



Hans Mol

The Frisian Popular Militias between 1480 and 1560

Amsterdam
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Fig. 1. Frisian peasant warrior with pole-vaulting pike, mid-sixteenth century. Woodcut from Cornelis Kempius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae, et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (1588).

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Cover illustration: Representation of an ensign or company of well-equipped mercenaries in the painting *David and Abigail*, by Jacob van Oostanen, 1507-1508. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Art, nr. KMSsp734.

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Table of Contents

List of Illustrations and Maps	7
Preface	11
1. Introduction	13
Questions	13
Duty to defend one's country	15
The existing image of the popular militias	19
Sources and set-up	25
2. Friesland between Vlie and Lauwers: land, population, and government until 1525	31
A coastal landscape with natural boundaries	31
Churches, villages, towns, and monasteries	35
Noblemen, freeholders, tenants, and townsmen	38
Frisian freedom: communal government, between about 1200 and 1480	47
The defence of freedom until about 1480	53
The loss of freedom, 1480–1498, and the struggle for the Saxon legacy, 1514–1524	59
3. The mobilisation of able-bodied men in Friesland 1525–1552	65
Mustering and engagement 1525–1528	65
Fighting the Anabaptists at Oldeklooster, April 1535	73
New threats and mustering in 1542, 1543, 1546, and 1552	77
The set-up of the 1552 mustering in Friesland	80
Differences in handling per city and per <i>grietenij</i>	85
Obligation and exemption: widows, the poor, and conscientious objectors	90
Representation per household	94
Conclusion	98
4. The equipment and organisation of the militiamen in 1552	99
Weaponry and wealth	99
Armour	105
Extra armour 'on the community' and the corps of 'the third man'	108

Organisation and leadership: captains, ensign-bearers, rot masters, pipers, and drummers	112
The relationship between the shooting guilds and the city militias	116
Comparing with Holland	120
Summary and conclusion	124
5. The deployment of popular militias in the period 1480–1500	127
The changing character of warfare after 1480	127
The massive effort of the Wold-Frisians near Sloten on 13 January 1496	136
Renewed defeat at Laaxum and Warns, 10 June 1498	142
Militiamen serving the Saxon government	151
Rebellion against the dukes: the siege of Franeker, 1500	153
The battles of Warfumerzijl, Bomsterzijl, and Miedum, 1500	157
Conclusion	165
6. The deployment of the popular militias in the period 1514–1524	169
The siege of Groningen and the turning point of November 1514	169
The objective of the warring parties and the role of the militias	173
Expansion of the Guelders' position with the support of Frisian militias, spring 1515	176
The return of the Black Band and the transfer of Saxon Friesland to Charles V	180
The Burgundian-Habsburg campaigns of 1516 and early 1517	184
Guelders' predominance again with the Black Band's support, 1517	191
Status quo, 1517–1521, and crumbling popular support for Guelders	194
Stadtholder Schenck van Toutenburg and the invasion of the Bishop's Band	196
Burgundy gets the winning hand, 1522	200
The expulsion of the Guelders' forces in 1523 and 1524	202
Conclusion	204
7. Conclusions	209
Bibliography	221
About the author	231
Index	233

List of Illustrations and Maps

1. Frisian peasant warrior with pole-vaulting pike, mid-sixteenth century. Woodcut from Cornelis Kempius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae, et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (1588). 2
2. Frisian peasant warrior with crossbow, mid-sixteenth century. Woodcut from Cornelis Kempius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae, et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (1588). 16
3. Swedish peasant warrior duelling with a German Landsknecht. Drawing from the sketchbook by Paul Dolnstein (ca. 1503). ThHStAW. Reg. S (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 9v–10r. 18
4. Halberd from about 1500. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest. Collection nr. 11113. 25
5. Page of the muster-roll of the *grietenij* Idaarderadeel. Photo J.A. Mol. 29
6. Friesland in 1768 by Jan van Jagen. Taken from P.J. de Rijke, *Frisia Dominium*, nr. 70. 32
7. The tombstone of the young Frisian nobleman Eppo van Rinsumageest, 1341. Collection Fries Museum Leeuwarden, nr. B 01028. 40
8. A defendable *stins* or stone house: the typical fortification of the Frisian *hoofdeling*. Here the Jarla stins in Garijp. Drawing by Jacob Stellingwerff 1722. Collection Fries Museum, nr. PTA 283-003. 44
9. Frisian peasant warrior with drinking horn, mid-sixteenth century. Woodcut from Cornelis Kempius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae, et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (1588). 47
10. Charlemagne grants the Frisians their freedom. Redrawn seal of Franeker from 1313, by A. Martin in lithography in Eekhoff, *Friese Oudheden*. 50
11. Charlemagne, flanked by two Frisian warriors, on the Grand Seal of Rüstringen, 1312. Redrawing by Georg Sello 1897, in: Sello, *Geschichte von Oestringen und Rüstringen*, Plate C3. 54

12. Frisian warrior in storm attack, on the seal of the Oldenburg *ministerialis* family Von Frese, alias Friso, from 1328. Redrawing by J.A. Mol, based on Sello, *Vom Upstalboom*. 55
13. Frisian camp fighters, first half of the fourteenth century: vault painting in the church of Westerwijtwerd. Photo Kerkfotografie.nl. 56
14. Duke Georg of Saxony, portrait by Lucas Cranach the elder, 1524. Collection Veste Coburg. Wikimedia Commons. Bildindex der Kunst und Architektur nr. 17011228. 61
15. George Schenck van Toutenburg, portrait from 1540, attributed to Ernst Maeler. Collectie Vereeniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis. 67
16. The siege of Oldeklooster in 1535. Etching by Pieter Hendricksz. Schut, 1629–1652. Collection Rijksmuseum, nr. RP-P-OB-78.512. 75
17. Frontpage of the muster list of Barradeel. Photo J.A. Mol. 81
18. Sixteenth-century helmet or storm hat, thought to have been worn by Grutte Pier. Collection Municipality of Súdwest Fryslân, Sneek. 89
19. ‘Katzbalger’. Landsknecht sword, made in Munich between 1520 and 1550. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, nr. 13212. 96
20. Representation of an ensign or company of well-equipped mercenaries in the painting David and Abigail, by Jacob van Oostsanen, 1507–1508. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Art, nr. KMSsp734. 101
21. Arquebus from the sixteenth century. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, nr. 13226. 105
22. Village armour and other equipment in the Mendlesham Church of St. Mary, Suffolk. Photo by Peter Wyat. 110
23. A drummer and piper. Drawing from the sketchbook by Paul Dolnstein (ca. 1503). ThHStAW. Reg. S (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 5v. 114
24. Silver parrot of the shooting guild of Bolsward from the middle of the sixteenth century, with five medallions of archers’ kings. City Museum Bolsward. 119
25. Medallion with the coat of arms of Tjaard Jongema as archer king of Bolsward in 1542. City Museum, Bolsward. 120

26. Partisan from the first half of the sixteenth century. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, nr. 12782. 122
27. Tombstone of the Ommelander *hoofdeling* Haye Ripperda in armour († 1504) in the parish church of Farmsum. Photo Marten Timmerman. 129
28. The Great Guard at the suppression of the revolt of the *Cheese and Bread People* near Hoorn and surroundings in 1492. Engraving by Hans Burgkmair in: *Der Weisskunig*, p. 167 (fol. 280b). 137
29. Field array of a *Landsknecht* formation (with the ensign-bearer in the middle). Drawing from the sketchbook by Paul Dolnstein (ca. 1503). ThHStAW. Reg. S (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 7v–8r. 140
30. Professional arquebussiers around 1500. Detail from the painting *David and Abigail*, by Jacob van Oostsanen, 1507–1508. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Art, nr. KMSsp734. 148
31. The siege of Franeker in 1500. Schematic map from the *Chronique ofte historische geschiedenis van Vrieslant* by Pierius Winsemius from 1622. 155
32. Battle between *Landsknechte* and peasant militiamen in Friesland. Engraving by Hans Burgkmair in: *Der Weisskunig*, p. 312 (fol. 502b). 163
33. The funeral of Duke Albrecht. Engraving by Hans Burgkmair d.Ä. in *Der Weisskunig*, p. 314. 171
34. The so-called sword of Grutte Pier. Photo collection Frisian Museum Leeuwarden. Collection nr. Doo185C. 178
35. *Landsknechte* and Swiss pikemen with each other in battle. Engraving by Hans Holbein Jr. ca. 1520. Albertina Vienna, Wikimedia Commons. 183
36. Floris van Egmond-IJsselstein, Count of Buren. Portrait by Jan Gossaert 1519. Mauritshuis The Hague. 187
37. Four *Landsknechte* with pikes, dressed in livery. Drawing by Paul Dolnstein (ca. 1491–1513), Landesarchiv Thüringen, Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Reg. S (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 6v–7r. 193
38. Duke Charles of Guelders, 1519. Facsimile of a woodcut by an anonymous master. Topografisch Historische Atlas Gelders Archief Arnhem. 199

Map 1.	The region around the city of Sneek according to the cadastre of 1832. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.	34
Map 2.	The political-administrative layout of Friesland in the fifteenth century. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.	49
Map 3.	The <i>grietenijen</i> and cities for which muster-rolls have been preserved. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy	84
Map 4.	The battle of Sloten 1496. J.A. Mol.	138
Map 5.	The battle of Laaxum 1498. J.A. Mol.	146
Map 6.	The battle of Bomsterzyl 1500. J.A. Mol.	161
Map 7.	Guelders' territory in Friesland in the spring of 1515. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.	179

Preface

This book offers an expanded and adapted version of my Dutch-language study on the *Friese Volkslegers*, which came to publication in 2017 by Verloren publishers in Hilversum. It grew out of an edition project of the Fryske Akademy, aiming to open up for historical use the Habsburg muster lists from 1552 that survived for Friesland. During my first attempts to fathom these texts, I soon had to conclude that little was known in the Netherlands about the phenomenon of popular militias. It was therefore inevitable that extra research would have to be devoted to it. Research that turned out to shed more light on the role of the Frisian rural and urban militias and therefore could not be limited to just one introductory chapter.

It was challenging to undertake the project because it followed on from earlier studies I had undertaken on warfare in medieval Friesland. Furthermore, it turned out to fit well as a part of the Leiden-Leeuwarder project *The Twilight Zone: Party Strife, Factionalism, and Feuding in the Northern Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages*. This was carried out between 2009 and 2014, with support from the Dutch Research Council NWO, by Aart Noordzij, Justine Smithuis and Matthijs Gerrits, under the supervision of Peter Hoppenbrouwers. I would like to thank them very much for their input and comments. My appreciation also applies to the Leiden bachelor students who, in 2013 and 2016, participated in courses I provided on warfare and violence in the Northern Netherlands in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

I owe many thanks to my Frisian colleagues Peter van der Meer and Oebele Vries. The former took care, together with me, of the edition of the muster-rolls, which was published as an extensive appendix to the Dutch edition and can now also be consulted on the Internet. The latter critically reviewed the draft of the book and provided it with valuable comments.

For the revision for the English-language version, I benefited greatly from the expert comments of Dr. Michel Depreter of Oxford University and Prof. Krzysztof Kwiatkowski of Toruń University. I would like to thank them for the effort they put into a thorough review of the text. For the errors and omissions that remain, I remain responsible, of course.

I would also like to thank Michelle Rochard for critically reviewing and correcting the translated sections. Finally, I am very grateful to the Fryske Akademy fund, which was generous enough to contribute to the costs of the publication.

1. Introduction

Questions

In Friesland in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a great deal of fighting occurred in the entire Frisian coastal area between Alkmaar and Bremen, and primarily in the centrally located region between the Vlie, Lauwers, and Linde rivers.¹ The clatter of arms was especially prevalent from 1480–1500, which ended with the loss of Frisian independence, but also during the civil war of 1514–1524 when Habsburg and Guelders fought for power. Hundreds of men and women were killed and wounded then, many more than in any later period.

Until the middle of the fifteenth century, the Frisians themselves played the main role in warfare: men between sixteen and sixty years of age, peasants, and townsmen who could defend their homes organised according to their parish and district, which were next to or under the direction of self-elected judges and administrators. After 1450, these Frisian rural and urban militiamen were slowly pushed off the stage by foreign mercenaries: bearded *Landsknechte* equipped with chest armour and long pikes, halberds or broadswords. These men first appeared in the private retinues of Frisian noblemen, who made use of them to settle their mutual feuds. They then acted alongside the permanent guards and other helpers to these nobles. Later, they were deployed in large numbers by army captains in the service of princes whose aim it was to establish dynastic rule in Friesland.² Their fighting power proved to be greater than that of the Frisian militiamen. This does not mean, however, that the latter were side-lined. Even after 1514, they continue to appear in the

¹ This region, which now coincides with the current Dutch province of Fryslân (formerly called Friesland), will be referred to as Friesland. In literature it is also called Westerlauwers Friesland or Friesland west of the Lauwers.

