

VU Research Portal

Gildepenningen

Teulings, C.D.O.J.

2019

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Teulings, C. D. O. J. (2019). *Gildepenningen: Hun rol binnen de ambachtsgilden van de Noordelijke Nederlanden*. Pictures Publishers.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

| SUMMARY

GUILD TOKENS: THEIR ROLE WITHIN THE CRAFT GUILDS OF THE NORTHERN NETHERLANDS

THE CENTRAL theme of this book is how guild tokens helped to solve the organizational challenges of craft guilds. From this central theme, two queries arise: why the guilds used those tokens instead of alternatives and secondly, why the tokens were mainly used in the Northern Netherlands but much less, if at all, elsewhere in Europe and maybe around the world.

During the last few decades institutions for collective actions, such as craft guilds have received considerable historiographic attention. Their organizational challenges, however, have received less focus. This study does not describe the internal organization of these guilds per se, but rather how guild tokens played a role in the functioning of those organizations. Heretofore such tokens received ample attention from numismatists, but not from historians. In the 19th century Jacob Dirks created an outstanding taxonomy of such tokens for the Northern Netherlands. Quite an achievement, considering the means available at the time. At the same time Louis Minard made a similar attempt for both the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Dirk Wittop Koning upgraded the Dirks taxonomy in the 20th century, by adding new discoveries and making the taxonomy more accessible. However, nobody paid much attention to the role of the guild token within the organization of the guilds. The only author of significance paying attention to this aspect was Marie de Man, who published many local studies on the Province of Zeeland.

Guild tokens were issued by local craft guilds, mainly in the Northern Netherlands. I define guild tokens as tokens issued by or for craft guilds. Close to 80% of such tokens functioned as proof of the mandatory presence of a guild member at funerals of fellow guild members or their spouses. In such cases we call the token a (craft guild) presence token, which is a narrower term than guild token. The Dutch guild tokens evolved out of earlier similar tokens in the 16th century in the Southern Netherlands, mainly in Antwerp. However, these were primarily used as one-time proofs of payment of the annual membership fee. The guild issued them to members upon payment of dues and collected them subsequently at the annual patron celebrations in exchange for a meal. At the end of the 16th century it appeared that they were not only used for one-time uses as proof of payment, but the guilds also started to individualize the tokens and by doing so assigned them permanently to members. This individualization was done by a manual inscription on the standardized token. The purpose of such early individualization in

the Southern Netherlands remains unclear and can only be guessed at. A breakthrough for their use occurred in 1588 in Middelburg in the Northern Netherlands where the tokens were introduced and moreover immediately individualized by numbering them. At this point, the purpose of the token was meticulously recorded in the minutes and could be traced in the archives. The tokens were especially developed to check the mandatory presence of the guild members at funerals, since until then presence was unruly or disorderly and irregular. With the individualized tokens, the presence could thus be verified. This practice spread gradually across the whole of the Northern Netherlands. By 1650 it was basically universal in the North and was used by close to a quarter of all guilds, predominantly by the larger guilds in the larger cities. In the South, however, the individualization of guild tokens hardly developed and they remained scarce. Outside the Low Countries we see them used in cities which had strong cultural and economic ties with the Northern Netherlands and which had a Calvinistic base. We see them widely used in the Calvinistic cities of East Frisia and sometimes in some major Hanseatic centres, such as Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck, as well as in Cologne and Lille.

With the abolition of the guilds in the Netherlands, starting in 1795 and finalized in 1818 by royal decree, the primary use of guild tokens ceased. However, their secondary use as guarantors and proof of the rights of former guild membership such as the right to draw upon guild funds was still extant after 1818. These rights still continued until the middle of the 19th century. A third use of guild tokens consisted of the initially sporadic collection of them by numismatists and museums, starting around 1830 and increasing in intensity around the 1870 to 1880 period. Then finally one might go so far as to define its present day use for historic research as the fourth use of the token.

A guild token can in most cases be recognized by its appearance. Solid proof of its identity is given by the presence of the name of a guild on the token and is enhanced by any combination of a crown in the field and town or guild symbols. However, the best proof of a token being a guild token is given by the individualization of the token in combination with the before mentioned characteristics.

Three methods were used for the individualization of guild tokens: by inscribing a sequential number, the name of the guild member or, both. The first two methods were the most successful, the first method being predominantly used in the beginning and in the

provinces in the South-West of the Republic. The second was mainly used later and mostly in the rest of the country. When using the numerical system for a token, the owner as well as the possessor of the token was the craft guild itself. It maintained a membership list and attached a number to each name. The numbering could be synchronic or diachronic. When synchronic a number of a deceased or ex-member was reused and assigned to a new member. In the diachronic system the guild kept on using new, sequentially higher numbers for each new member. They could in such cases either issue a brand-new token or renumber the now obsolete token.

