expenses on bearers in time, as presented in Table 4.1. Absolute and relative cost items and costs dedicated to the ritual recorded in the death debts increased between 1638 and 1800, especially between 1638 and 1750. The local variation and the conspicuous timely development suggest that the ritual of bearing the coffin was increasingly focused on the market from the seventeenth century onwards, as a greater number of deceased and bereaved started paying more money to hire men to accompanying the coffin during the funeral procession. The subject should be studied in more detail

<sup>170</sup> That Maasland's economy had a different focus than most other towns in Holland can be recognized in the death debts: funerary practices and rituals had more in common with funerary customs prevalent in Lichtenvoorde. Neighborly obligation to bearing the coffin during the funeral procession was of great significance during the funeral. The generally diverging characteristics of Antwerp partly explain the low percentages. On the other hand relatively high proportion of undefined costs. could be in this way be hiding the ritual of bearing the coffin.

in additional research, together with other funeral rituals regularly performed by neighbors or other unpaid persons, to draw more definitive conclusions.

	<i>Absolute</i>		<i>Relative*</i>	
<b>Time period</b>	<b>Cost items (N)</b>	<b>Total costs in guilders</b>	<b>Cost items</b>	<b>Total costs</b>
<b>1638-1700</b>	19	250,4	3,4 %	4,1 %
<b>1701-1750</b>	61	1198,5	6,3 %	9,0 %
<b>1751-1800</b>	134	3649,9	4,8 %	10,8 %

*\* Number of cost items dedicated to and total costs spent on the ritual as percentage of total specified cost items and total specified costs as recorded in the death debts per time period.*

The expenses on bearers accompanying the coffin are presented per social group in Table 4.2, focusing on absolute and relative costs and observances. The relative numbers show which proportion of cost items and funeral costs was dedicated to the ritual per social group, in percentages of the total specified costs and cost items recorded in the death debts of the dataset. The first social group paid the least attention to bearers, but relative attention to the ritual was conspicuously similar in the three social groups. Costs dedicated to bearers however differed greatly: there can be recognized a sharp increase in absolute costs between the first and second group as well as between the second and third social groups. Grietje Joris Groenebroek, part of the lower orders of Medemblik, was carried to her grave for 1,1 guilders in 1746, while in Weesp in 1742 the fourteen bearers accompanying Anna Maria Groenwolt, in life the wife of a local governor, were paid 3,2 guilders each (44,1 guilders in total).<sup>171</sup> Everhard Woel, apothecary in Doesburg and part of the middle orders, was carried to his grave by an unknown number of bearers in 1678, who were paid 20 guilders in total.<sup>172</sup> It can be concluded that expenses dedicated to the funeral ritual of hiring bearers varied per social group: in all three groups the ritual is observed with similar frequency, but the higher the social group the more was spent on bearers accompanying the coffin.

	<i>Absolute</i>		<i>Relative*</i>	
<b>Social group</b>	<b>Cost items (N)</b>	<b>Total costs in guilders</b>	<b>Cost items</b>	<b>Total costs</b>
<b>Low</b>	53	1392,9	5,6 %	9,4 %
<b>Middle</b>	76	2902,2	5,1 %	9,8 %
<b>High</b>	78	5632,5	5,5 %	12,3 %

*\* Number of cost items dedicated to and total costs spent on the ritual as percentage of total specified cost items and total specified costs recorded in the death debts.*

<sup>171</sup> Medemblik 1308, Weesp 684.

<sup>172</sup> Doesburg 1785.



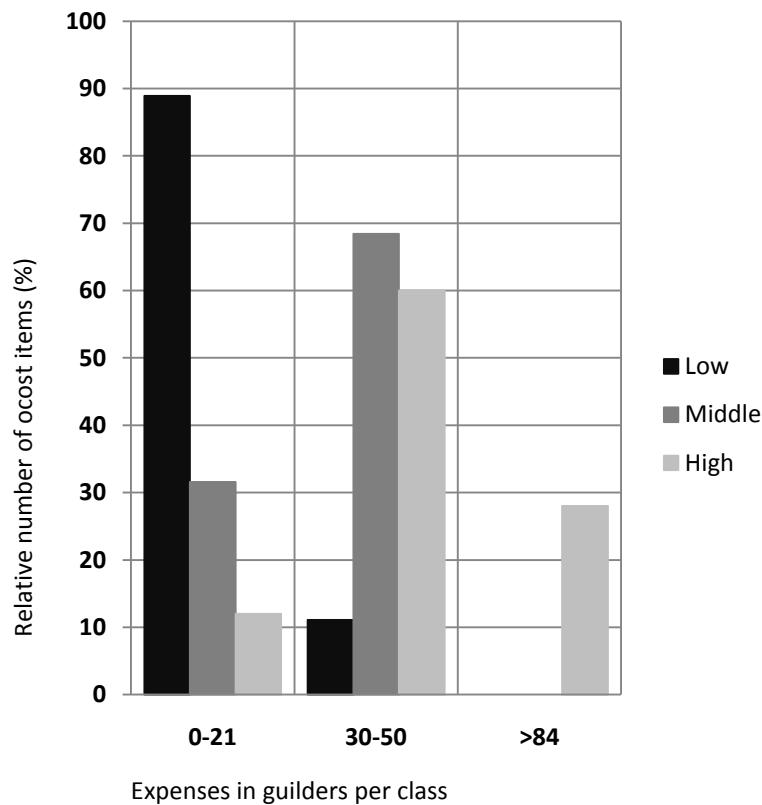
Of the three funeral rituals most important for social distinction, the data on bearers recorded in the death debts was most useful. Expenses dedicated to the dress of the bearers worn during the funeral are only sporadically found in the death debts, but as the number of bearers hired was quite frequently mentioned, the practice of bearing the body could be studied in great detail. The number of bearers hired could be examined in connection to the total costs dedicated to the ritual in the death debts, as well as the individual monetary rewards of the bearers. The relation between the number, costs and rewards of bearers and social status could therefore be studied. Additional research should however study the importance of unpaid bearers, neighbours, family member, or colleagues of the deceased who accompanied the coffin out of obligation and respects, in certain local contexts more closely, approaching the ritual from a different and but, especially in some local contexts, just as significant perspective.