² J.A. Mol, 'Hoofdelingen en huurlingen. Militaire innovatie en de aanloop tot 1498', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat en macht 1450–1650* (Hilversum 1999) 65–84, here 75–84, for the period up to 1500. An analysis for the time of the civil war of 1514–1524 is still lacking.

sources, but due to a lack of detailed studies, their military significance is not yet clear. There is no doubt that they often suffered defeat, but it is also certain that their contribution was very important for the warring parties. Therefore, the question arises as to how the efforts of the Frisian rural and urban militias developed and how their declining importance should be appreciated.

This theme is important for two reasons. The first is that the communal autonomy of the area, qualified as exceptional in Western European relations, is difficult to understand both in its blossoming and its demise without knowledge of its military defence. Frisian freedom could only flourish if its bearers were prepared to protect it with their bodies and property. The main question, then, is why, in the decades before and after 1500, did self-defence eventually fail in the Frisian endeavour to maintain or regain political independence? Another important theme in this context is whether, and if so how, in the ensuing civil war between 1514 and 1525, when Habsburg and the duke of Guelders were fighting each other for territorial power in the area and appealed to the contribution of the Frisians themselves, the deployment of popular militias ultimately promoted Habsburg's victory over Guelders.

This brings us automatically to the second, more general, reason to study the Frisian militias. An understanding of their functioning could help us gain a sharper insight into the military aspects of the process of state formation that took place in north western Europe in the late Middle Ages and early modern times. In the period under study, besides the city of Groningen, it was mainly princely states that contested each other's power over the Frisian lands.³ It may be assumed that the Frisian case, by way of contrast, because of the special socio-political structure of the region, will shed light on the use of able-bodied men more generally by the Burgundian-Habsburg empire, the duchy of Guelders, and other early modern states elsewhere. Furthermore, the popular armies deserve attention because they offer a window on the use and distribution of arms throughout society, with the accompanying culture of mustering, arms inspection and going out together in the face of imminent danger.⁴

3 The interested parties shortly before 1500 were, apart from the common land of Friesland itself, the City of Groningen, the German Empire, Burgundy-Habsburg and Saxony. After 1515 it was between Habsburg and Guelders. For developments in brief, see A.F. Mellink, 'Territoriale afronding der Nederlanden', in: (*Nieuwe*) *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden V* (Haarlem 1980) 492–505. Compare Formsa, W.J., 'De onderwerping van Friesland, het Sticht en Gelre', in: *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden IV* (Utrecht 1952) 72–96.

4 Lindsay Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia 1558–1638* (London/Toronto 1967) 3.

Duty to defend one's country

Not much has yet been written about the importance and organisation of medieval popular militias.⁵ Military history textbooks pay little attention to it. What we do know on the Low Countries is mostly about the use of armed citizens in densely populated cities, especially in the Flemish metropolises of Bruges and Ghent.⁶ In addition, there is a lot of historical literature available on the defence systems of German cities, including Frankfurt, Giessen, Cologne, Braunschweig, and Göttingen.⁷ It is obvious that large cities have been studied in a military sense to some extent, not only because a relatively large amount of source material has been preserved for them, but also because strong militias enabled city councils to pursue their own political course, independently or at least partially independently of their ruler. The fact that various urban armies successfully took part in important battles

5 We sometimes use the word 'armies' as well, with the note however that both militia and army refer to relatively small units.

6 Well known are the older publications of the Belgian military historian J.F. Verbruggen about the Bruges and Ghent municipal armies. See the various studies by him listed in the general bibliography. Recent, additional studies are by Jelle Haemers and Botho Verbist, 'Het Gentse gemeentelager in het laatste kwart van de vijftiende eeuw. Een politieke, financiële en militaire analyse van de stadsmilitie', *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 62 (2008) 291–325, and by Peter Stabel, 'Militaire organisatie, bewapening en wapenbezit in het laatmiddeleeuwse Brugge', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 89 (2011) 1049–1073. Compare the study by Frederik Buylaert, Jan Van Camp, and Bert Verwerft, 'Urban Militias, Nobles and Mercenaries: The Organization of the Antwerp Army in the Flemish-Brabantine Revolt of the 1480s', *Journal of Medieval Military History* 9 (2011) 146–166.

7 On Frankfurt, see Martin Rommeis, 'Die Wehrverfassung der Reichsstadt Frankfurt am Main im Mittelalter', *Archiv für Frankfurts Geschichte und Kunst* 41 (1953) 5–63. Giessen is treated by Hiram Kümpfer, *Regimen von der Wehrverfassung. Ein Kriegsmemorandum aus der Giessener Handschrift 996, zugleich ein Beitrag zur städtischen Militärgeschichte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Berichte und Arbeiten aus der Universitätsbibliothek und dem Universitätsarchiv Gießen 55 (Gießen 2005). For Cologne, there is the dissertation by Brigitte Wübbecke, *Das Militärwesen der Stadt Kölns im 15. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1991), and, for a comparative perspective, various articles by Klaus Miltzer, including: 'Die Bewaffnung der Bürger westdeutscher Städte im Spätmittelalter', in: *Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae* 11 (1998) 47–51; and 'Stadt und Fehde: das Kölner Beispiel', in: *Le convoi militaire. Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae* 15 (Lodz 2003) 87–92. For Braunschweig and Göttingen, it is worthwhile to mention the publications of Beate Sauerbrey, *Die Wehrverfassung der Stadt Braunschweig* (Braunschweig 1989), and Dieter Neitzert, *Die Stadt Göttingen führt eine Fehde (1485/86). Untersuchung zu einer Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte von Stadt und Umland* (Hildesheim 1992). Information about the urban militias in Silesia and Poland is offered by Mateus Golinski, 'Wroclaw burghers in military expeditions', in: *Le convoi militaire. Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae* 15 (Lodz 2003) 79–86. An old, but informative Dutch study in this field is: J. Gimberg, 'Het krijgswezen eener Geldersche stad in de middeleeuwen (Zutphen)', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen Gelre* 8 (1905) 75–111.



Fig. 2. Frisian peasant warrior with crossbow, mid-sixteenth century. Woodcut from Cornelis Kempius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae, et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (1588).

in the late Middle Ages also played a role in this. We can think of the battle of the Golden Spurs at Courtrai in 1302, in which pike men of Flemish cities resisted the armoured equestrian army of the French king. Such victories of citizens over knights, of amateurs over professionals, and of foot-soldiers over armoured riders demanded explanation and analysis.⁸

In general, however, the military deployment of the city-dweller was no different from that of the countryman. It was based on the principle that, since the early Middle Ages, every free man had to be prepared to defend his country and community with weapons and could be summoned to do so by the recognised ruler or authority.⁹ There were two forms of military

8 In which the 'national' point of view (that Flanders cut itself loose from France) also played an important role: Raoul C. van Caenegem, 'Inleiding', in: P. Trio, D. Heirbaut and D. van den Auweele (ed.), *Omtrent 1302* (Louvain 2002) 7–12. See also the review by P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers, 'De Guldensporenslag en zijn nagalm in de moderne tijd', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 119 (2004) 153–173.

9 A.W. Meyer and B.G. Pfeiffer, 'Aufgebot', in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters* I, kol. 1203–1205. Compare U. March, *Die Wehrverfassung der Grafschaft Holstein*, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft*

service: offensive and defensive.¹⁰ The first was referred to in Middle Dutch as 'heervaart' [German: *Heerfahrt*], sometimes also called 'host'; the second was referred to as 'landweer' [German: *Landwehr*].¹¹ In the first case, an army was deployed to seek out the enemy; in the second everyone was called to arms to resist an invading opponent.

The defensive form seems to have been the most fundamental and original. For the defence of home and inheritance, any physically healthy man could be called upon, no matter to what rank or class he belonged. As soon as the bells rang, the drum was beaten, or the horn blown, everyone had to abandon his normal work and gather at a central point to fight or stop the enemy. This meant that each man was also obliged to have arms at his disposal and had to be able to handle them; the basis was an equipment according to income. It also meant that there was always and everywhere a territorial organisation that could lead the resistance to be offered by the people. In rural northwestern Europe this was the *pagus* (or county), which gradually evolved into a grouping of various districts or municipalities, whether or not composed of a number of villages. In the cities, the able-bodied men were originally grouped according to the quarters in which they were located. From the late thirteenth century onwards, however, we see that in large urban centres where the guilds managed to gain a grip on the city government, the militiamen were also organised into craft guilds; the men not tied to a craft were often still called up in quarter units.¹²

In practice, defensive and offensive activities could not always be organised separately, neither at the 'national' nor at the regional level.¹³ Therefore, the setup of the *Heerfahrt* would have always taken place within the same territorial

für Schleswig-Holsteinische Geschichte 96 (1971) 1–174, there 11–45. For England, see J.J. Goring, *The Military Obligations of the English People* (London 1955) 20–22.

¹⁰ For further explanation: J.F. Verbruggen, 'De militaire dienst in het graafschap Vlaanderen', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 26 (1958) 437–465.

¹¹ It should be kept in mind that 'landweer' [*Landwehr*] in the Middle Ages and early modern period also could have a physically concrete meaning as an earthen wall, often densely planted with trees and shrubs, often also with moats on either side, which could be used as a defensive wall: Bertus Brokamp, 'Middelleeuwse landwieren in Nederland', in: Henk Baas e.a. (ed.), *Tot hier en niet verder. Historische wallen in het Nederlandse landschap* (Amersfoort 2012) 105–121. The strongholds and ramparts around the towns were also referred to as such in Friesland in the early sixteenth century: P.N. Noomen, *De stinzen in middeleeuws Friesland en hun bewoners* (Hilversum 2009) 18.

¹² Stabel, 'Militaire organisatie Brugge', 1051–1055; for Utrecht, see René de Kam, *De ommuurde stad. Geschiedenis van een stadsverdediging* (Amsterdam 2020) 57–62.

¹³ March, 'Die Wehrverfassung der Grafschaft Holstein', 26, views 'verfassungsrechtlich' nowhere a contradiction between *Heerfahrt* and *Landwehr*.



Fig. 3. Swedish peasant warrior duelling with a German Landsknecht. Drawing from the sketchbook by Paul Dolnstein, ca. 1503. Landesarchiv Thüringen Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Reg. 5 (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 9v–10r.

framework as that of the *Landwehr*.¹⁴ Depending on the purpose and duration of the military expedition, a selection of conscripts from the land defence could be called up for this purpose. Logically, participation in supra-regional campaigns was only reserved for members of social classes who could afford to be away from home for a while. From the tenth century onwards, the increasing predominance of heavy cavalry in warfare placed high material demands on military service. With the feudalisation of society, the duty of performing military tasks abroad therefore increasingly became a matter of knightly vassals who, with or without a retinue of their own, made themselves available to their liege lord for a certain period of time with horses and armour for the *chevauchées* the latter wished to undertake. Cities could, however, make an additional contribution, with selected units of archers and other foot-soldiers.

As a result, farmers and peasants seem to have played less and less of a military offensive role after 1200, except where they were ‘free’ in large

14 H.P.H. Jansen and P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers, ‘Heervahrt in Holland’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 94 (1979) 1–26, there 21. They suppose that ‘the old’ *Heervahrt* of Holland and the *Landwehr* mobilised by the ringing of the village bells each had a different organisation. How we should imagine this is not clear due to a lack of sources on the set-up of the Holland *Landwehr*.

numbers, had relatively valuable property of their own, and participated in the district administration, as well as where the geophysical situation was such that their land could hardly be controlled by equestrian armies,¹⁵ such as in mountainous regions like Switzerland and Norway. This also occurred in low coastal areas separated from the hinterland by marshlands and peat bogs, such as those along the North Sea, or in sparsely populated countries without a wealthy aristocracy, such as Sweden and Iceland.¹⁶

The existing image of the popular militias

A coherent picture of the development of the urban and rural militias at the end of the Middle Ages cannot yet be found in literature. Most studies that touch on the subject only identify partial developments in different regions of diverse countries. They often confine themselves to the participation of city militias in offensive actions. Hardly any research has been done into the commitment of the common man to the *Landwehr*.

If I briefly summarise the conclusions of *Heerfahrt* studies for the Netherlands in the period between 1450 and 1550, I arrive at the following. At first sight, everything seems to have been determined by the professionalisation of military business that continued in the course of the fifteenth century, partly as a result of the increase in scale brought about by the rise of the monarchy.¹⁷ The emphasis in warfare gradually shifted from the cavalry to the infantry. More and more battles were decided by large formations of hired foot-soldiers, first from Swiss pikemen, and later also from the so-called *Landsknechte* (French: Lansquenets) from southern Germany.¹⁸ It was not that the armoured cavalry no longer mattered – its efforts remained crucial, albeit not as a separate main force but as a combat unit that had to operate in conjunction with the infantry,¹⁹

15 Meyer and Pfeiffer, 'Aufgebot', 1203.

16 Sven Ekdahl, 'Die Bewaffnung der schwedischen Bauern im Mittelalter', *Fasciculi Archeologiae Historiae* 11 (Lodz 1998) 17–38, there 18–21.

17 This professionalisation is dealt with in all handbooks on warfare in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. Leading in this area is still: Philippe Contamine, *La guerre au Moyen Age* (Paris 1980) 202–306.