85% of the (surviving) tokens were made of copper, brass or bronze, 9% of lead, 4% of silver and 2% of pewter. They could be either struck, cast or engraved. We see the use of die striking mainly in the beginning, probably following the tradition of jettons or reckoning counters. Casting (56% of the surviving tokens) and engraving (39%) became the preferred method over time. Casting produced somewhat heavier and more durable tokens with an average weight of 28 grams, their diameter being 41 mm on average, somewhat larger and therefore more imposing. Engraving allowed lighter tokens with an average weight of 15 grams and a diameter of 38 mm on average, offering more flexibility for the issuing guild.

This study makes use of information that has been gathered into a database. This DB presents a corpus of guild tokens of the Northern Netherlands, stored as 16'300 line items, each line item containing specific data on a guild token. Each line item reflects what has been discovered on a particular guild token in public collections (73 in number), in private collections (160), in sales and auction catalogues (around 650) and in literature (22). Based on these data each of the tokens has been given its own unique number. To establish such a number, the taxonomy of Wittop Koning has been used, defining to which category the token belongs, where rank 1 in his taxonomy is the issuing town, rank 2 is the issuing guild and rank 3 is the emission of the specific guild. Based on the individualization of each token it is also possible to establish for each token a fourth rank. This rank 4 I have created by giving each specimen within rank 3 a sequence number. With a coding system based on four ranks each token thus has been assigned a unique code. An example is Ams20,07012, whereby Ams stands for Amsterdam in rank 1, 20 for the Carpenters guild of Amsterdam in rank 2, 07 for the seventh issue in rank 3 and 012 for the sequence number in rank 4. Having coded all line items and the tokens they represent, we can then eliminate all duplicates, as some tokens appeared multiple times in the course of the last two centuries in sales catalogues or were recorded in public or private collections. The elimination of those duplicates has resulted in the identification of 8.800 unique tokens. Based on a certain documented logic it was demonstrated that these 8.800 tokens represent probably 85% of all still existing tokens. The total number of original presence tokens in the 17th and 18th century is believed to have been around 55.000. The total number of original guild tokens is somewhat

higher. For the purpose of this study, the 85% coverage by the DB of the total presumptive issue suffices to allow the drawing of conclusions. Moreover, the guild category and geographic distributions make it probable that the DB is also representative for the original total distribution of tokens during the guild period in the 17th and 18th century. This DB is publicly accessible on the internet via Dataverse IISG, hosted by the website of the International Institute of Social History (IISG). The published DB was closed in June 2017 but updates will be made available in the future at certain intervals.

Each issue in the rank 3 category has been correlated with a primary function of the corresponding token. To find out what the function of a particular token emission was, I have used the appearance of the token as well as archival sources. An individual token might have fulfilled several functions, over time or even, conceivably simultaneously, but I have assigned only one function in rank 3 to it, the one I concluded to have been the main function.

The study proved that around 78% of all the emissions in rank 3 and close to 76% of the tokens in rank 4 were intended to verify the presence of the guild members at funerals or other guild gatherings with a mandatory attendance for their members. The remaining tokens turned out to have various functions such as tokens obliging the recipient to support a coffin at a funeral, to honour officials or to grant admission to a Hortus Botanicus. Some were used to allow surgeon and apothecary apprentices to attend lessons on herbology in the Hortus or to demonstrate staff membership of a guild. An interesting additional, though rare application constituted tokens for journeymen. Upon starting their first job, the guild issued a token with their name. This token was then held by the patron and hence a journeyman could only switch jobs with the approval of the current patron. Furthermore, there were tokens proving membership of the mutual benefit fund (called *bos*) of the guild. Such a membership of a fund was not automatic or a mandate linked to a guild membership. However, if the membership was facultative, members could receive a token to prove their membership in the fund. Emission of such tokens, however, was rare as in most cases proof of membership in the fund was registered by alternative means.

Over time presence tokens evolved increasingly into the role of membership tokens or were even fully transformed into them. Such transformations can only be inferred circumstantially. During the period of secondary use, the tokens might have been used to prove drawing rights on the poor relief or funeral funds of the former guilds. When the guilds were abolished their funds were maintained and former members or their offspring kept financial rights to them.