To provide better insight into the variation of the ritual per social group, cost items in which the exact number of bearers was recorded were studied separately. Of the death debts which could be connected to a social group and in which observances dedicated to bearers were found, 58 recorded the exact number of bearers (28 % of the total number of cost items referring to the ritual). Of the sample 17,2 % was connected to the low social group, 34,5 % to the middle and 48,3 % to the high social group. The sample thus underlines the general occurrence of the ritual in all three social groups as observed before, but also shows that in the middle and higher social groups bearers were hired more often. While the number of bearers hired per social group appeared to be quite random, costs did steadily increase per social group. Of the total costs of the sample, 8 % was spent by the low groups, with a median of 14 guilders. The middle social group accounted for 29,9 % of the costs, with a median of 37,5 guilders. The third group was exceptional: while median costs were slightly less than those of the middle group (36 guilders), over 62 % of the total specified costs dedicated to bearers were spent by the highest social groups of society.<sup>173</sup> The increase in costs per social group, not only observed in the sample and but also when studying all expenses referring to bearers, is underlined by Graph 4.2, which presents the relative number of cost items (in percentages) per class of expense and per social group. While almost 90 % of the expenses on bearers by the lower orders did not exceed 21 guilders, the higher classes were the only social group spending extraordinary amounts of money on the funeral ritual: 28,0 % of the total elite expenses on bearers cost more than 84 guilders. The middle social group's expenses were allocated in the first and second expenses classes, but most often this social group spent between 30 and 50 guilders on the funeral ritual of bearers. Despite their regular grand overspending on the funerary practice, expenses referring to bearers in the death debts of the higher social groups varied greatly, between 36 and 140 guilders.

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<sup>173</sup> Medemblik 1327.

Graph 4.2 Expenses on bearers per social group<sup>174</sup>



The expenses dedicated to bearers in the funerals of the dataset show that the costs of this funeral ritual greatly increased per social group. While the ritual was regularly performed in all social orders, the middle and especially the higher social groups spent extraordinary sums on bearers accompanying the coffin during the funeral. The local variation of the ritual in the death debts was connected to the varying importance of neighborly obligation, when the task was performed for free, and the increasing commercialization of funeral rituals, when people were hired to perform certain funerary practices, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Thus bearers accompanying the deceased to its final resting place were a regular but relatively expensive and socially distinctive feature of the early modern funeral. Studying the Undertakers' Riot, several images, and the occurrence and costs of the ritual in the death debts, we can conclude that the number, rewards and dress of the bearers was connected to social status and social distinction in certain local contexts in the Netherlands, and that the ritual might have been used for positively influencing social position by deceased and bereaved in these towns. After carrying the body to the grave, the bearers might have been invited to the feast that concluded the process of death and the funeral. We will focus on this social gathering taking place after the actual burial in the next chapter.

<sup>174</sup> Of the expenses of the low social groups 100 % fell within the three ranges, of the expenses on mourning cloaks of the middle group and high group respectively 92,9 % and 85,7 % fell within the three ranges.

## Chapter Five. The funeral feast

Eating and drinking after the burial was a standard feature of early modern funerals. During a social gathering that symbolized a return to normal life after the solemnity of the funeral, attendants were thanked for their commemoration of the deceased. Funeral feasts varied greatly: the kind of feast organized, the number of attendants invited, the drinks and foods served, and the expenses dedicated to the feast differed, from the consumption of a beer with a small party to elaborate banquets with many guests and large amounts of consumption goods. The ritual was performed by all classes, but scholars have argued that the higher social groups, focused on underlining and possibly upgrading their social status, spent most extravagantly on the event: impressing invitees with expensive drinks and a broad range of different foods.<sup>175</sup> Petronella Houwaert, wife of a wealthy farmer, died in Maasland on the second of October 1744. After Petronella's burial in December 1744, an extravagant funeral feast took place: bread, butter, fish, meat, beer, coffee, tea and tobacco were consumed by the attendants and tin mugs were hired to for all guests to use. In total 121,8 guilders was spent on the funeral feast, over 43 % of the budget of the funeral was dedicated to the ritual.<sup>176</sup>

Like bearers carrying the coffin and mourning textiles hired and purchased, the connection between social distinction and the funeral feast ran both ways in early modern Europe. An expensive feast, with great variety of food and drinks served and a large attendance, was suggested to reflect on a family's social position in society, possibly also positively influencing their social standing. The bereaved's and deceased's established social status before the funeral, related to their wealth, was reflected in the type of feast organized and the expenses dedicated to funeral consumption. The direct relation between wealth, social status and the funeral feast was underlined by scholars, the higher the social group the more attention was paid to the ritual, and it was also suggested that by spending conspicuously on the feast, bereaved could have attempted not only to affirm but also to positively influence their social positions. After discussing the importance of communal eating and drinking during private and public rites and rituals in early modern Europe as described by scholars in more detail, with special attention to the funeral feasts of different social groups, their observations and conclusions will be examined with use of the dataset. Do the expenses dedicated to the funeral feast in the early modern Netherlands, as recorded in the death debts, underline the connection between funeral consumption after the burial on one hand and social status as well as socially distinctive behavior on the other?

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<sup>175</sup> Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 40-44, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 119-121, 131-149, 154-164, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 40, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 277-281, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 24, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 443-448, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103-104, 109-110, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20-21, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1912, 1924-1936.

<sup>176</sup> Maasland 2107.

## 5.1 The funeral feast in early modern Europe

Studying the cultural peculiarities of the Dutch in the seventeenth century in his notorious work *The embarrassment of the riches*, Simon Schama argued that abundance was common in Dutch society: to celebrate public feasts and private rites of passage grand communal banquets were often organized.<sup>177</sup> In early modern Europe communal consumption of food and drink was an important facet of life, which strengthened social bonds on the one hand and underlined social differences on the other. The costs of a feast, whether private or public, and the quantity, quality and types of food and drinks served were a direct reflection of the wealth and status of the person, family or institution that organized the drinking or dinner. Scholars have stated that funerals were often the occasion of traditional sumptuous banquets. A considerable portion of the funeral expenses was reserved for conspicuous consumption during the funeral feast.<sup>178</sup> Gittings argued that eating and drinking after the burial illustrated the survival of medieval customs and attitudes to death and the funeral after 1600. She noted that an essential part of an English burial was ‘a drinking’, during which an assembled company gathered for a feast that was organized to stress the importance of the deceased in the local community. After 1650 attendants spent more time drinking together than commemorating the deceased in church. Before 1700 a drinking often took place in the churchyard or in church, in the eighteenth century the feast was moved to a local tavern or the house of the deceased. In England cakes and wine sometimes initiated as well as terminated the funeral, as people would gather to drink and eat together in the presence of the corpse. The coffin could even be used as a table during this ritual, referred to as ‘sin-eating’. While the funeral feast could be a private familial affair, with the purpose of commemorating the deceased on the day of burial with only the direct bereaved, scholars have argued that like other early modern communal feasts public eating and drinking during the funeral could in addition be used for social distinction.<sup>179</sup> But how was funeral consumption, eating and drinking during the funeral feast, related to social distinction?