18 The classical study of these foot soldiers, who were frequently active in the Netherlands in particular, is M. Nell, *Die Landsknechte. Entstehung der ersten deutschen Infanterie* (Berlin 1914).

19 Clifford Rogers, 'The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War', *Journal of Military History* 57 (1993) 241–278, there 247–252.

which meant, among other things, that it also had to be provided with more professional fighters. Both developments led to the reduction or disappearance of the two old *Heerfahrt* components in the armies: those of the knight's vassals and those of the city militias. Under the dukes of Burgundy, especially under Charles the Bold, the central authority tried to convert the concrete military obligations of feudal knights and cities into fiscal burdens.²⁰ From the money this yielded, the monarch could then pay mercenaries on foot or on horseback, who were permanently employed and had to form the nucleus of a standing army. An intermediate form was that cities themselves hired infantry and horsemen, whether or not from their own area, to make them available to the lord as an independent *Heerfahrt* expedition group.²¹

In addition, minor princes and semi-independent cities, which were able to raise proportionately less capital and credit, continued to rely on the deployment of their own militias.²² In 1471 and 1480, for example, the duke of Guelders called on a large proportion of the able-bodied men of Zutphen for expeditions to Grave and Nijmegen, respectively. The city of Utrecht decided in 1511, before it went to war against Floris van Egmond, that all civilians between sixteen and sixty years of age would be armed to lead them under a new city banner – a sign of fighting spirit and pride – together with a group of mercenaries to the castle of IJsselstein.²³ At the siege of Hasselt, a small town in the northwest part of Overijssel, by Duke Charles of Guelders in 1521, not only were the militiamen of the Hasselt placed on the ramparts alongside ad hoc hired professional soldiers, but the men of nearby Vollenhove were called upon as well to fight the Guelders' army

20 A. Sablon du Corail, 'L'Etat princier à l'épreuve. Financer et conduire la guerre pendant la crise de l'Etat bourguignon (1477–1493)', *Revue Historique* 679 (2016) 549–576; idem, *La guerre, le prince et ses sujets: les finances des Pays-Bas bourguignons sous les règnes de Marie de Bourgogne et de Philippe le Beau (1477–1506)* (Turnhout 2019).

21 This is how Leiden acted in 1474–1475, summoned by Charles the Bold: H. von Seggern, 'De deelname van Leiden aan de belegering van Neuss, 1474–1475', *Jaarboekje voor de geschiedenis en oudheidkunde van Leiden en omstreken* 101 (2009) 24–40. Antwerp's approach was similar when it had to supply troops to the Roman King Maximilian for the suppression of the Flemish-Brabant uprising in the 1980s: Buylaert, Van Camp and Verwerf, 'Organization of the Antwerp Army'.

22 David Eltis, 'Towns and Defence in Late Medieval Germany', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 1989, 91–103, there 97–99.

23 C.A. van Kalveen, *Het bestuur van bisschop en Staten in het Nedersticht, Oversticht en Drenthe, 1483–1520* (Utrecht 1974) 178–179. In the siege camp near IJsselstein at the beginning of May 1511 there were more than 2,000 citizens of Utrecht alongside 300 horsemen and 1,600 *Landsknechte*, most of whom were under the command of Duke Charles of Guelders; these 2,000 men were more of a (large) selection than the total of the able-bodied men of the city.

in the field, which they did with limited success.²⁴ These are just a few of many possible examples.²⁵

Quite apart from the professionalism aspect, it has been observed often enough that there was an increasing reluctance among the citizens of many towns in this period to take part in military expeditions as auxiliaries and to be away from home for a long time.²⁶ In addition to the loss of income, many able-bodied men preferred to be spared the risk of injury or even death due to their non-military profession.

On the other hand, it must be emphasised that the sizeable, sometimes 5,000 strong militias of metropolises such as Bruges and Ghent, which were led by guilds of craftsmen, were so well equipped, trained, and disciplined that they could measure up to formations of professional soldiers. In the battle of Guinegate in 1479, Archduke Maximilian of Austria was victorious over the French king thanks in part to the efforts of these urban corps.²⁷ That is why Peter Stabel recently judged the militias of the major Flemish cities of the time as 'flexibly deployable, layered, relatively well-equipped [...] and also sensitive to changing military-technical requirements'.²⁸ The fact that the Burgundian dukes and their successors preferred not to make use of these militias had more to do with the potential political unreliability of city armies than with their possible military inferiority.²⁹ After all, they could not be used if it was not in the interests of their city. In addition, there was always the risk that the city would put them in the field against its ruler, as was shown by the Ghent uprisings of 1379–1385, 1449–1453, and 1540. Every time a lord had put down such a revolt, his first measure was to forbid townsmen and peasants from possessing arms at home. For example, in Holland after 1426, Philip of Burgundy only allowed the Kennemers and West Frisians to keep and carry blunted bread knives.³⁰

In practice, such bans on weapons were seldom actually implemented and monitored for compliance. In the absence of an efficient police force,

24 J. Benders, *Hasselt, 1521: een Overstichts stadje in de greep van Hertog Karel van Gelre*, Doctoraalscriptie Geschiedenis en Mediaevistiek Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 1992, 108.

25 The city of Groningen, too, made ample use of its able-bodied men in this way until the 1530s: W. Zuidema, *Wilhelmus Frederici, persona van Sint-Maarten te Groningen 1489–1525* (Groningen 1888) 11.

26 This aspect is emphasised by Wübbecke, *Das Militärwesen der Stadt Köln*, 61–67, for Cologne, and by A. Janse, *De sprong van Jan van Schaffelaar. Oorlog en partijstrijd in de late Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum 2003) 50, for Utrecht.

27 J.F. Verbruggen, *De slag bij Guinegate, 7 augustus 1479* (Brussel 1993) 137–140.

28 Stabel, 'Militaire organisatie Brugge', 1053.

29 *Ibidem*, 1071.

30 Jansen and Hoppenbrouwers, 'Heervaart in Holland', 19.

late medieval states certainly had difficulty establishing a monopoly on the possession and use of weapons. What was more important was that when cities and rural areas were threatened with war and could not rely on the lord's main force for their own safety because it was deployed elsewhere, they did everything they could – sometimes together with the sovereign – to make their inhabitants militarily defensible.³¹ Weapons were needed for this. In Holland, for example, during the turbulent years of party strife in 1488–1494 and in the period of the ever-flaring wars with Guelders from 1504–1528 when the region was regularly confronted with raids by mercenaries, citizens were repeatedly ordered to supply themselves with arms and armour.³² The city councils then facilitated the purchase of arms on a large scale by their inhabitants. The cities of Flanders and Brabant also maintained their militia organisation for defensive purposes.³³ Depending on the situation, army commanders of the ruler also did not hesitate to call for selections of able-bodied men, either to fight insurgents, or to use them to prevent the incursions of external enemies. These selections comprised what is referred to as the 'the third man' or 'the fourth man'.³⁴

The nature of medieval warfare meant that entire regions were exposed for months and sometimes even longer to numerous forms of limited but extremely disruptive military violence. There were seldom any real battles. Most actions were small-scale and aimed at looting and destroying the economic capacity of an opposition city or region. This was referred to as a 'riding war', meaning a series of hit-and-run actions.³⁵ In addition, there was the terror of mercenaries who stripped the area bare like locusts when they were out of work. The Holland and Utrecht data suggest that counteracting and deflecting all this violence remained a task for the urban and rural

31 For example, in October 1506 when Philip the Fair called upon all citizens of Holland between twenty and sixty years of age to equip themselves with armour and a hand-arm, i.e., a pike, firearm, crossbow, or halberd, with which they could defend themselves: J.P. Ward, *The Cities and States of Holland (1506–1515). A Participative System of Government under Strain* (Leiden 2001) 317.

32 *Ibidem*, 325–330.

33 St. Gunn, D. Grummitt and H. Cools, *War, State and Society in England and the Netherlands 1477–1559* (Oxford 2007) 54–57.

34 On 6 May 1492, Albrecht of Saxony, as the general of Maximilian, summoned 'the fourth man' from all towns and villages in Holland to resist the so-called *Cheese and Bread* people: J. Scheurkogel, 'Het Kaas- en Broodspel', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 94 (1979) 189–211, there 200. And, in 1515, when the mercenaries of the Black Band threatened to invade Holland, a quarter (i.e., 'the fourth man') of the able-bodied men were mobilised in Leiden and a third ('the third man') of the able-bodied men were called up in Naarden, Rotterdam, and Dordrecht: Ward, *Cities and States of Holland*, 254–255.

35 Janse, *Jan van Schaffelaar*, 32.

militias that were still to be mobilised. They acted to protect a certain region or city, or as an auxiliary force without which the relatively small (because expensive) professional force of the territorial lord could not operate. How, after 1500, the lord himself was involved in the organisation of the popular militias – in the case of the Netherlands, especially the duke of Guelders (until 1543) and Emperor Charles V – has hardly been studied.

This was different for England. There, on the other side of the North Sea, fighting was less extensive in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries than in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany.³⁶ Fewer mercenaries were deployed among the Tudors. King Henry VIII launched a few expeditions to France and managed to settle a number of conflicts with Scotland to his advantage. However, his military strategy was also defensive. To this end, he and his successors worked hard to build a national defence system with the help of county militias in order to be prepared for a possible invasion by the French or the Spaniards. At the time of the Wars of Roses, great feudal lords still dominated the field with their private armies consisting partly of professionals and partly of small vassals and leaseholders. Yet, even then it was the rule that every physically healthy man kept arms at home, in proportion to his own wealth, in order to stand up for the *Landwehr*.³⁷ Just as on the continent, it was up to the competent authority, or the king, to summon these men when need arose. Only a strong monarch – and that was certainly Henry VIII – could really make use of this. He curtailed the power of the barons and started in 1522 to revive the county militia system by providing it with a central administration, setting standards for armament and organisation, and ensuring that the militias met regularly to practice and be mustered.³⁸ Responsibility for this was entrusted to muster commissioners, who would later be replaced by lords-lieutenants under the reign of Henry VIII's daughter Mary. In cooperation and consultation with the county sheriffs and local peacekeepers, they had to organise the inspection ceremonies and arrange the financing of any expenses.

The musterings were organised at intervals: traditionally once every three years, but more often when there was a threat of invasion; then the men were called together twice a year. Usually this was an event lasting one or two days at an appropriate time in the summer – preferably before the harvest – after which the people returned home with their weapons.

36 M.C. Fissel, *English Warfare 1511–1642* (London 2001) 21–49.

37 Gunn, Grummit and Cools, *War, State and Society*, 6.

38 Fissel, *English Warfare 1511–1642*, 50–67; St. Gunn, *Early Tudor government, 1485–1558* (University of Michigan 1995) 38–42.

However, when there were reports of an impending invasion, the people's army was mobilised for a longer period of time. In 1544, Henry VIII kept 120,000 men on their feet for months. In case of imminent danger, the men did not have to move outside their county and could not be summoned to march across borders or even sail overseas. This would remain the basic principle even in the sixteenth century. However, it is very doubtful whether the king would have abided by this principle in the event of a real invasion by a foreign power.

Rolls or lists of all those muster meetings were drawn up and had to be sent to London for checking and analysis. Although many of these have been lost, a relatively large number have been preserved, partly in central government archives and partly in private archives, in which they ended up through the legacies of muster commissioners. Thus, for some counties, a fairly complete series has been handed down for the year 1522.³⁹ Over the years, a lot has been published in England about this national militia system. The emphasis, however, is on the development since the last quarter of the sixteenth century, when the system had to prove itself in various war situations and was further adapted and modernised.⁴⁰ Because 1560 is our end point, we must refrain from comparing the Frisian and English popular militias. The fact that Henry VIII was prepared to invest so much in the modernisation of his county militias does, however, indicate that after 1500 the system had by no means come to an end everywhere.

With this insight in mind, we can for now conclude that the image of the development of the popular armies in northwestern Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is still vague and multicoloured at the same time.⁴¹ The question now is whether it can be drawn sharper and clearer for Friesland.

39 Muster-rolls have been edited for various counties, including Buckinghamshire (1973), Gloucestershire (1980), Rutland (1980), and Bedfordshire (1993). For an overview, especially of the unpublished rolls, see Jeremy Gibson and Alan Dell, *Tudor and Stuart Muster Rolls: A Directory of Holdings in the British Isles* (London 1991). Compare Julian Cornwall, 'A Tudor Domesday. The Musters of 1522', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3 (1965) 19–23, and A.C. Chibnall (ed.), *The Certificate of Musters for Buckinghamshire in 1522* (London 1973). For the context, see Goring, 'the general proscription of 1522'.

40 Fundamental in this respect is Lindsay Boynton's 1967 study of the militias under Queen Elizabeth. Because she and several other English authors worked in an insular tradition, their analyses of the English system pay little or no attention to the militia systems on the continent.

41 For the period after 1566, the situation is different. However, the many Dutch early modern historians who describe the Revolt or the Dutch Civil War tend to describe the military developments at that time in terms of discontinuity, presenting the formation of large civil guards (the



Fig. 4. Halberd from about 1500. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, collection nr. 11113.