The present study analyses the impact of tokens, particularly those of presence, on the internal organization of guilds. Primarily, the two main methods of individualization, i.e. by numbering the tokens or by engraving the name of the guild member on it, were

compared to each of their functional components, such as invitations to funerals, oversight of presence, management of the tokens, impact on the group cohesion, administration of membership and application of the other functions of a token. Such comparisons are expressed as a relative advantage of one method over another for the guild itself. The same holds true for the utility to members of other functions, such as proof of membership rights, the discharge of personal costs and impact on the social standing. By relative advantage is understood the sum of qualitative advantages, of cost advantages and of workload. The total result was neutral. More important than a comparison between the two methods is the one between method and no method. The outcome here is interesting, as apparently a guild has to already be pretty well organized to be able to utilize guild tokens, so that the use of tokens by a given guild not only reflected a pre-existing degree of organization but also enhanced still further the quality of that organization. In as far the archives permitted insight into its actual organization, the guilds issuing tokens were well administered as evidenced by a good correlation between the names on the tokens and extant guild records. Where such records survive the correlation between textual and token names is virtually flawless.

Why some guilds used tokens and others in the Northern Netherlands did not has been investigated by applying two methods, one generic, the other ad hoc. The generic method consisted of checking possible explanatory variables such as the presence, number and size of guilds in the cities, the logistic infrastructure of a city and connectivity to other cities in order to see whether the guilds were predominantly working for the local market, the political power of the local guilds, the alternatives for the use of presence tokens, the local presence of minting facilities, the impact of specific religious practices in a town, alternative forms of guild manifestation in a town, the local free-rider problem and use of tokens by other institutions in the town such as civil militia. The survey showed a strong positive correlation between the size of a town, the size of a guild and the use of presence tokens. There was a slight positive correlation between the presence of a mint and of the use of tokens by other institutions with the use of presence tokens. There was a negative correlation between the presence of alternatives for tokens and of alternative forms of manifestation of the guilds in the public arena. Most other variables showed no correlation with the use of presence tokens.

The city by city comparison revealed a geographic gap in the use of tokens. This gap is best described by the area correlated with the so-called Green Heart of the province of Holland. This region featured a small number of larger cities which – in contrast to other larger cities in the heavily urbanized Northern Netherlands – amazingly did not use presence tokens. The cities without such tokens were Amersfoort, Dordrecht, Gorinchem, Gouda and Leiden. The more substantial town Utrecht, capital of the province of Utrecht, utilized some presence tokens

but given its size not in the degree one might have expected. Five reasons why those towns did not have such tokens are:

- 1) city council support for city undertakers (Dordrecht);
- 2) a relatively large number of guilds given the town's that resulted in all of them being too small to make token usage practical (Amersfoort and Gorinchem);
- 3) the former political power of guilds and the anxiety of city councils about the re-emerge of guild power (Leiden and to a lesser extent Utrecht). Similarly, I see the support of the city council of Leiden for the neighbourhood funeral arrangements as having priority over guild funerals;
- 4) the possibility for guilds to show their presence in the public arena as a continuation of their former political power through noteworthy guild graves or stained windows in churches (Dordrecht and to a lesser degree Utrecht);
- 5) the existence of a deposit system comparable to guild tokens in the form of the payment of a small amount by a guild member upon invitation to a funeral and its reimbursement after appearance at the funeral (Gouda).

The question why the use of guild tokens and in particular presence tokens were used more in the Northern Netherlands than elsewhere, was initially questioned but then confirmed. The number of extant presence tokens from the Southern Netherlands is a single digit percentage of that of the corpus from the North. In East Frisia in Northern Germany we may find a somewhat higher percentage, particularly as their emission and use of tokens continued far into the 19th century. However, the percentage still remains a single digit number of the Northern Netherlands.

Two relevant distinctions between the Northern and the Southern Netherlands were the prevailing religion and the political power of the craft guilds. Both differences offer a likely explanation for the difference in use of presence tokens. The guilds in the Southern Netherlands had through their prevailing Roman Catholic religion and by their political clout ample opportunities to assert themselves in the public arena. Such opportunities were offered amongst others via religious processions. Then too impressive guild houses in the centre of town also demonstrated their presence and power. Such opportunities no longer existed in the North. There, the only chance for a craft guild to manifest itself publicly was by means of a guild funeral and even then, they needed to refrain from ostentation as this would have been in conflict with the prevailing Calvinistic morality. Hence a simple but impressive procession of guild members, in a long row, two by two behind a coffin, latter to be carried by eight to fourteen guild members, all dressed in more or less similar black gowns, was about the most public manifestation that might be attempted. Such processions would normally be formed at the house of the deceased and would lead through the streets of the town to the local church or

churchyard where the deceased would be put into a grave without much additional ceremony. Occasionally the guild could inter the deceased within a collective guild crypt in the church, but that was not the norm. Hence, maximum attendance of the guild's membership at the funeral was desirable since a well-organized procession showed the citizens of the town the importance of this guild. The presence token played an important organizational part in order to achieve this.