Alcohol was ever-present at funeral feasts: usually beer was served, with the occasional addition of wine, spirits, coffee and tea. Dibbits argued that during funeral feasts in the Dutch Republic only those who could afford it served wine, which was quite expensive, while beer was consumed by all social groups. People were sometimes given a special glass to consume the beer or

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<sup>177</sup> Schama, *The embarrassment of the riches* 185-186, see also: S. Schama, ‘The unruly realm: appetite and restraint in seventeenth century Holland’, in: *Daedalus: Hypocrisy, Illusion and Evasion* 108.3 (1973) 113-118.

<sup>178</sup> Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 40-44, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 119-121, 131-149, 154-164, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 40, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 120-134, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 277-281, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 24, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 443-448, Cressy, ‘Death and the social order’ 103-104, 109-110, Harding, *The dead and the living* 1-9, 14-45, 187-189, 208-234, 263-268, 279-283, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20-21, Schepens, ‘Het begrafenisritueel’ 351, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1912, 1924-1936, Schama, *The embarrassment of the riches* 185-186, Schama, ‘The unruly realm’, 113-118.

<sup>179</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 151-159.

wine: as a special gesture 'roemers' could be rented for the occasion. Tea and coffee could be served during the funeral feast as well. An elite drink in the early seventeenth century, consumption of both hot beverages had slowly spread down the social scale to become regular drinks for all social groups after 1700.<sup>180</sup> Food was often provided at funeral feasts in addition to drinks: especially baked goods were served frequently. If a grand meal was organized, during which meat, fish, fruit and vegetables were provided to the guests, it generally took place at the deceased's home. Food was the most expensive single item found in the death debts studied by Gittings: often more than half of the total sum spent was dedicated to food served at the funeral feast.<sup>181</sup>

Scholars and contemporaries have argued that in eighteenth century Europe the significance of funeral meals decreased: instead of grand sit-down meals and communal banquets people increasingly preferred to serve only drinks and small snacks to a smaller group of attendants. While the social gathering of many guests, consuming food and drinks together, became less important, the material and decorative elements of the funeral procession increased in significance after 1650. In the Netherlands, after an increase in costs of the funeral feast in the seventeenth century, after 1700 the costs of the feast slowly decreased. Dibbits stated that the funeral meal transformed to become a typical peasant funerary custom: in Maasland and in Maassluis only during funerals of persons affiliated with the agrarian lifestyle funeral dinners were still organized in the eighteenth century.<sup>182</sup> In addition to the differences in time, scholars have underlined the importance of and differences between local contexts in the performance of the funeral feast. For instance Dibbits argued that while in Maassluis the quantity of food and drinks was most important, in Doesburg the quality of the goods served was prioritized.<sup>183</sup>

The funeral feast is one of the few funeral rituals that was studied by scholars focusing on probate inventories in connection to local, social and timely developments in consumption patterns and material culture. Expenses dedicated to eating and drinking after the burial recorded in the death debts provided historians with a rare insight, absent in the rest of the probate inventory, into which consumption goods were consumed concurrently by different social groups during meals and social events. Studying eating and drinking habits with the use of death debts, scholars have concluded that while the poor only enjoyed drinks after a funeral, served in the local church or tavern, the rich organized grand funeral meals in their own homes: thus while the lower social groups often only consumed drinks, the richer social groups also provided food for their guests. The middle

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<sup>180</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 151-159, Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 139-142.

<sup>181</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 154-157.

<sup>182</sup> Addy, *Death, money and the vultures* 40-44, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 154-159, Cressy, 'Death and the social order' 103-104, 109-110, Zeijden, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van de dood* 40, Hirsch, *Doodenritueel* 120-134, Kok, *De geschiedenis van de laatste eer* 277-281, Snoep, *Dood en begraven* 24, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 275, 293-294, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 443-448, Harding, *The dead and the living* 216-218, Maarveld, *De kerk in rouw* 20-21, Schepens, 'Het begrafenisritueel' 351 Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 136-142, 160, Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie* 1925-1937.

<sup>183</sup> Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 136-138.

social groups did both: bread and biscuits were often added to the wine and beer served at their funeral feasts.<sup>184</sup> In the eighteenth century this pattern changed: Wijsenbeek argued that due to general changes in the food habits of the poorer orders of Dutch society, copying the eating habits and consumption goods of the middle and richer social groups, funeral consumption during their feasts changed as well. More meat, more wine and more coffee and tea were served during the funeral feasts of the poor: who could afford to serve a greater variation of goods and more luxurious products. The funeral consumption of the middle and high social groups also changed after 1700: the middle orders started serving more costly food and more different types of food while at the funerals of the rich more expensive foodstuffs were served, with the addition of tobacco.<sup>185</sup> The grand funeral feasts of the higher social groups, during which 'merry mourners' entertained themselves with much food and drink, were often criticized: commemorating the death of a Christian with a sumptuous and costly feast was judged by the clergy to be disrespectful to God and opposing Christian values. The meals were also regularly prohibited by the local government in the Dutch Republic, for instance by the States of Holland in 1671 and in 1689, to put a halt to the social disorders that frequently took place during and after funerals, due to the great amount of alcohol served.<sup>186</sup>

Focusing on the funeral feast, scholars have argued that this essential part of early modern funerals varied and changed. In the higher social groups the feast was organized as a display of social standing and to underline the wealth of the deceased: great amounts of expensive food and drinks were served. Funerals of the poorer orders usually ended in a less extravagant manner: only beer was consumed in the company of a small party. In addition to social variation, local variation was commented upon by historians: customs surrounding funeral feasts could differ per city, village and region in the Netherlands. In the eighteenth century the significance of the funeral feast decreased: organizing a dinner became less common, more often snacks were served in addition to drinks.

## 5.2 The funeral feast in the data

The death debts provided additional evidence for the importance of the funeral feast in early modern Europe. In more than 79 % of the specified funerals the ritual was recorded and almost 26 % of specified cost items referred to funerary consumption related to the funeral feast (see *Feast*, Table 2.4). From the bread and beer passed around after the burial of Aart Cornelis Richter in Weesp in 1755 (costing 20,2 guilders in total) to the wine, beer, apples, bread, 25 ducks, ham, and other meat

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<sup>184</sup> Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft* 230-232, Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 157-158, Houlbrooke, *Death, religion, and the family* 248-255, 275-294, Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 443-448.