Sources and set-up

In order to reveal the importance of the popular militias of Friesland, we need to learn as much as possible about their composition, armament, and organisation. This is not so easy because the administrative source material is scarce due to poor archival traditions, which in turn stems from the weak executive organisation of the communal administration in Westerlauwers Friesland. Of the communally governed counties and their constituent parts – the *grietenijen* (small regional districts or municipalities, by and large consisting of 10 to 25 parishes)⁴² and the cities – disappointingly few internal, administrative documents have been handed down from before 1524. The lack of such cannot be fully compensated for by including sources of Burgundian or Guelders' origin.

However, from Friesland itself, several narrative texts from the years before and after 1500 have been handed down providing information about warfare. The most comprehensive are three chronicles from the Windesheim priory of Thabor near Sneek, which, in the party oppositions that sharply divided the country both before 1500 and in the period 1514–1524, sided with the so-called Schieringer party who favoured the Saxons, and Burgundians

new post-1580 shooters guilds) as an innovation, while it can be better interpreted as a revival of the traditional general duty of home defence forced by the pressure of war, and adapted to the growing dominance of firearms: P. Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer. De schutterijen in Holland, 1550–1700* (Hilversum 1994) 104–105.

⁴² Many *grietenijen*, c.q. municipalities, in Friesland still have the suffix 'deel' (which means 'part') in their name: Franekeradeel, for example. This indicates that it was a constituent part of the county. The old communally organised county of Westergo thus consisted of – and eventually fell apart into – Franekeradeel, Barradeel, Menaldumadeel, Baarderadeel, Hennaarderadeel, Wymbritseradeel, Wonseradeel, and Hemelumer Oldeferd.

and thus eventually moved into the camp of the victors and new rulers. Nevertheless, none of the authors show themselves to be fierce supporters of this party. They only hint at their appreciation for the peace that the king (Charles V) ultimately brought to Friesland despite the military aberrations of his armies. Two of these three chronicles are quite well-known: the first being the work by Peter van Thabor, the other by Worp van Thabor, both written in Middle Dutch. Peter was a laybrother at the time in question, Worp was a regular canon, who even held the office of prior for some time.⁴³ Their stories, which continue into the 1520s and in which many of their own observations are incorporated, have the same tenor. They offer a large amount of factual data about the various small and large military actions. Important is that the one often gives names and details that the other does not have. The same applies to the anonymous Latin chronicle, which runs until 1524 under the title *De Phrisonum gestis*, and which, according to recent studies, was also recorded in Thabor.⁴⁴ The basic data are similar to the chronicles of Worp and Peter van Thabor, but some interesting details are found that are missing in those works.

Fiercely pro-Saxon, because they were written about and at the instigation of a Saxon mercenary captain, are the chapters about Friesland from *Die Geschichten und Taten Wilwolts von Schaumburg*. This is a biography in High German of Albrecht of Saxony's main army commander which, according to the text editor, would have been completed in 1507 and therefore only covers the period 1495–1501.⁴⁵ The author is anonymous, although it is assumed that it was Wilwold's brother-in-law, Ludwig Eyb zum Hertenstein. His information should be treated with caution because it strongly serves the glorification of Wilwold's personal achievements. It almost seems as if it is an autobiography written by someone else in the third person. However, the

43 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken van Friesland, boeken IV en V*, J.G. Ottema (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1850/1871); Peter Jacobszoon van Thabor, *Historie van Vriesland*, H. Amersfoordt and H.W.C.A. Visser (ed.), *Archief voor vaderlandsche, inzonderheid Vriesche geschiedenis, oudheid- en taalkunde* 1,2 (1824–1827) 1–110; 125–264. Reprint, with an introduction by R. Steensma (Leeuwarden 1973).

44 Tresoar Leeuwarden, Archief familie Thoe Schwartzenberg, inv.nr. 3992. Further data at M. Carasso-Kok (ed.), *Repertorium van verhalende historische bronnen uit de middeleeuwen. Heiligenlevens, annalen, kronieken en andere in Nederland geschreven verhalende bronnen* (The Hague 1981) nr. 270. No research has been done on the text yet. For some preliminary observations, see the commentary of H.D. Meijering on his edition of *Oudfriese kronieken uit het handschrift Leeuwarden RA Schw. 3992*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam/Kiel 1986) 5. Compare J.A. Mol, 'Het militaire einde van de Friese vrijheid: de slag bij Laaxum, 10 juni 1498', *Millennium* 13 (1999) 3–20, there 11, 18. There is an urgent need for a scientific edition.

45 A. von Keller (ed.), *Die Geschichten und Taten Wilwolts von Schaumburg* (Stuttgart 1859) 163–192.

work offers a lot of first-hand details, especially about the tactics followed by the mercenaries, as well as about their organisation and payment.

As pro-Saxon and pro-Burgundian, there is also a monastic chronicle available from a completely different tradition, namely, the *Preliarius, recentiora Frisie bella continents*, written in Latin. It contains an overview of the quarrels and feuds in the southwestern part of Friesland, in and around the united Benedictine monasteries of Staveren and Hemelum. The first part is authored by Jacob van Oest, who was appointed abbot in 1494 and who died in 1516. The second is from the hand of his chaplain, Paulus van Rixtel, whose text is dated 1517. Together, these stories cover the period 1485–1515.⁴⁶

There are also two other sources with an anti-Saxon and – later – anti-Burgundian, pro-Guelders party tenor, which describe the period 1475–1524 in detail: the *Boeck der partijen* by the protagonist Jancko Douwama the younger from Oldeboorn, and the *Croniken der Vrescher Landen* by the Groningen brewer Sicke Benninge.⁴⁷ The first uses a South Frisian perspective; the second obviously has more of an eye for Groningen's interests. Sicke Benninge, born around 1465, wrote his chronicle in the years 1505–1528, but the story about what happened in the years 1496–1500 appears already to have been composed in the beginning of that period. Jancko Douwama, who was born in 1482, first compiled his text while he was imprisoned in the Habsburg castle of Vilvoorde in Brabant, after 1523.⁴⁸ He thus had to rely on his memory and on what he had heard from others, with the result that his narrative is not very precise with facts and dates.

While it is true that these narrative sources report much about warfare in general, they are not very detailed with respect to the army groups on Frisian soil, and they are certainly silent on the organisation of the municipal

46 The only manuscript is a sixteenth-century copy: Tresoar Leeuwarden hs. 1383. This text, too, needs to be published properly. The chronicle became known through the translation of J.G. Ottema, *Proeliarius of strijdboek, bevattende de jongste oorlogen in Friesland* (Leeuwarden 1855), which contains quite a few errors and omissions.

47 A fine new edition of this chronicle has recently been published under the title *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher Landen mijtten Zoeven Seelanden ende der stad Groningen*, vol. I, F.A.H. van den Homberg, A. Rinzema and E.O. van der Werff (ed.): (The Hague 2012). See about Sicke Benninge's background and vision, the monograph of A.J. Rinzema, *Sicke Benninge en zijn kroniek: Een Groninger burger over opkomst en verval van zijn stad rond 1500*, L. van Beek, D.E.H. de Boer and C. Zwart (ed.) (The Hague 2014).

48 *Jancko Douwama's geschriften*, F.D. Fontein and J. van Leeuwen (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1849). See further for Jancko Douwama: M. Kist, 'Centraal gezag en Friese vrijheid: Jancko Douwama's strijd voor de Friese autonomie', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat en macht 1450–1650* (Hilversum 1999) 107–125.

militias. As a rule, the chronicles deal with the topic of militias in a general sense by talking about ‘the men’ of Sneek, Wonseradeel, the Wolden, or any other town, municipality, or region, but rarely discuss the composition of the battle groups and the functions or posts of their captains. Such information may have been superfluous for the contemporary readers because they were somehow familiar with it. Thus, we can only discover reports on these topics by reading between the lines. These messages have to be decoded, as it were, using notes from later sources.

Fortunately, there are documents from later times that make such a reconstruction back in time possible. These consist of a number of texts from the Habsburg period between 1524 and 1558, which have not been consulted very often, containing regulations on the defence obligations of the male population. In the first place, these are accounts from *grietmannen* from the years 1524–1530, which have been deposited in the steward general’s archives for thirteen *grietenijen*.⁴⁹ They contain records of actions taken by the *grietmannen*, who led these districts as judges and administrators, by order of the *stadtholder*, who acted as governor of the principality for the prince. Their purpose was to justify and declare expenses incurred. This included the announcement and organisation of musterings. In a number of cases, it is made clear that a *grietman* went out with a selection of militiamen to carry out defensive duties for the *stadtholder*.

Most important, however, are the muster-rolls of 3 February 1552.⁵⁰ These are inventories of all able-bodied men with their weapons and other equipment, drawn up per rural district, village, and town. Although these rolls were produced for the whole of Friesland, they have been preserved for only fourteen of the thirty *grietenijen* and six of the eleven towns, which still makes up roughly half of the total. However, their information density is high in such a way that the data, after analysis, can be extrapolated for the rest of Friesland – even more so as there is a relatively representative spread across the region. Apart from these muster lists, I used for comparison a list of defence obligated men from the island of Ameland from 25 March 1558,

49 Tresoar, Archief rekeningen en andere stukken betreffende Friesland, afkomstig uit de Hollandsche Rekenkamer (1515–1575), inv.nrs. 35–47. These concern Leeuwarderadeel, Oostdongeradeel, Dantumadeel, Smallingerland, Rauwerderhem, Baarderadeel, Hennaarderadeel, Wonseradeel, Doniawerstal, Haskerland, Schoterland (with Aengwirden), Weststellingwerf, and Ooststellingwerf. The account of the latter two districts was recently edited by Jerem van Duijl, Sjoerd Galema, and Henk Bloemhoff, *Rentmeestersrekeningen van Stellingwerf-Oosteinde en Stellingwerf-Westeinde (1524–1531)* (Oldeberkoop 2017).

50 General State Archives of Belgium, Brussels, Papiers de l’Etat et d’Audience 1429.4, old no. 170. The documents will be discussed in detail below.



Fig. 5. Page of the muster-roll of the *grietenij* Idaarderadeel. Photo J.A. Mol.

drawn up by order of Peter van Camminga, lord of Ameland, in view of possible threats to the island from invasions by pirates.⁵¹

Of course, the figures and announcements in the muster-rolls first of all say something about the situation in 1552, and thus about the role and significance of the popular militias in the Habsburg era. However, it is obvious that the inspection of 1552 was set up according to long-standing customs – customs which, by the way, differed per district and city. As a result, it reflects to a certain extent a traditional organisation that certainly dated back to the period of Frisian Freedom. The actual armour as shown and prescribed appears to have been largely recent, although a few mentions of rusty or otherwise old-fashioned weaponry are found in the rolls.⁵² Apart

51 National (Dutch) Archives, The Hague, Archives Nassause Domeinraad 1581–1881, inv.nr. 1822.

52 The nobleman Rippert Eelsma from Sexbierum in Barradeel showed up with an ‘old rusty armour’, and Aeth Aut’s widow in Wirdum in Leeuwarderadeel presented a sword with an old shield: *cum scuto antiquo*. By the way, this is the only mention of a shield in all the muster lists!

from that, the data on the numbers of men, their age, weaponry, origins, and background provide a basis to better place older information.

The availability of all these sources now justifies the approach to first examine in detail the muster data of 1552 and then to make a leap back in time in order to analyse, with the acquired knowledge, the less precise data from the chronicles concerning the years 1480–1525. Therefore, my study is divided into two parts. In the first part, more specifically in Chapters Three and Four, I try to analyse the reports from the accounts of the *grietmannen* of 1524–1530, two stadtholder ordinances (of 1528 and 1535), the muster-rolls of 1552, and the Ameland list of 1558. I will also compare these with the registration for the Holland city of Alkmaar, also preserved for 1552, plus another muster list for Hasselt in the province of Overijssel, dating from 1535. All this material originates from the time after the final establishment of the Habsburg authority in 1524. This dissection will take place against the background of Charles V's government and its need for the possible deployment of armed peasants, farmers, and townsmen. In the second part, which covers Chapters Five and Six, I will attempt to clarify the deployment of Frisian municipal armies in the battles of 1480–1500 and 1515–1524 with, incidentally, a long prelude from the early thirteenth century onwards. First, however, as an introduction to Chapter Two, I present a sketch of the terrain and administration of Friesland between Vlie, Lauwers, and Linde concerning the period that is central to our study.

2. Friesland between Vlie and Lauwers: land, population, and government until 1525

Abstract

Chapter Two introduces the reader to Friesland: a prosperous coastal area that never became feudalised. Around 1300, it was communally governed by elected judges from a landowning elite of so-called *hoofdelingen* who considered themselves to be noble. Under their leadership, every Frisian was expected to defend the country with arms whenever it was threatened by a foreign power. In the rural militias, the noble principals had the same infantry role as the wealthy free farmers, tenants and other country folk. In the urban militias, wealthy and low-income citizens fought side by side as well. The laws and regulations, however, prescribed arming according to wealth. Those with a considerable status were generally entrusted with the command of the various units.

