General
This dissertation concerns a source publication with enclosures, two explanatory introductions, and detailed data concerning some early clergymen in Goch and in Gennep, then two towns in the duchy of Cleves. There, in or before the year 1569, Dutch reformed refugee communities were founded.

An important part of the archives of these communities has been preserved. The acta of the consistory of Goch start off with the year 1570. They are the oldest records of a Dutch refugee community in Germany, and older than those of a reformed community in the Netherlands. The acta of Goch reaches further back than the year 1571, when the Synod of Emden was held. This provided an opportunity to investigate, in which way the reformed church organization, and especially the one in a local church community, functioned for the institutionalizing Synod of Emden, and if some of the influence from the so-called Convent of Wezel, or another ecclesiastical forum would prove. This concerns two secret communities, a point that deserved attention too.

The method
All locally preserved archives from the years 1570-c. 1610 had to be transcribed first. Part of the documents had suffered from severe water damage. So some parts had to be deciphered using an ultraviolet reading lamp. Other parts had disintegrated into small snippets, and had to be joined together – much like a jigsaw puzzle – before reading.

After editing these sources on the spot, I continued my research in sources located elsewhere. This concerns archives in the “Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv” and the “Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland”, both located in Düsseldorf, the manuscript division of the “Zentralbibliothek Zürich”, the “Algemeen Rijksarchief” in Brussels, the “Nationaal Archief” in The Hague, the “Gelders Archief” in Arnhem, and the “Gemeentearchief” of Nijmegen. Documents containing data on either of both refugee communities, found in one of the previous locations, have also been transcribed, and have been added to the section “Beilagen zur Einleitung” using a calendar entry.

The main research questions
The main questions I wanted answered, were the following. How did a reformed community function in her beginning, in particular an – at first secretive – refugee community near the Lower Rhine, on which church order did they base themselves before the Synod of Emden in 1571, and how was the refugee community related to a possibly already existing part of the population with protestant sympathies.

The meaning of the dissertation
This work is of exceptional regional importance – it fills up an existing hiatus in (church)historical research of the Rhineland – and moreover it is of distinct national, and even international value. From the protocols can be derived that before “Emden 1571”, concerning church order, people did not turn to the determinations of the Convent of Wezel, but to those of the Synod of Paris 1559. The protocols start with a Dutch translation of the Ordonnances ecclésiastiques of this synod. Also the function indication superintendent in the protocols reminds us of these “Ordonnances”. The document published as number 4 under “Beilagen zur Einleitung (Allgemein/Goch)”, titled “Ordonnantien der gemeenten Godes binnen Goch [...]”, is a local church order, as intended in article 21 of the previously mentioned Ordonnances. This and more supports the thesis of dr. Owe Boersma (1994), who redated the Convent of Wesel at July 1571, as a preparatory meeting to the Synod of Emden.

Likewise important is the view, that this source publication gives on the organization of a reformed community in her beginning, and on the affairs in a secret community of faith (“secret” for fear of repression by the civil authorities). The impressive organization of the local deacony in both secret reformed communities should also be named in this context.