<sup>185</sup> Wijsenbeek-Olthuis, *Achter de gevels van Delft* 228-253.

<sup>186</sup> Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 158-159, Dibbits, *Vertrouwd bezit* 136-142, Helsdingen, *Politiek van de dood* 24-26, 44-51, Schama, 'The unruly realm', 113-118. For criticism of the church on costly and extravagant funeral rituals in general see: H. Roodenburg, *Onder censuur. De kerkelijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578-1700* (Hilversum 1990) 35-41, R.B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam. De kerk der hervorming in de gouden eeuw* (Part II, Amsterdam 1967) 53-54, 71-72, 96, 130-134.

consumed in Maassluis during the funeral meal of widow Maertje Cornelis in 1694<sup>187</sup>, people were prepared to spend great amounts of money on a suitable funeral feast: almost 19 % of the specified costs of the funerals of the dataset was dedicated to the ritual. The variation within the funeral feasts was considerable: expenses varied from a couple of guilders to over 200 guilders in total. Not only the costs but also the contents of the cost items differed greatly: while some expenses only stated a total sum for the funeral meal, in other death debts the costs and details of drinks and foodstuffs were recorded. Of the cost items, 37,7 % referred to food (5,3 % of total specified costs) while 33,6 % recorded the costs and details of drinks (7,9 % of total specified costs), but also other consumption items were found: tobacco was frequently consumed after 1696 (61 times). Expenses on tobacco were often recorded together with pipes; in combination expenses varied between 0,2 and 8,5 guilders. Also references to glasses ('roemers'), jugs, mugs and other kinds of tableware were frequently found in the death debts.

Like the references to mourning textiles, exact details of food and drinks served are often missing in the expenses dedicated to the funeral feast. While separate expenses to different drinks consumed were often specified, foodstuffs were recorded with too much variation in the death debts to be studied in detail. This is partly due to the general focus of this thesis, examining the ritual per town in a greater number of death debts could provide a more detailed perspective. As details on the moment and place of consumption of the different goods, as well as the number of bereaved and guests they were served to, were never recorded in the death debts, the beer, biscuits and bread purchased could in theory have been consumed in private by a handful of bereaved before the funeral. Research conducted by other scholars and comments of contemporaries confirm the consumption of drinks and food in public only after the funeral by often a large number of attendants, but this information is absent in the death debts.

From the data we can conclude that two types of funeral feasts were usually organized during a funeral, defined by the food served: either baked goods ('pleskens', 'beschuit', 'krakelingen'), sugary goods and sometimes bread were served during a funeral feast, or a funeral meal consisting of all kinds of meat, bread, butter, cheese, sometimes fish, and other various items (from potatoes and rice to apples and pears) was organized. For instance during the funeral feast taking place after the burial of Grada Jacobs Lindeschot in Doesburg in 1798, bread and baked goods were served in addition to coffee, gin and other drinks (for a total of 11 guilders).<sup>188</sup> The funeral meal organized after the funeral of farmer Tesman Planten, in Lichtenvoorde in 1678 was a different ordeal: 68,4 guilders was spent on different kinds of meat (poultry, a calf, a sheep and different kinds

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<sup>187</sup> Maassluis 61.

<sup>188</sup> Doesburg 2002.

of ham), bread, butter, sugar and spices, which were served with wine and beer.<sup>189</sup> Funeral meals were most expensive, as meat and fish were costly goods. But as often combinations of items were recorded in one cost item, it was difficult study the expenses dedicated to particular goods separately, also because the prices of foodstuffs varied according to type, quantity and quality.

Time period	Absolute		Relative*	
	Cost items (N)	Total costs in guilders	Cost items	Total costs
<b>1638-1700</b>	168,0	1526,8	30,2 %	24,9 %
<b>1701-1750</b>	211,0	1917,6	21,8 %	14,4 %
<b>1751-1800</b>	736,0	6062,1	26,5 %	17,9 %

*\* Number of cost items dedicated to and total costs spent on the ritual as percentage of total specified cost items and total specified costs as recorded in the death debts per time period.*

The costs and number of cost items dedicated to the funeral feast in the death debts were quite stable between 1638 and 1800: in the seventeenth as well as the eighteenth century the practice was of great importance. Table 5.1 shows that the number of cost items and the total costs dedicated to the funeral feast greatly increased between 1750 and 1800. While relative attention paid to the feast in the death debts did decrease after 1638, especially in the first half of the seventeenth century, this decline in attention was less significant than often observed. While scholars have argued that the significance of the funeral feast decreased in the eighteenth Netherlands, according to the death debts the ritual was making a comeback after 1750, as expenses dedicated to the practice increased in occurrence and costs. Also the supposed disappearance of the sit-down meal observed by scholars cannot be supported: references to funeral meals and dinners appeared with similar frequency between 1638 and 1800. Meat, bread and baked goods were most frequently served in combination with wine and beer in death debts of the seventeenth as well as the eighteenth century. What could explain the divergence of observations is the general perspective of the research undertaken here, in comparison to the specified studies of other scholars focusing on funeral feasts in the early modern Netherlands. Dibbits and Wijsenbeek studied goods consumed during funeral feasts in specific local contexts, Maassluis, Doesburg, and Delft, and could therefore study the ritual in more detail.

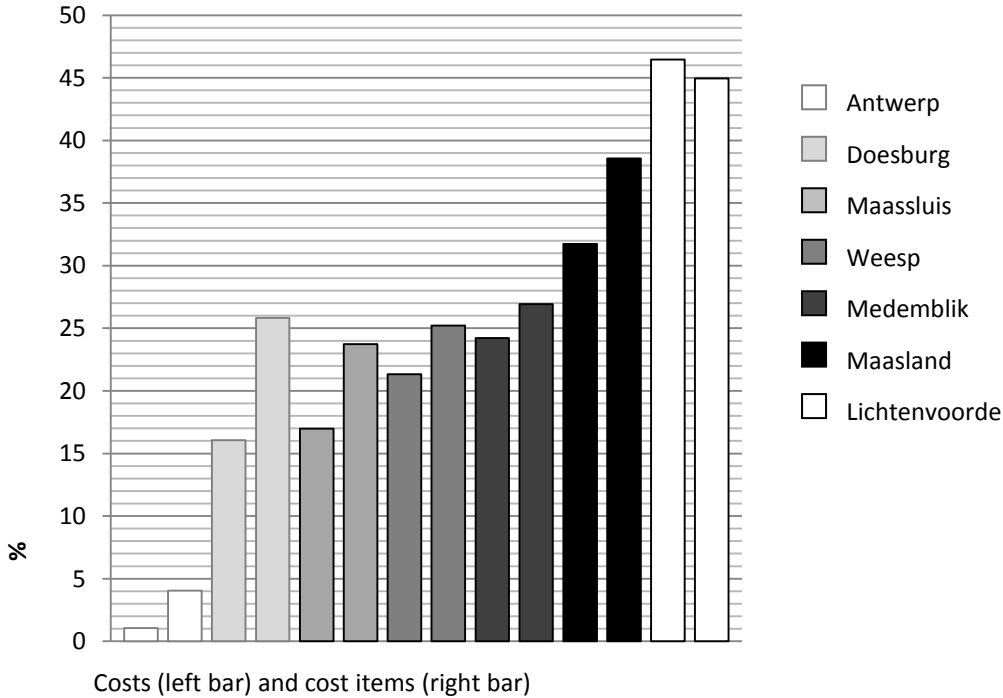
That the local variation of the funerals studied in this thesis might explain the overall minor decrease of the costs and cost items dedicated to funeral feasts and meals observed in the death debts, as studied only from a general perspective, is underlined by the references on sit-down meals, which were found much more often in the death debts some towns of the dataset than in others.