Keywords: rich farming area, Frisian freedom, political autonomy, self-defence, arming to wealth

A coastal landscape with natural boundaries

In the Middle Ages, Friesland was an area with natural boundaries. Geographically, we perceive it as an elongated coastal strip of washed-up salt marshes, behind a row of narrow dune islands along the North Sea, stretching from the northern part of Holland in the west to beyond Bremen in the east. Because of their fertile clay soil, these salt marshes had already become inhabited long before Roman times. Until the year 1000, the sea was able to penetrate deep into the marshes at high tide, which was favourable for the deposition of new silt and also encouraged traffic across the water. The population protected itself against the danger of flooding by forming



Fig. 6. Friesland in 1768 by Jan van Jagen. Taken from P.J. de Rijke, *Frisia Dominium*, nr. 70.

residential mounds and constantly raising them. Due to the fact that flood creeks and numerous peat streams flowing from the south cut through the area, it was not a contiguous whole. Rather, there was a series of isolated districts, each of which, spatially speaking, was attached to high sandy hinterland, which could hardly be accessed because of the intermediate wilderness of soggy peat.

The area between Vlie and Lauwers, which is the focus of this book and coincides with the current Dutch province of Friesland (Fig. 6), originally comprised three of these districts, namely, Westergo, Oostergo, and Zuidergo. The boundary between the first two was formed by the Boorne river, which downstream had the character of a tidal stream and was known there as Middelzee. The names Westergo and Oostergo indicate in their oldest forms, *Westrachia* and *Austrachia*, that they were originally understood as ‘eye’ or island.¹ Of these two, Westergo became the largest in size due to its continual accretion in the early Middle Ages. Most of the mounds that arose in the Frisian lands can be found here. Zuidergo was

1 R.E. Künzel, D.P. Blok and J.M. Verhoeff, *Lexicon van Nederlandse toponiemen tot 1200* (Amsterdam 1988) 274–275, 393–395.

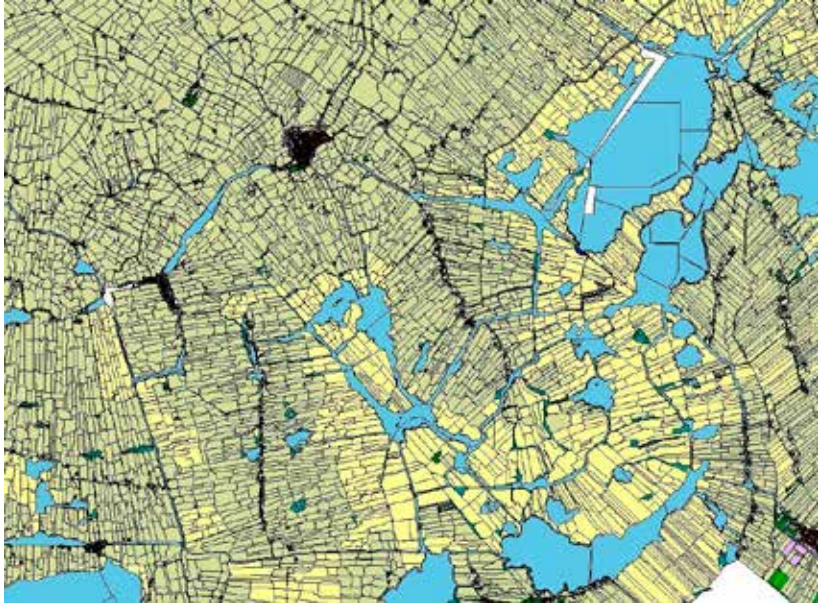
the area around Staveren and the Gaasterland moraine, surrounded by a series of peat reclamation areas, some of which to the west and south were washed away in the Zuiderzee. Via the peat settlements on the north side, Zuidergo became connected to Westergo in the thirteenth century and was administratively merged into it.

The two large ‘terp’-regions of Westergo and Oostergo each had a hinterland of peat bogs that had grown up against the Pleistocene sand ridges of South Friesland. These peat cushions had reached an enormous size in the last period of the Holocene. In the Roman period, out of the clay area, an attempt was already made to cultivate the edges. However, heavy depopulation in the third and fourth centuries put an end to this and, as a result, the land became covered with clay sediments and then again with new peat.² In the eighth and ninth centuries, systematic reclamations began again, which were tackled on such a scale that after the turn of the millennium they resulted in the foundation of dozens of new villages. As a result, Westergo and Oostergo did not only consist of clay land dotted with mounds but also of agriculturally usable peat bogs which attracted numerous settlers in the High Middle Ages.³ On topographical maps (Map 1) and aerial photographs, these newly opened up areas, which were to form their own territorial units, are easily recognisable by their strip parcelling and straight settlement axes with ditches and canals.

Because the reclamation of peat is a dynamic process that leads to soil subsidence as a result of continuous dewatering with accompanying oxidation – the high hinterland eventually became the ‘Low Middle’ – the peat and the sandy brook valleys in which the peat had developed eventually merged into a single landscape. We therefore know the south and east of the province of Friesland as the Wolden or Zevenwouden. This is a name that first came into vogue in the middle of the fifteenth century for the political formation of that region. The Wold-element in it refers to the original vegetation with small trees and shrubs on the edges of the peat bog.

2 G.J. de Langen, *Middeleeuws Friesland. De economische ontwikkeling van het gewest Oostergo in de vroege en volle Middeleeuwen* (Groningen 1992) 106, 121, 129–130; idem, *De gang naar een ander landschap. De ontginning van de (klei-op-)veengebieden in Fryslân gedurende de late ijzertijd, Romeinse tijd en middeleeuwen (van ca. 200 v. Chr. tot ca. 1200 n. Chr.)*, in: M.J.L.Th. Niekus (ed.), *Gevormd en omgevormd landschap. Van Prehistorie tot Middeleeuwen* (Assen 2011) 70–97, there 81–86.

3 J.A. Mol, ‘De middeleeuwse veenontginningen in Noordwest-Overijssel en Zuid-Friesland: datering en fasering’, *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 14 (2011[2012]) 46–90, there 47–48.



Map. 1. The region around the city of Sneek according to the cadastre of 1832: in the northwest the irregular block pattern of the clay area can be discerned, in the south on can see the striplike structure of the sand and peat area. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.

Simultaneously with the systematic occupation of the peat bog, a different kind of colonisation movement arose in the old mound area. The land was diked between 1000 and 1250 at high speed, a process by which the large creeks and currents that previously supplied and drained seawater were dammed up.⁴ The Middelzee is the best known of these. Landowners were forced to construct locks and artificial waterways to drain off excess inland water. This was done by interconnecting old watercourses but also by digging straight new canals. Depending on their location, these also contributed to the drainage of the underlying peat bog. The great advantage of all these dike and water works was that the flat clay soil could be used more intensively. Numerous farms were thus able to slide off the mounds to be rebuilt in the middle of the land they were exploiting. Hundreds of new farmsteads in the former mound area were thus established, with most of them still existing today. In Westerlauwers Friesland, this process was completed around 1350. From that time on, for the whole of the present province there were about 10,000 farms, roughly half of which are spread over the clay and half over

4 G.J. Borger, 'De ouderdom van onze dijken. Een nieuwe discussie over een oud vraagstuk', *Historisch Geografisch Tijdschrift* 3 (1985) 76–80.

the peat or clay-on-peat area.⁵ A side-effect of this colonisation activity and dike construction was that the individual districts automatically became attached to each other and also gained connections to the hinterland.

Churches, villages, towns, and monasteries

A development that went hand in hand with this reclamation movement was that the number of parish churches grew rapidly.⁶ In addition to the old missionary centres in Dokkum, Leeuwarden, Franeker, Bolsward, and Staveren, which had been established in the eighth and early ninth centuries, many new places of worship were founded after the Viking Age. The earliest generation of baptismal chapels seems to have been created between 975 and 1050. They were spread relatively evenly over the districts (either according to a plan or coincidentally), placed in residential nuclei with a regional care function. Over the course of the following centuries, new units were split off from these main churches. As a result, secondary village churches arose everywhere, with an associated territory in which the inhabitants became connected to each other as parishioners. The founders were royal monasteries, the bishop, local aristocrats, peasant communities, or a combination of these parties. By the middle of the fourteenth century, this process of multiplication came to an end. Since then, Westerlauwers Friesland has had some 365 parishes, also known as *kerspels*. The parish, also called *ga* in Old Frisian, was at that time the smallest territorial administrative unit both in the field of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and in that of secular jurisdiction. As such, it also formed the constituent part of the synodal district and the *grietenij* (municipal district) which, in turn, were part of the archdiakonate and the *pagus* (county), respectively.⁷

Town formation was still in full swing around 1350. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, some market centres and trading places with mints

5 This is a rough approximation based on the total number of voting farms from 1640, which (with some reservations, especially with regard to the south-western part of the province) according to Obe Postma in the core can be linked to the number of farms from around 1500, and thus also to the number of farmsteads from 1350: O. Postma, *De Friesche kleihoeve. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van den cultuurgrond vooral in Friesland en Groningen* (Leeuwarden 1934) 185.

6 J.A. Mol, *Friezen en de zeggenschap over hun kerken in de Middeleeuwen*, inaugurele oratie voor de bijzondere leerstoel Geschiedenis van de Friese landen in de Middeleeuwen (Leiden 2004) 5–8.

7 O. Postma, *It Fryske doarp as tsjerklike en wrâldske ienheit foar 1795* (second edition, Sneek 1953) 8–12.

and tolls had grown into proto cities,⁸ for example, Dokkum, Leeuwarden, Bolsward, and Staveren. They each had an old mother church. Each also formed the administrative centre of a *pagus*. Due to the fact that in this period, when counts and dukes promoted the development of cities everywhere else by granting separate privileges, Friesland became free from overlordship, it took these settlements a long time to gain autonomy from the municipality or district in which they were located. For most Frisian towns, this development only took place in the period 1350–1450. At that time, their population numbers were still relatively low. Around 1511, Leeuwarden, which was the only Frisian city with more than one parish, had a population of about 4,300 people.⁹ Sneek, Bolsward, Franeker, and Harlingen each did not exceed 2,000 people.¹⁰ Dokkum had about 1,400 inhabitants, and Workum had probably a little over 1,000.¹¹ Hindeloopen and Staveren had even lower populations. Most of these relatively small towns were hardly defensible around 1500. Only Leeuwarden, Sneek, and Franeker had moats and low earthen ramparts, with stone gates at the bridges through which one could enter the city.

The Frisian cities were all located in, or at least on the edge of, the clay zone. In the peat and sand areas of the south and east, no urbanisation took place. These areas certainly experienced a period of prosperity during and shortly after the reclamation phase. However, their soil fertility ultimately turned out to be so low that there was no serious accumulation of property and no major differences in prosperity. The economic centre of gravity in almost all Frisian countries was and remained the clay area with the adjoining transition zone from clay to peat.

In addition to cities and villages, monasteries developed into important settlement elements in the Frisian landscape, and there were relatively many of them. Around 1500, the region between Vlie and Lauwers had more than fifty convents, belonging to thirteen different orders. It has been written that nowhere else in Western Europe was as densely dotted with monasteries as here,¹² but that is an exaggeration. Many other ancient

8 W. Ehbrecht, 'Gab es im mittelalterlichen Friesland Städte?', in: W. Freitag and Peter Johaneck (ed.), *Bünde – Städte – Gemeinden. Bilanz und Perspektiven der vergleichenden Landes- und Stadtgeschichte* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2009) 125–163, there 151–156.

9 M. Schroor, "Eene jonghe aencommende lantstadt". Een poging tot reconstructie van de bevolkingsomvang en de bevolkinggroei van Leeuwarden in de zestiende eeuw (1511–1606), *Leeuwarder Historische Reeks* 3 (1992) 107–142, there 110.

10 M. Schroor, 'De bevolkingsomvang en bevolkingsevolutie van Sneek', in: M. Schroor e.a. (ed.), *Sneek van veenterp tot waterpoortstad* (Leeuwarden 2011) 195–202, there 195.

11 M. Schroor, *Geschiedenis van Dokkum, hart van noordelijk Oostergo* (Dokkum 2004) 113.

12 W. Ehbrecht, *Landesherrschaft und Klosterwesen im ostfriesischen Fivelgo (970–1290)* (Münster 1974) 7.

cultural areas such as Flanders, Brabant, and the Rhineland counted at least as many religious houses at the end of the Middle Ages, with a great diversity of institutions from all periods. However, the monastic system in the Frisian coastal regions seems to have been special in that it consisted largely of institutions founded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and thus belonged to the popular orders of the time.¹³ Apart from the mendicant orders, these were monastic organisations that still established their houses in rural areas because they were dependent on income from land ownership. The orders they came to belong to were the Benedictines, the Augustinian canons, the Cistercians, the Premonstratensians, and the military orders (Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights).

Some monasteries arose in (proto)cities, such as St. Boniface Abbey of Dokkum, St. Odulfus Abbey of Stavereen, and St. John's Commandery Hospital near Sneek. The vast majority, however, came about in more open locations. In a short period of time, these monasteries grew into large complexes of four to seven hectares, surrounded by walls and one or more moats, with gatehouses controlling access. The main purpose of the moats and walls was to keep the monks and nuns to their own chosen isolation. A second, not unimportant aim would have been to protect the residents from 'minor' violence.¹⁴ This appearance gave outsiders the impression that the Frisian monasteries were defensible strongholds. For example, in a spy report made for Duke Charles the Bold in 1468 in the context of his plans to conquer Westerlauwers Friesland, Ludingakerke Abbey near Harlingen was even perceived as being '[...] more robust than whatever city here', with wide moats and a strong gate.¹⁵

The rural monasteries, more than half of which consisted of nunneries, continued to dominate the scene after 1400. At that time, however, the spectrum became more colourful with the appearance of reform congregations and the foundation of a large number of densely populated but modest (in terms of material resources) sister houses in and near the cities. The oldest monasteries were favoured by the wealthy elite. These monasteries even managed to acquire so much land that in the long run the monasteries

13 J.A. Mol, 'Bemiddelaars voor het hiernamaals. Kloosterlingen in middeleeuws Frisia', in: *Hel en hemel. De Middeleeuwen in het Noorden. Catalogus van de tentoonstelling in het Groninger Museum 13 april-2 september*, E. Knol, J.M.M. Hermans and M. Drievergen (ed.) (Groningen 2001) 152-164, there 153-158.

14 J.A. Mol, 'Kleasters en geweld yn let-midsieusk Fryslân', in: H. Brand e.a. (ed.), *De tienduizend dingen. Feestbundel voor Reinier Salverda* (Leeuwarden 2013) 87-98, there 91-92.

15 N.E. Algra, *Een spionagerapport van omstreeks 1468* (Leeuwarden 1967) 17.

themselves became large landowners. At the time of the Reformation, they owned 15–20 percent of the most productive land in Westerlauwers Friesland.¹⁶ In the sixteenth century, more than 80 percent of that portion was in the hands of the religious houses established in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Just like the cities, almost all of these can be found in the clay area.

Noblemen, freeholders, tenants, and townsmen

A question arises as to which social groups carried and controlled society in this coastal area. Historic Friesland is often presented as a land of farmers only: rich and self-confident farmers, but still men who made a living for themselves, ploughing, sowing, mowing, haymaking, and milking. Nobility was not lacking, but according to a number of authoritative Dutch and German historians, including Isaac Gosses, who taught general and national history in Groningen before the Second World War, this nobility was relatively young. Its members are referred to in Latin sources as *capitanei*. In the Old Frisian and Middle Dutch texts from the time until around 1500 they were called *hoofdelingen* (Germ.: *Häuptlinge*, chieftains or principals). After that they are usually referred to as *heerschappen* (lordships). According to Gosses, it was not until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that they worked their way out of the peasantry by means of violence and the monopolisation of administrative and judicial offices. Subsequently, they would have separated themselves as a group. At the end of his classical study, *De Friesche hoofdeling* (1931), Gosses speaks explicitly of a 'late-acquired power'.¹⁷

This vision was adopted and further developed in the 1960s for Ostfriesland and Jever by the German medievalists Hajo van Lengen and Heinrich Schmidt, on the basis of their research into the rapidly developing principalities of these *Häuptlinge* in the regions east of the Ems in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Van Lengen and Schmidt placed the emphasis on the social and economic expansion opportunities that certain families of noblemen were able to exploit.¹⁸ The ancestors of the *Häuptlinge* would

16 J.A. Mol, *Grootgrondbezit van Friese kloosters in de middeleeuwen*. Doctoraalscriptie Mediävistiek en Historische Geografie Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 1979, 53–55.

17 I.H. Gosses, *De Friesche hoofdeling* (Amsterdam 1933) 74; compare *ibidem* 29.

18 Of the many works of these productive scholars, I mention here only: H. van Lengen, *Geschichte des Emsigerlandes vom frühen 13. bis zum späten 15. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Aurich 1973–1976), and 'Bauernfreiheit und Häptlingsherrlichkeit im Mittelalter', in: K.-E. Behre and

have been 'Grossbauern' or 'farmer aristocrats'. Their vision has recently been followed – albeit with some nuance – by the German historian André Köller, in his voluminous book on *Führungsgruppen* in the northwest of the German Empire between 1250 and 1550.¹⁹

The interpretation of *hoofdelingen* who had worked their way up – which has not remained undisputed²⁰ – stemmed from the correct observation that feudalism did not develop in Friesland and that the *nobiles* who appear in the Latin sources concerning Friesland before 1350 did not strive for chivalrous dignity and did not lead a chivalrous life like the members of the feudal nobility elsewhere. It also fits with the fact that in many Frisian countries after 1200 the inhabitants governed themselves for a long time in a communal way without recognising a territorial overlord.²¹ Because the position of the nobility in adjacent duchies, territorial earldoms and prince-bishoprics was to a large extent determined by the recognition and privileging by the princely sovereign, and because self-government and noble culture were generally considered incompatible, for many historians it seemed and seems plausible that well into the thirteenth century Friesland did not have a nobility of its own, and was originally the playing field of an elite group of rich freeholders.

A clear picture of the *hoofdeling*, who, according to Gosses, would have dominated this field at the time, can be drawn. He would have been a man who owned several farms and employed one or more men-at-arms. He

H. van Lengen (ed.), *Ostfriesland. Geschichte und Gestalt einer Kulturlandschaft* (Aurich 1996) 113–134; H. Schmidt, 'Adel und Bauern an der Nordseeküste', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 45 (1973) 45–95, and idem, 'Häuptlingsmacht, Freiheitsideologie und bäuerliche Sozialstruktur im spätmittelalterlichen Friesland', in: K. Andermann and P. Johaneck (ed.), *Zwischen Adel und Nicht-Adel* (Stuttgart 2001) 285–309. Compare R.W.M. van Schaik, 'Een samenleving in verandering: de periode van de elfde en twaalfde eeuw', in: M.G.J. Duijvendak e.a. (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Groningen I, Prehistorie – Middeleeuwen* (Zwolle 2008) 125–168, there 133–136, and R.I.A. Nip, 'Hoofdelingen en stedelingen, een wereld van verschil ca. 1350–1536', in: M.G.J. Duijvendak e.a. (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Groningen I, Prehistorie – Middeleeuwen* (Zwolle 2008) 230–294, there 230–233.

19 André R. Köller *Agonalität und Kooperation. Führungsgruppen im Nordwesten des Reiches 1250–1550* (Göttingen 2015) 255 ff.

20 Particularly in the Netherlands, a great deal of criticism has been formulated, among others, by the legal historian Nico Algra and the medievalist Jurjen Schuur; see from them especially N.E. Algra, 'De oorsprong van de Friese adel', *Jaarboekje van de Nederlandse Kastelenstichting* 1971, 16–26, and J.R.G. Schuur, 'De Friese hoofdeling opnieuw bekeken', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 102 (1987) 1–28.

21 O. Vries, 'Geschichte der Friesen im Mittelalter', in: *Handbuch des Friesischen / Handbook of Frisian Studies*, O. Vries, V. Faltings, A.G.H. Walker, O. Wilts, N. Arhammar, J.F. Hoekstra, and H.H. Munske (ed.) (Tübingen 2002) 542–543.



Fig. 7. The tombstone of the young nobleman Eppe van Rinsumageest, 1341. Collection Fries Museum Leeuwarden nr. B 01028.

also owned one or more defensible stonehouses, which sometimes took on the character of a real motte-and-bailey castle – the well-known *stinzen* – and often acted as the leader of a feuding party. Many stories handed down in the fifteenth-century chronicles relay that these principals were indeed accustomed to exerting violence or threatening it. *Hoofdelingen* and their culture of violence belong together. It is also clear that many of them tried to form their own clientele of tenants and other dependent supporters. But that is not all. What Gosses overlooked was the fact that when they first appeared in the sources, *hoofdelingen* were already forming a marriage group with its own characteristics everywhere in the Frisian lands. That is to say, they always appeared to have searched for their spouses within their own separate circle, which was not completely closed off but difficult for newcomers to enter.²² What is also certain is that in the fifteenth century, the principals enjoyed some important legal privileges that distinguished them from other free men, such as a higher *wergeld* and the right to be tried only for and by peers. Gosses was, of course, aware of the latter, but he believed that these were later usurped prerogatives.

²² G. de Langen and H. Mol, *Friese edelen, hun kapitaal en boerderijen in de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw. De casus Rienck Hemmema te Hitzum* (Amsterdam 2022) 142–156.

In recent years, the historian Paul Noomen stressed that these privileges were by no means new at that time.²³ According to him, the data on the *wergeld* compensation in particular show that from various *hoofdelingen* from the late Middle Ages, via the Frisian judicial sources from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a line leads back to the *nobiles* from the eighth-century *Lex Frisionum*. The same goes for the position of the freeholders or *husman(s)*. They may be linked to the class of *liberi* (free men), which also appear as a separate group in the *Lex Frisionum*. Crucial here are the passages in the eighth article in the pan-Frisian *Seventeen Statutes of the Frisian Land Law* of around 1100 and the *Statutes of Hunzingo* of 1252, in which the nobility, on the one hand, and the *fri men* / *einerva* / *husmon* (free man / free land owning man / house owning man), on the other hand, are distinguished as the upper two of the three available positions. At the very least, it can be deduced that no new nobility developed in or after the thirteenth century. At that time there was already a permanent circle of 'nobles', who can easily be identified with the group of *nobiles*, *potentates*, *optimates*, *meliiores*, and *divites* who constantly appear as local rulers in the well-known thirteenth-century monastic chronicles of Wittewierum and Mariëngaarde, and whose fortified houses can sometimes be accurately drawn on the map. In his study of the *stinzen* in medieval Friesland, Paul Noomen was able to make a plausible case that many fifteenth-century *hoofdelingen* were direct descendants of these thirteenth-century *nobiles* and *divites*. According to Noomen's approach, Friesland was thus indeed an area with an old nobility, at least as far as the old, cultivated land within the clay zone is concerned.

The question remains as to what we should make of these Frisian noblemen/*nobiles* in the early and high middle ages. Under no circumstances do they seem to have been persons who could establish kinships with, for example, Saxon high noblemen or other territorial magnates. Rather, they seem to have been men to whom the informal leadership of a local community could be attributed on the basis of their origin and prestige. For example, the description of the still pagan *maior villulae* from a Frisian village in the diocese of Utrecht – our area between Vlie and Lauwers – is mentioned in the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* at the time of Bishop Adelbold of Utrecht (1010–1027) as follows: he had an *armiger* (man-at-arms), moved on a horse, and successfully persuaded people around him to turn down the Eucharist and instead drink beer with him in an inn. He was of

23 P.N. Noomen, 'Eigenerfd of edel? Naar aanleiding van de afkomst van de Aytta's', *It Beaken* 74 (2012) 257–301, there 267–271.

course punished by God for this, crashing drunk off his horse and dying.²⁴ Thus, he was an influential village aristocrat, but not a lord with autonomous authority over land and people. This brings us close to the *Führungsschicht* of Köller.

There is not much more to say about this for the time being. Let us therefore set aside the question of the origins of the Frisian nobility and turn our gaze to its composition in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For Westerlauwers Friesland this can easily be limited to the 60 or so families with about 240 individual nobles who were recognised as 'privileged lordships' by the new Saxon regime in 1505 on the condition that they declared their willingness to accept the so-called tax of the twenty-first penny, which was a levy of one twenty-first part of the annual income in rents and leases. At that time, they were described per quarter or *pagus* (Oostergo, Westergo and Zevenwouden) and, within these, further described per *grietenij*. From the list of establishments and the location of *stinzen* or defensible houses per *grietenij*, it can be deduced that for the most part they were domiciled within the clay area. Only a few were found in the clay on peat and sand municipalities such as Opsterland, Schoterland, and the Stellingwerwen. In this respect, the distribution pattern of the stonehouses of the nobility shows a remarkably strong resemblance to that of the monasteries and towns.

This circle of *hoofdelingen* in Friesland west of the river Lauwers was not a homogenous group in these centuries. There were major and minor, i.e., wealthy and less wealthy, *hoofdelingen*, and both groups had more and less wealthy branches. For all branches, proper marriage was an important strategy in the competition to maintain and increase honour, power, and prestige. How this stratification was created is difficult to say due to a lack of sources. What is certain, however, is that in the fourteenth century there already existed a permanent group of major principals who had their bases of power in the cities or large villages and whose families owned a few hundred hectares of fertile farmland divided over several dozen tenanted farms.²⁵ They married one another as much as possible, on a material and culturally equal level, in order to prevent the loss of property and honour by inheritance.

24 Extensively discussed by Schmidt, 'Adel und Bauern', 52–53; compare also J.R.G. Schuur, 'Een weinig bekend bericht over weerstanden tegen het christendom in het middeleeuwse Friesland', *It Beaken* 46 (1984) 198–200.

25 The size and value of this large property per family around 1500 has recently been analysed by De Langen and Mol, *Friese edelen, hun kapitaal en boerderijen*, Chapter 6. See also J.A. Faber, *Drie eeuwen Friesland: economische en sociale ontwikkelingen van 1500 tot 1800*, 2 vols. (Leeuwarden 1973) I, 316–336.