<sup>189</sup> Lichtenvoorde 2646.



Graph 5.1 shows that in Holland (with the exception of Maasland) funeral dinners were less frequently organized than in the east of the Dutch Republic. In the death debts of Antwerp the funeral feast was infrequently referred to<sup>190</sup>, but in all other towns of the dataset references to the ritual were plenty and the costs of the feast were relatively high: on average 28 % of the total funeral costs were spent on food and drinks. Especially in agrarian towns Lichtenvoorde and Maasland grand attention was paid to drinking and eating after the burial: in the Lichtenvoorde death debts 46,5 % of the specified costs referred to the feast (45 % of the specified cost items), while in Maasland almost 39 % of the expenses referred to the ritual, accounting for over 31 % of the total specified costs of the Maasland funerals. Significant differences in the quantity, quality and types of food served in the different towns where funeral meals were regularly organized were not observed.

**Graph 5.1 Relative costs and cost items (% of total specified costs and cost items) dedicated to bearers per town**



In Table 5.2 the expenses related to funeral consumption in the death debts are presented per social group, focusing on costs and cost items in absolute and relative terms (proportions of the total specified costs and cost items of a social group dedicated to the item as recorded in the death debts in percentages). One can conclude that the ritual was frequently recorded in death debts of all social groups: 22,1 %, 22,6 % and 25,7 % of the specified cost items were dedicated to funeral consumption of respectively the high, low and middle social groups. Relatively, the lower orders

<sup>190</sup> As explained earlier, this is partly due to the relatively high proportion of undefined costs. Also the generally diverging characteristics of Antwerp in comparison to the other towns of the dataset explain the low occurrence and costs dedicated to funeral feasts in the Antwerp death debts.

spent grand amounts of money on the funeral feast, which emphasizes the importance of the ritual even in the lower social orders. In absolute terms the elite's expenses on food and drinks were highest, 6143,8 guilders in total, but proportionally the middle social group dedicated the largest sums to this funerary custom, also most frequently spending money on the funeral feast. For instance during the funeral feast of Neeltje Cornelisdochter van der Gaag, a middle class woman who died in Maasland in 1771, tea, beer and spirits were served, together with meat, fish, bread, butter and other foodstuffs, for a total of 76,2 guilders.<sup>191</sup> Just over 18 % of the specified costs of the middle group was dedicated to the funeral meal, against 16,1 % of the low social group and only 13,4 % of the funeral costs of the elite. This is a conspicuous outcome: while absolute costs did not differ much, proportionally the middle classes dedicated much more money to the ritual than the elite. The elite spent relatively little on the gathering; even the lower orders spent a greater part of their funeral budget on the funeral feast. The middle social groups could thus have been more keen to socially distinguish themselves via the funeral feast than the elite groups.

<b>Table 5.2 Feasts per social group</b>				
	<i>Absolute</i>		<i>Relative*</i>	
<b>Social group</b>	<b>Cost items (N)</b>	<b>Total costs in guilders</b>	<b>Cost items</b>	<b>Total costs</b>
<b>Low</b>	213	2370,0	22,6 %	16,1 %
<b>Middle</b>	382	5364,8	25,7 %	18,1 %
<b>High</b>	316	6143,8	22,1 %	13,4 %

*\* Number of cost items dedicated to and total costs spent on the ritual as percentage of total specified cost items and total specified costs recorded in the death debts.*

While costs as well as cost items connected to funeral foods in the death debts varied greatly in specification as well as detail, expenses dedicated to drinks consumed during the funeral feast were often specified and can give a good idea of which beverages were typically served during the funeral feasts of different social groups. Scholars have argued that the consumption of beer, wine, coffee and tea differed per social group: as these drinks were frequently recorded separately in the death debts their relation to specific social groups could be examined closely. Based on the number of times a drink was mentioned, wine was the most popular drink during funeral feasts, recorded in 167 death debts. While costs varied between 0,6 and 73,5 guilders, wine was relatively expensive: total expenses fewer than 17 guilders were exceptions. Beer on the other hand was generally inexpensive: total costs only exceptionally exceeded 8 guilders. References to beer were recorded 153 funerals of the dataset, with costs varying between 0,3 and 31,8 guilders. Wine and beer were also frequently recorded to be served together at funerals. Spirits were infrequently found

<sup>191</sup> Maasland 2134.

in the death debts; expenses on gin ('jenever'), a drink usually served in combination with other drinks, were recorded in 15 death debts, with costs varying between 0,5 and 8,5 guilders.

Social group	Cost items (N)		Costs in guilders				
	N	%	Total	%	Median	Min	Max
Low	43	37,7	237,2	32,6	4,9	1,1	21,8
Middle	32	28,1	205,2	28,2	3,8	1,4	31,8
High	39	34,2	284,4	39,2	5,0	0,9	29,1

That beer was cheap and was often consumed during the funeral feast by all social classes, as stated by scholars, is confirmed by the data recorded in the death debts: while 40,5 % of the cost items dedicated to drinks referred to the consumption of beer, only 25,2 % of the total costs of drinks were spent on the beverage. Despite the variance of expenses between 0,3 and 31,8 guilders, the median costs of beer were small: 5,8 guilders. Of the expenses on beer found in the dataset 75 % were recorded in death debts that could be connected to a social group. In Table 5.3 the cost items and costs of beer per social group (absolute and relative) are presented. Beer was a popular in all three social groups, the percentages of the specified cost items dedicated to the drink per social group were similar: between 28 % and 38 % (21,1 % to 28,3 % of total specified cost items). What is conspicuous is that the three social groups also spent around the same amount of money on beer; with similar median, minimum and maximum costs. The elite proportionally spent the most, 39,2 % of specified costs, but the relative specified costs of the lower and middle orders were not much different: amounting to 33 % and 28 %. In the middle groups beer was least popular, judging by costs and cost items, but differences were small. Beer was thus a beverage enjoyed by all, and not directly connected to social distinction. The lower orders drank the beverage slightly more often, while the elite spent a bit more, but beer was favored in all classes with the same variation.