However, those *hoofdelingen* at the top and the subsequent middle group could not compete with the high noblemen from Guelders, the prince bishopric of Utrecht, and the Burgundian regions, who moved in court circles, possessed many fiefdoms, often owned a high seignior, and were assigned important army posts or administrative offices by their respective sovereigns. Only the Tom Brock and Cirksena families in Ostfriesland, who, during the fifteenth century were indeed able to develop their informal regional rule by means of violence and usurpation into a comital lordship, would reach that level. The major *hoofdelingen* elsewhere in the Frisian lands never came this far. In terms of wealth and status, they can best be compared with the members of the landed gentry in the East Netherlandish and North West German regions, who came from the ministerial and knighthood classes. At the end of the fifteenth century, *hoofdelingen* from the Groninger Ommelanden entered into marriage alliances with knightly families from Drenthe and Munsterland.²⁶ The minor *hoofdelingen*, who had little more than two to four farmsteads in addition to their core property, fell out of this group. They were usually found in small villages, often not on the clay but in the clay-on-peat area to the south of it. They often had the greatest difficulty staying within their peer group and sometimes had to look for their partners among the circle of freeholders or in one of the rich abbey leaseholders. Perhaps they can be compared to the group of so-called ‘well-born men’ in Holland in terms of wealth.²⁷

As a result of the concentration of *hoofdelingen* possessions in the clay area, where most monasteries also had their lands, this area (in Northern Westergo and Northern Oostergo) was strongly dominated by leasehold property. For the situation at the beginning of the sixteenth century, this can be verified in the fiscal land accounts of the Land Registry of 1511, which has been preserved from Saxon times. The somewhat older investigations into this by Tjitte de Boer and Obe Postma have shown that, at that time, 70 and 80 percent of the land in the *grietenijen* Leeuwarderderadeel and Ferwerderadeel, belonging to Oostergo, was leased out.²⁸ In the Westergo *grietenijen* Hennaarderadeel and Baarderadeel those percentages were 66

26 R. Alma, ‘De Ommelander ridderschap (1498–1516)’, *Virtus. Jaarboek voor Adelsgeschiedenis* 10 (2003) 7–70, there 47–48.

27 About the Holland category of ‘well-born’ men, who can be considered partly as socially declined descendants of nobles around 1200 and partly descended from the non-noble ministeriality, see: A. Janse, *Ridderschap in Holland. Portret van een adellijke elite in de late Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum 2001) 43–49.

28 T.J. de Boer, ‘De Friesche grond in 1511 (Leeuwarderadeel en Ferwerderadeel volgens het Register van den Aanbreng)’, in: *Historische Avonden II* (Groningen 1907) 95–115, there 106–107;

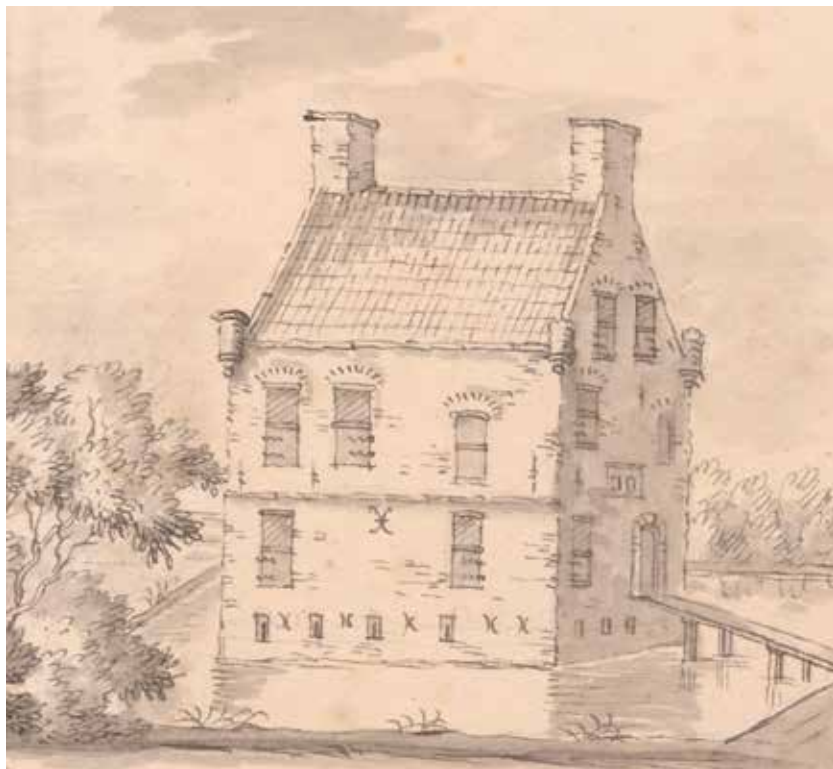


Fig. 8. A defendable *stins* or stone house: the typical fortification of the Frisian *hoofdelling*. Here the Jarla stins in Garijp. Drawing by Jacob Stellingwerff 1722. Collection Fries Museum, nr. PTA 283-003.

and 70 percent, respectively. It can be calculated that about 20 to 25 percent of the land was owned by the monasteries and about 15 to 20 percent belonged to the parish churches and the various funds attached to them. This means that the nobility, together with the urban landowners, owned some 35 to 40 percent of the land. It also means that three quarters of the farmers consisted of tenants, as opposed to one quarter of owner-users.

The other *grietenijen* in the clay area, although less thoroughly studied, present the same picture. However, the situation was completely different in the clay-on-peat communities in the east and south. Because a large number of them are missing from the abovementioned Land Registry of 1511, it is difficult to give precise figures for the sixteenth century. *Grietenijen* such as Tietjerksteradeel, Achtkarspelen, and Aengwirden had 35, 44, and 63 percent,

respectively, of their people owning more than half of the land they used, which give at least some indication of the trend.²⁹ The further into the peat bog and the poorer the land, the less land was farmed out to tenants. We can assume that the percentage of owner-users in the southern *grietenijen* Opsterland, Schoterland, Lemsterland, and the Stellingwerven even exceeded 70 percent. In these areas with poor soils, which together accounted for almost one-third of the Westerlauwers Frisian area, there was hardly any monastic property, nor were there any noble estates to be found. In these areas, it was the less wealthy freeholders that together determined the course of business.

There were many freeholding farmers – that is to say, farmers with an allodial land ownership of some size that was partly used by themselves – in the Frisian lands. As we have seen, in the late-medieval charters and chronicles these farmers are usually called *husmannen* or ‘house owning men’, which could differ widely in social and economic status. In terms of wealth and ability, we can best distinguish them in two groups, according to the nature of the soil and the soil fertility of the regions in which they were established. The first and most affluent category was that of the freeholders on the clay and the clay-on-peat lands. The second one included the free owning peasants of the peat and sandy areas. Both groups can also be divided into arable farmers and cattle farmers. The social group as a whole has always been highly valued in the older Frisian historiography. After all, it was regarded as the main bearer of Frisian political independence and thus also of the Frisian original egalitarian identity. In spite of this traditionally positive image however, we still seem to know surprisingly little about their number and significance.³⁰

Regarding the freeholders in the clay regions, we have recently been better informed through a case study by Paul Noomen about the social background and family ties of the famous Viglius van Aytta.³¹ This Viglius was a humanist and cleric who managed to acquire important positions in the Habsburg Executive Councils of the Low Countries under Charles V and his son Philip.

29 Faber, *Drie eeuwen Friesland* I, 216–217; II, table IV.37. It should be noted that the Tietjerksteradeel and Achtkarspelen were still partly made up of clay on peat soil. If one looks at the taxable income of the farms per village, it will immediately become clear that the (lease) farmers on the clay managed to earn three to four times as much per hectare than the owner-users on the sand.

30 For the landed elite of freeholders in the area of the Gronings Westerkwartier, we have, since 2004, the monograph of H. Feenstra and H. Oudman, *Een vergeten plattelandselite. Eigenerfd en in het Groninger Westerkwartier van de vijftiende tot de zeventiende eeuw* (Leeuwarden 2004). *Een vergeten plattelandselite*, based on a lot of genealogical research.

31 Paul Noomen, ‘Eigenerfd of edel?’

From his father's side, he was a freeholder; from his mother's side, he descended from *hoofdelingen* families. From the genealogy back to his grandparents, or at least from his indications, it is clear that the freeholders cherished their farmsteads. They showed this by, among other things, surrounding them with moats and providing them with gates. They looked for their spouses generally supralocal but within their own region – in this case, the region of western Idaarderadeel and southern Leeuwarderadeel – with the idea, of course, that each man and woman could bring in enough land. Among their partners were also sons and daughters of prominent abbey leaseholders. Viglius' father, for example, had much property of his own but he allowed others to use some of it, while he himself, as a tenant, exploited the former grange complexes of Barrahuis and Schierhuis under Wirdum, which belonged respectively to the Augustinian priory of Bergum and the large Cistercian abbey of Bloemkamp. Tenants of such large complexes apparently were held in high esteem. Whether at a lower level, too, there were relationships between the group of the freeholders and those of the tenants has yet to be further investigated. As we shall see, for the time being no clear distinction can be made between them among the defence obliged men in the clay regions.

In addition to these freeholders and tenants, there were other social strata in the countryside from which militiamen were recruited, namely: the toddlers or 'cow milkers', the workers, the craftsmen, and the poor.³² Of the latter three groups, a substantial number were found in the larger villages in the arable areas. Throughout the year, the arable farm required more manual labour than the cattle farm. Cattle farmers actually only needed extra help to harvest the hay during the summer. That is why the village centres on the clay region of Northern Westergo and in the *Bouwhoek* (arable corner) of Wonseradeel were much more densely populated than those in the *Kleiweide* (clay meadow) area of Eastern Westergo.³³ On the cattle farms, the service personnel on the farm were largely residents.

Finally, the social composition of the Frisian cities needs little explanation as it was entirely in line with the general Western European pattern. In the Frisian cities, there was an urban elite that tried to dominate the government beside or in opposition to the nobility. There were also numerous merchants, shopkeepers, transporters, and craftsmen.³⁴ The cities had a relatively large

32 Spahr van der Hoek and Postma, *Geschiedenis van de Friese landbouw* 1, 131–135.

33 For a detailed analysis of these groups, see Ph.H. Breuker, *De Greidhoeke. Lân en minsken fan 800 oant 1800 en letter* (Leeuwarden 2012) 168–183.

34 On the social composition of Frisian towns, see M. Schroor, 'Leeuwarden tussen middeleeuwen en nieuwe tijd', in: R. Kunst e.a. (ed.), *Leeuwarden 750–2000 Hoofdstad van Friesland* (Franeker 1999) 78–109, there 93–100.



Fig. 9. Frisian peasant warrior with drinking horn, mid-sixteenth century. Woodcut from Cornelis Kempius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae, et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (1588).

number of paupers, whose needs were partly provided for by guest houses and religious brotherhoods.³⁵ In addition to one or more parish churches, each with a sometimes large group of priests and a range of ecclesiastical funds and foundations, all the cities had a number of convents. These and other institutions invested their money both inside and outside the city limits. They acquired a lot of property in the fertile clay area in the immediate vicinity and thus stimulated the growth of the rental economy.

Frisian freedom: communal government, between about 1200 and 1480

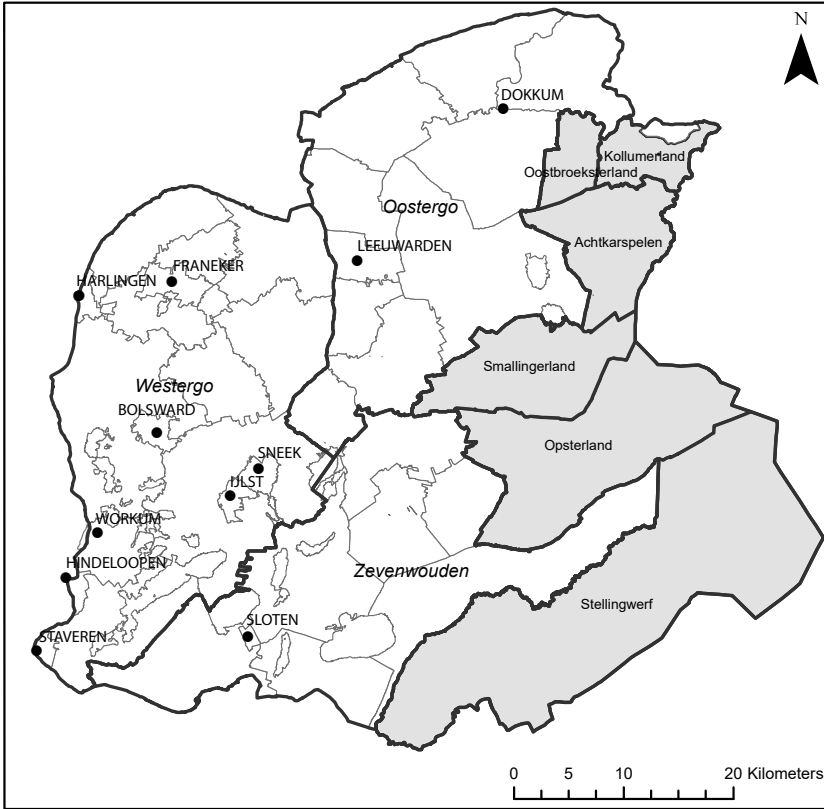
In the time after the pacification and Christianisation by the Franks, the Frisian areas west of the river Lauwers became integrated into the Carolingian Empire. This meant that, at that time, the administration was in the hands of a count, as an official of the king. After the Norman times such

35 J. Spaans, *Armenzorg in Friesland 1500–1800* (Leeuwarden 1997) 30–36.

officeholders tried to cumulate several counties and make them hereditary. For Westergo and Oostergo we know that in the eleventh century they were ruled for a long time by counts of the Brunon family, with the support of the indigenous elite. These counts also had coins minted there.