Social group	Cost items (N)		Costs in guilders				
	N	%	Total	%	Median	Min	Max
Low	22	15,8	245,5	10,2	11,2	0,9	31,0
Middle	56	40,3	875,4	36,4	15,6	0,6	61,8
High	61	43,9	1283,1	53,4	21,0	0,6	73,5

Wine was the most popular and at the same time the most expensive drink to be served at early modern funeral feasts, according to the death debts. Of the cost items related to beverages served after the burial 44 % referred to the consumption of wine. Wine was a costly drink to serve: more than 68 % of the total costs spent on beverages was dedicated to the wine, with costs varying

between 0,6 guilders and 73,5 guilders, with a relatively high median of 14,4 guilders. Of references to wine 85 % was recorded in funerals that could be connected to a social group; in Table 5.4 the findings are presented in absolute and relative percentages. The elite most frequently wine served at their funeral feasts: with median costs of 21 guilders the higher orders spent grand sums of money on the drink, making up for over 53 % of specified costs. The middle groups chose to serve the drink almost as often, but paid a lower price: with a median 15,6 guilders and accounting for 36,4 % of specified costs. In the lower social orders the consumption of wine was least common as well as least expensive. We can thus conclude that the consumption of wine and the expenses dedicated to wine increased per social group, as suggested by scholars. Especially the gap between the lower groups on one hand and the higher and middle groups on the other is conspicuous. Wine was indeed a drink preferred by the higher orders; the elite chose to serve the drink most often and also purchased the most expensive wines. But also the middle groups enjoyed the drink and served it frequently at their funeral feasts for quite substantial prices. Deceased and bereaved belonging to the higher social groups might have served wine to underline their financial ability to do so and to emphasize their (aspired) social positions.

Serving hot drinks during the funeral feast was much less popular than offering guests beer or wine: coffee and tea were consumed in combination during 38 funerals. With median cost of 3 guilders and total costs never exceeding above 20 guilders, coffee and tea were not only the least popular but also the least expensive beverages recorded in the death debts. First served in 1744, and regularly after 1760, both drinks featured in the death debts of the low, middle and high social groups, which all spent approximately the same price on the drinks. Coffee and tea were served for instance after the funeral of Annetje Jorisdochter de Bijé, widow of a Burgomaster, in Maassluis in 1760 for the total sum of 6 guilders, but also during the funeral feast of Marijtje van Leeuwen, the wife of a farmer who died in Maasland in 1778, costing 3 guilders in total.<sup>192</sup> It can be concluded that hot beverages were not connected to socially distinctive funeral consumption: coffee and tea were served during the funeral feasts of all social classes for the same amounts of money.

The importance, variation and change of funeral feasts in early modern Europe as described by scholars are partly confirmed by the data found in the death debts. The ritual was of great significant and costly, but expenses varied, per town and especially social group. While all social groups paid sufficient attention to the feast, the middle social group's dedication to consumption after the burial stands out. The middle classes relatively dedicated the greatest attention to the ritual, possibly attempting to advance their social status. Especially the consumption of wine was

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<sup>192</sup> Maassluis 1760, Maasland 1778.

important: who could afford it served wine during the funeral feast, to underline and possibly positively influence their social position. Despite the scholars' observation that the importance of the ritual, and especially the occurrence of the funeral meal, decreased after 1700, the death debts show that the significance of the funeral feast for social distinction was still apparent in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Additional research studying the ritual in more detail could provide a valuable addition to the general study of funeral feasts in this thesis. While different types of funeral feasts could be recognized in the death debts, the ritual showed much local variation and thus future research into this funeral ritual would benefit from a more specialized as well as comparative approach focusing on funeral consumption during the funeral feasts in different localities.

## Conclusion

Were expenses dedicated to funeral consumption in early modern Europe, as recorded in death debts, related to social distinction? This thesis has shown that the funeral was not only of general social significance, as a public remembrance of the passing of a member of the local community, but was also dually connected to social status. The established social position of deceased and bereaved was directly related to the rites and costs of a funeral. Which funeral rituals were performed and especially what was spent on their characteristics and scale was dependent on finances, the greater one's wealth the more money was generally spent on funeral consumption. In addition contemporaries used funerals for socially distinctive purposes, as it was generally perceived that the rituals taking place during the socially important and public phases of the funeral could influence the social positions of the deceased and their families. During the public phases of the funeral, costly rituals were thus performed and prestigious objects were presented out of a desire to underline as well as positively influence social status. Funeral consumption was thus related to and reflective of the actual as well as the aspired social position of the deceased and bereaved.

The use of death debts, recorded in probate inventories, to reflect on the relation between social distinction and funeral consumption turned out to be successful: the quantitative figures recorded in the death debts, referring to the total and specified costs of a funeral, as well as the qualitative data found on funeral consumption turned out to be valuable and significant. Death debts contain a great and interesting amount of information on all facets and phases, private and public, of the early modern process of death and the funeral. And by providing a quantitative contribution to a historical debate dominated by qualitative evidence, death debts have the ability to shed a new and interesting light on early modern funeral rituals and costs, especially by demonstrating the variation of expenses, general costliness of the event, and social importance of the funeral in different social groups, time periods and localities. As expenses dedicated to a burial tax were recorded in the death debts, funeral costs and customs could be connected to three social groups, low, middle and high, using in addition the social groups constructed by other scholars. The data on funeral consumption recorded in the death debts could thus be directly connected to the social group of a deceased, which made it possible to study funeral customs and costs in relation to social groups.

Concentrating on three socially important funerary rituals frequently recorded in the death debts, mourning clothes, bearers, and the funeral feast, this thesis has demonstrated that there was a strong and dual relation between funeral costs, public funeral rituals and social status in the early modern Netherlands. Funeral consumption was related to the distinctive consumption patterns of different social groups: the higher the social group the more was spent on the funeral and on specific funeral customs. During early modern funerals the social group of the deceased and bereaved was

reflected in different ways: mourning cloaks were hired for all attendants, grand amounts of meat and wine were served during funeral feast, and more than twenty luxuriously dressed bearers were sometimes hired to accompany the coffin. Deceased and bereaved might thus have attempted to use the communal and public funeral not only underline but also to upgrade their social position in society by overspending on objects and rituals. Like fashionable consumer goods that were purchased and presented publicly for social distinction, the death debts show that people of the higher social groups spent extravagantly on funeral rituals to reflect as well as positively enhance their social statuses. The imitation of traditional and costly elite funeral customs by especially the middle social groups, by contemporaries criticized in writings describing and disapproving of the improper consumptive behavior of the middle classes and by scholars observed when focusing on the emulation of consumption goods and customs of the elite, was underlined by the data: the conspicuous funeral consumption of the middle orders of society was recorded in the death debts, as high expenses were dedicated in particular to mourning clothes and the funeral feast.

In this thesis a broad geographical and historical focus was chosen: funerals organized in seven different towns in the Netherlands between 1638 and 1800 were studied. This study thus makes a significant contribution to the predominantly locally focused historiographies of death and the funeral as well as studies focusing on consumption as related to social groups and social distinction in local contexts. Conspicuous similarities as well as significant differences in the funeral costs and customs prevalent in particular towns, within certain regions and of the three different social groups would have been missed if only the death debts of one or two towns had been studied. The general approach has show that social distinction was important in the early modern Netherlands as a whole, related to particular public and social funeral rituals in all of towns of the dataset. By focusing on three general social groups the thesis has underlined that while local customs did differ, the higher social groups, and conspicuously the middle orders, always found a way to overspend on funeral consumption. Due to the consistency of funeral customs in time and the generality of most funerary developments in Europe, additional research could study the subject from a similar perspective, focusing on funeral consumption in a number of different localities or regions, also outside the Netherlands.

The study of funeral consumption in the context of social distinction with the use of death debts, however, is highly dependent on the specification of these death debts. To be able to use the source productively, information on the deceased's social group as well as specified expenses dedicated to the funeral are crucial. Partly due to the broad time span, number of towns and the use two different databases, but mainly because of the general characteristics of the source, the specification of the death debts studied in this thesis varied greatly. The funeral expenses of 382 death debts of the dataset were sufficiently specified, of which 348 could be connected to a social

group. Future research should take time to carefully preselect death debts, and probate inventories, on the basis of specification, taxation, detail, and possibly the presence of certain funerary rituals, to be able to make most of the data recorded in the many death debts preserved. Despite their shortcomings however, death debts are a valuable historical source that can make a significant contribution to a better understanding of funeral consumption, especially in relation to social groups. Future research focusing on social distinctive consumption in early modern Europe should study in more detail the role of funeral consumption in comparison to other socially distinctive consumption goods and practices, using death debts in addition to other primary sources to examine funeral costs, objects and rituals. Additional research could not only provide novel and enlightening views upon the relation between consumptive behavior and social groups, but would also further enhance our knowledge of the place of death and the general importance of the funeral in early modern Europe. Research concentrating on funeral consumption, as recorded in death debts, on a smaller scale would allow more attention to detail and could relate funeral costs and specific expenses more directly to local and timely developments. By concentrating on a carefully constructed selection of sufficiently specified death debts, the value of the death debts for the historical study of death and the funeral could be further explored and underlined in more localized studies, in which social groups, funeral rituals and objects, and the influence of social, economic and cultural contexts could better defined, observed and studied. Additional research, focusing on the quantitative as well as the qualitative data on funeral cost and customs recorded in the death debts of one region or of a smaller selection of European towns, could provide a valuable contribution to the general study conducted in this thesis.



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## Images

Images portrayed in this thesis as well as additional images can also be found on the disc.

### *Image front page*

Detail from: 'De Byzondere Nationaale Lykstatien der Hollanderen', in: J. Le Francq van Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie van Holland* (Amsterdam 1769-1776) 1959.

### *Image 1.1*

P. Nolpe, 'De begrafenisstoet van Frederik Hendrik', images portrayed in a book published by Pieter Janszoon Post (The Hague 1651), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, NG-793-71 (plate numbers 12, 19 and 22).

### *Image 1.2*

H. P. Schouten, 'De Ooster-Kerk van Binne, tot Amsterdam. Interieur van de Oosterkerk, tijdens een begrafenis', in: *Atlas van Fouquet* (Amsterdam 1770-1780).

*Image 2.1*

J. Buys, 'Afbeelding der Lykstatie van den Hoog Welgeboren Gestrengen Heere Wolter Jan Gerrit baron Bentinck', published as a separate print by Johannes Allart (Amsterdam 1781) City Archive Amsterdam number 010097002610.

*Image 3.1*

R. de Hooghe, *Het overlijden en de lijkstatie van Maria II Stuart, koningin van Engeland* published by Pieter Persoy (Amsterdam 1695) Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-76.279 and RP-P-OB-77.221 (Muller 2905 and 2905/10b). Also used as illustration in the work of S. Gruterus, *Funeralia Mariae II Britanniarum* (Haarlem 1695).

*Image 3.2*

B. Picart, 'Ceremonies funébres comme on les fait à la Haye, et en quelques autres villes de la Hollande' (Den Haag 1732), in: *Atlas Van Stolk* (Amsterdam 18<sup>e</sup> eeuw) number 50614 (24).

*Image 3.3*

I. Commelin, 'De Laaste Lyckplicht van Zyn Hoogheit', in: *Frederick Hendrick van Nassauw: Prince van Orangien, Zyn leven en bedryf* (Amsterdam 1651) second part, p. 215. Also published separately: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-76.484.

*Image 4.1*

'De Byzondere Nationaale Lykstatien der Hollanderen', in: J. Le Francq van Berkhey, *Natuurlyke historie van Holland* (Amsterdam 1769-1776) 1959.

*Image 4.2*

J. Luyken, *Begrafenis van De Ruyter* (Amsterdam 1685) Amsterdam Museum, inventory number A46842.

## Appendix 1 Funeral costs per place and per period

<b>Table A1. Funeral costs per place and period</b>							
<b>Place</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Antwerp	1660	42	3071,0	73,1	37,2	1,6	404,6
Antwerp	1780	44	5565,6	126,5	33,2	4,0	2241,9
<b>Antwerp</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>8636,6</b>	<b>100,4</b>	<b>33,5</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>2241,9</b>
Doesburg	1638-1700	16	1933,2	120,8	70,3	15,3	415,5
Doesburg	1701-1750	8	1439,4	179,9	56,5	34,8	900,5
Doesburg	1751-1798	27	3335,0	123,5	88,4	6,0	700,0
<b>Doesburg</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>6707,7</b>	<b>131,5</b>	<b>69,9</b>	<b>6,0</b>	<b>900,5</b>
Lichtenvoorde	1678	1	92,9	92,9	92,9	92,9	92,9
Lichtenvoorde	1721-1748	20	639,9	32,0	19,0	2,5	207,2
Lichtenvoorde	1752-1800	23	424,5	18,5	10,9	4,0	88,5
<b>Lichtenvoorde</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1157,2</b>	<b>26,3</b>	<b>26,3</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>207,2</b>
Maasland	1736-1748	11	2056,6	187,0	197,9	56,9	334
Maasland	1752-1800	48	7909,0	164,8	138,0	33,7	470,5
<b>Maasland</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>9965,6</b>	<b>168,9</b>	<b>149,1</b>	<b>33,7</b>	<b>470,5</b>
Maassluis	1666-1700	25	5106,0	204,2	121,5	25,0	966,4
Maassluis	1701-1750	39	4834,1	124,0	94,5	35,9	347,1
Maassluis	1751-1798	56	12475,8	222,8	99,5	2,4	740,2
<b>Maassluis</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>22415,8</b>	<b>186,8</b>	<b>1345,0</b>	<b>2,4</b>	<b>966,4</b>
Medemblik	1711-1750	18	2537,2	141,0	80,2	22,5	561,8
Medemblik	1751-1800	52	9848,3	189,4	149,0	4,5	670,7
<b>Medemblik</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>12385,5</b>	<b>176,9</b>	<b>125,6</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>670,7</b>
Weesp	1647-1698	9	1019,7	113,3	50,0	25,2	321,6
Weesp	1704-1746	22	4894,6	222,5	166,2	19,8	636,8
Weesp	1751-1789	45	8445,0	187,7	164,3	18,0	763,1
<b>Weesp</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>14359,3</b>	<b>188,9</b>	<b>163,0</b>	<b>18,0</b>	<b>763,1</b>
Total	1638-1700	93	11222,8	120,7	65,9	1,6	966,4
Total	1701-1750	118	16401,7	139,0	86,6	2,5	900,5
Total	1751-1800	295	48003,2	162,7	120,9	2,4	2241,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1638-1800</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>75627,6</b>	<b>149,5</b>	<b>104,9</b>	<b>1,6</b>	<b>2241,9</b>



Appendix 2 The location of the seven towns in the Netherlands

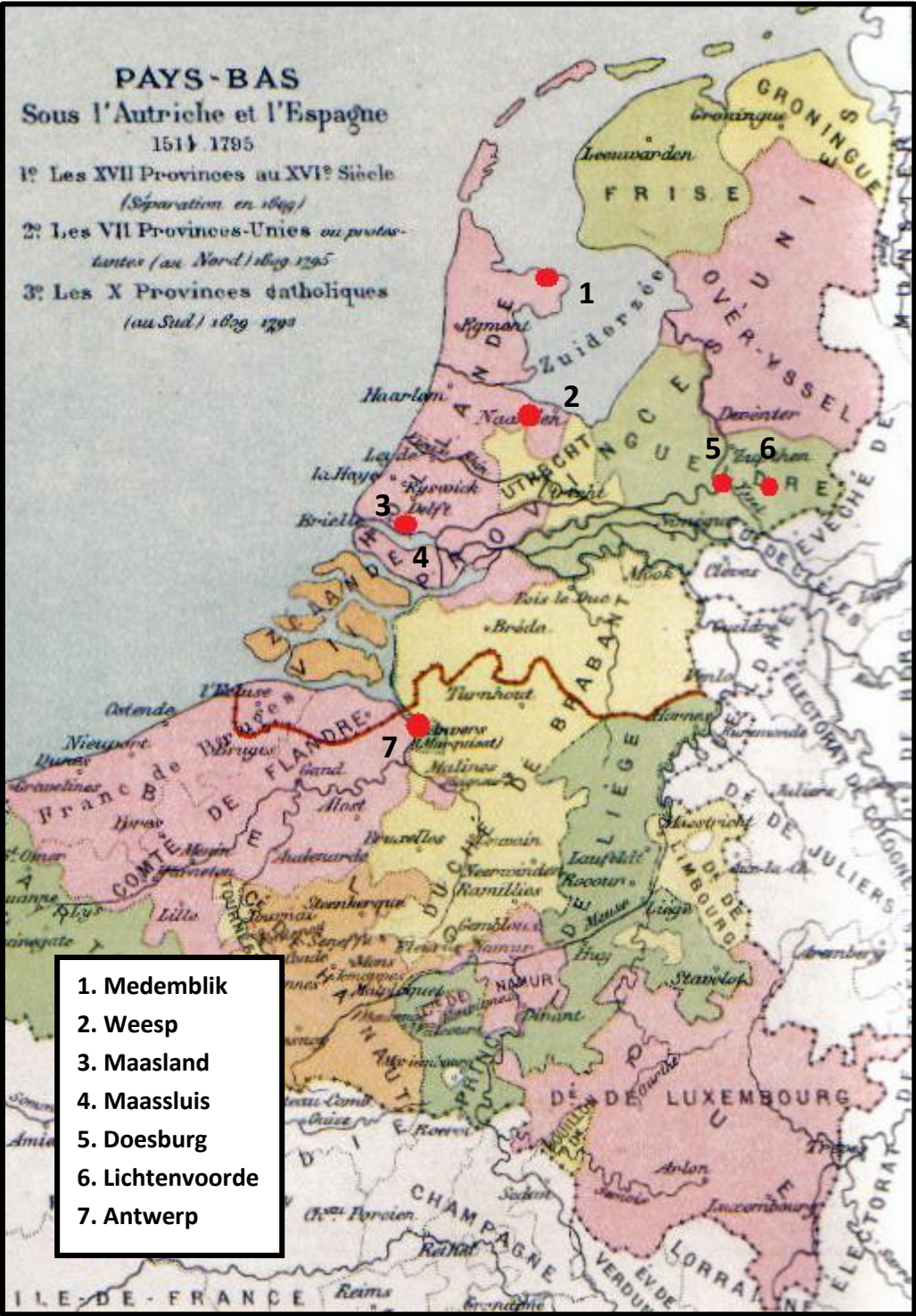


Image A2 The seven towns as situated in the Netherlands