Whereas combinations of counties grew into princely territories under the leadership of ruler dynasties elsewhere, this development in the Frisian countries was interrupted in the course of the twelfth century. This first happened in the regions east of the Lauwers. It was not the case that there were no rulers here who could claim comital rights of authority. There certainly were, but in almost all cases, they had their core goods and main interests outside Friesland. It appears they were not able to acquire enough land ownership and jurisdiction in Friesland to form a faithful circle of vassals or servants per county or pagus *district*. The consequence was that feudalism did not penetrate and no foreign lord was able to develop his inherited comital rights into a closed territorial rule. As a result, the indigenous elite had to take the government into their own hands. What had previously been judicial circles of free men under the lead of *skeltas* appointed by the count now developed into independent land districts or *universitates terrae* under the leadership of self-chosen judges or consuls. These already functioned around 1200 in the areas between Lauwers and Eems. In the regions west of the Lauwers however, it was only after the middle of the thirteenth century that there was such an increase in autonomy. At that time, the count of Holland claimed comital rights.

In principle, the leading circles in Westergo and Oostergo were prepared to accept the count of Holland – and in an earlier phase also the bishop of Utrecht – as representative of the king, provided he limited his ambitions to the collection of tolls and fines from periodic court trips of deputies. Their ideal lord was an ‘old style’ count, who did not reside permanently and left the day-to-day management to themselves. When the subjugation attempts of the Roman king and count of Holland William II and his son Floris V with regard to Friesland west of the Vlie showed that the count was eager to develop a ‘new style’ lordship everywhere with castle construction, taxation, and bailiffs, he was side lined in Westerlauwers Friesland. As of the third quarter of the thirteenth century people wished to be free of royal authority here as well. Westergo and Oostergo, and their subdistricts within which justice was carried out at a lower level originally under the leadership of a comital *skelta* (sheriff), were now governed by colleges of self-chosen *grietmannen* with co-judges. On the thirteenth century seal of Oostergo, one sees these depicted one by one. There are a total of eighteen persons on it, in two groups of nine: that is nine per group (three *grietmannen*, each



Map 2. The political-administrative layout of Friesland in the fifteenth century. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.

assisted by two co-judges) for the northern part, and nine for the southern part of the *pagus* district. These colleges met regularly for matters that concerned the entire land, such as alliances and interpretation issues, but also to deal with higher court cases. They were responsible for the handling of crimes and misconduct above a certain penalty amount. Together, they also acted as a court of appeal. In the sources we find their competence described as the *hagista riocht* or the highest court. It may be assumed that they also dealt with military matters at the highest level.

Westergo and Oostergo, as old Carolingian *pagi*, were originally the most important autonomous districts in the area between Vlie and Lauwers. But in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there were more districts in addition to these, and their number tended to grow, due to division and fragmentation. In the sand and peat areas below Dokkum, there were around 1450 the four small districts of Kollumerland, Oostbroeksterland, Achtkarspelen,

1313. According to the caption: ‘King Charlemagne makes the Frisians free’, he would have been the one who gave the Frisians the privilege to govern themselves. The main text produced in this context was the *Magnussage*, a piece from the late thirteenth century that recounts how the Frisians conquered the city of Rome for Charles around 800 in order to have it punished for expelling the pope. The apotheosis of the story is that the Frisian army commander and ensign-bearer Magnus accepted a series of privileges as a reward, the first of which was that all Frisians, born and unborn, would be free. The most important provision in the story – that the Frisians could choose their own judges – was incorporated not much later into a forged charter that became known everywhere as the Charlemagne privilege.³⁸ In later text collections, one finds this core myth of the meritorious conquest of Rome complemented by numerous other motives of sacrifice, for example, in relation to the Frisians’ part in various crusades. Such compilations were developed further and multiplied when foreign lords threatened to invade Friesland and autonomy was at stake.³⁹

Such a serious attack occurred in September 1345, when Count William IV of Holland landed at Staveren with an army from Holland and Hainault to conquer Friesland.⁴⁰ This invasion was well prepared, both logistically and in the field of diplomacy. For example, the count had threatened the Frisians with war at least a year before and had even seized all goods from Frisian monasteries located in Holland. This did not result in Frisian submission but rather had the opposite effect. When negotiations broke down, Westergo and Oostergo became united and mobilised all opposing forces from all the once separate districts on behalf of one Frisian patria. William’s invasion ended with his own death and a disastrous defeat for his entire army in what was later erroneously called the battle of Warns. It was an important event because it perpetuated the Westerlauwers Frisian position of freedom from overlordship. From that moment, the assemblies of

38 A. Janse, ‘De waarheid van een falsum. Op zoek naar de politieke context van het Karel-sprivilege’, *De Vrije Fries* 71 (1991) 7–28.

39 J.A. Mol and J. Smithuis, ‘The Frisians as a Chosen People: Religious-patriotic Historiography in Fifteenth-century Frisia’, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Älteren Germanistik* 81 (2021) 172–207, there 200–203.

40 J.A. Mol, ‘De slag bij Staveren’, in: D. Kooistra, E. Betten and P.A. de Vries (ed.), *Frieslands verleden. De Friezen en hun geschiedenis in vijftig verhalen* (Gorredijk 2008) 104–109, there 104–105; idem, ‘Graaf Willem IV, de Hollands-Friese oorlog van 1344/1345 en de Friese kloosters’, in: Ph.H. Breuker and A. Janse (ed.) *Negen eeuwen Friesland – Holland. Geschiedenis van een haat-liefdeverhouding* (Zutphen 1997) 94–108, there 95–104. Compare R. de Graaf, *Oorlog om Holland 1000–1375* (Hilversum 1996) 273–308.

Oostergo and Westergo also met regularly and were represented externally by an executive body, in which, apart from the most prominent *grietmannen*, there were a few abbots.

The Holland wars of 1396–1413, in which Duke Albrecht of Bavaria and his son William VI, the presumptive lord of Friesland, successively tried once again to establish their rule on the other side of the Vlie, did not change this outcome. Initially, Albrecht was successful and managed to gain support from part of the indigenous nobility.⁴¹ He even set up bailiffships, at the head of which he could place Frisian party members. However, his ambition to assert his authority in the lands between Lauwers and Eems broke down after a while. The opposition by both the Eastern and Western Frisians proved to be so stubborn that William VI had to give up his expansion plans after Albrecht's death and, in the end, he even decided to evacuate Staveren. This did not mean, however, that the peace and quiet in Friesland was immediately restored. On the contrary, the area between Vlie and Lauwers was dragged into a decade-long conflict, which was fuelled by an East Frisian and Groningen power struggle that fiercely clashed with the now opposing protagonists in Westerlauwers Friesland. We are talking about the dual-party system of the *Schieringers* and the *Vetkopers*. As far as Friesland west of the Lauwers was concerned, the reconciliation of 1422, which ended after a military intervention by Jan van Beieren, was not only signed by individual *hoofdelingen* but also by representatives of the districts and subdistricts.

In the following decades we then see a Council of Lands and Cities of Westergo and Oostergo, which gradually developed into an overarching institution in which the cities were represented as a separate group in addition to the separate *hoofdelingen*. The Council held diets throughout the fifteenth century, on which the districts and cities all had a voice. In design, these diets thus closely resembled the standard meeting of the Swiss Confederation.⁴² At the public meetings, *hoofdelingen* and prelates could also act on their own behalf.

However, this form of meeting, which was later called *Recht en Raad* (Law and Council) and was alternately chaired by representatives of cities, did not succeed in developing much authority. The main reason for this was

41 For general information about this episode: A. Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht. De Friese oorlog van de graven van Holland omstreeks 1400* (The Hague 1993).

42 O. Vries, 'Staatsvorming in Zwitserland en Friesland in de late middeleeuwen. Een vergelijking', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat en macht 1450–1650* (Leeuwarden/Hilversum 1999) 26–42.

that its administrators lacked a power apparatus with which the growing autonomy of the individual districts and cities, as well as the wilfulness of individual leaders, could be kept in check. For example, the districts tended to disintegrate into autonomous subdistricts (the *grietenijen*), each of which tried to develop an independent authority for itself. In this context, it cannot be a coincidence that in the second half of the fifteenth century almost all *hoofdelingen* and cities underlined their independence by erecting a gallows at a visible location within their territory.⁴³ In doing so, many *hoofdelingen*, whether or not they were *grietman* or alderman, tried to expand their domestic power by entering into alliances with other parties in power on their own. This fragmentation of the highest authority and the resulting changing coalitions led to a power vacuum after 1480 – a vacuum that attracted outside forces that were difficult to guard against over the long term.

The defence of freedom until about 1480

The fact that the Frisians believed they had gained their freedom with military services in defence of Christianity indicates that they greatly appreciated martial qualities, and were used to fighting. In his *Historia Damiatina*, the crusade preacher Oliver of Cologne even called the Frisians a warlike people.⁴⁴ Han Nijdam states in this context that the archetypal ‘Free Frisian’ was a warrior or fighter. This perception of Frisians is witnessed in the central concept of *mund* (= guardianship) in the surviving Frisian legal texts, with respect to a Frisian first and foremost protecting his own house, yard, family, and cattle by force.⁴⁵ The word is related to the Latin *manus* (hand), from which it can be inferred that one who had the *mund* could defend himself and his family with his hands. But the Frisian also had other interests to serve. If the legal community or the Church requested it, he had to go out together with others to catch criminals, fight enemies, or even help liberate the Holy Land from the Saracens.

How important military self-reliance was for the Frisians is not only evident from narrative and legal sources, but also from numerous images

43 J.A. Mol, ‘Gallows in medieval Friesland’, in: *Advances in Oldfrisian Philology*, Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Älteren Germanistik 64, R.H. Bremmer, O. Vries and L. van Weezel (ed.) (New York 2007 [2008]) 263–298.

44 J.A. Mol, ‘Frisian Fighters and the Crusade’, *Crusades* 1 (2002 [2003]) 89–110.

45 H. Nijdam, *Lichaam, eer en recht in middeleeuws Friesland. Een studie naar de Oudfriese boeteregisters* (Hilversum 2008) 283–284, 289–295.



Fig. 11. Charlemagne, flanked by two Frisian warriors, on the Grand Seal of Rüstringen, 1312. Redrawing by Georg Sello 1897, in: Sello, *Geschichte von Oestringen und Rüstringen*, Plate C3.

of warriors. We find these images on murals in churches, for example, but also on seals, such as those of the Opstalsboom Alliance and those of individual independent districts such as Rüstringen, Hunzingo-Oosteramt, Mormerland, Opsterland, and Oostergo.⁴⁶ Such images are always of non-helmeted foot-soldiers with short, shaved hair and barefooted, dressed in a long leather plate jacket and armed with a round shield, a sword, and a long spear. Most of the images show the spear had a leather knot tied around the middle of the shaft. Apparently, this was to prevent the weapon from slipping through the hand of the warrior during an assault. We are certain that attacking with speed is what Frisians liked to do in battle. Based on texts one can read about their way of fighting in the thirteenth century, it is clear that the men always distinguished themselves by the impatience, speed, and ferocious behaviour with which they stormed forward. The light armour must have contributed to this. It is remarkable that the spear or pike of the Frisian warrior from these times shows a gaff, tripod, or cube at the bottom on even the smallest drawings. The explanation for this is that the spear was also used as a pole to jump over ditches. The thickening or tooting at the end prevented the spear and jumper from getting stuck in the mud. It also means the spear was a considerable length, if we compare the fact that the vaulting poles still used today in Friesland for the traditional

46 Mol, 'Frisian Fighters and the Crusade', 98–103.



Fig. 12. Frisian warrior in storm attack, on the seal of the Oldenburg *ministerialis* family Von Frese, alias Friso, from 1328. Redrawing by J.A. Mol, based on Sello, *Vom Upstalboom*.

activity of searching lapwing eggs in the field are at least three and a half metres long. As we will see further on, this multifunctional weapon seems to have been in general use around 1500.

The above illustrations fit well with the provision from the thirteenth-century general Frisian legal source, *Thet is ac frisesk riucht*, which the Frisians used to defend their country against the rule of the ‘high helmet and red shield’ – meaning the Saxon knight – [...] *mith egge and mith orde and mith tha bruna skilde*, i.e., with a sword, a spear, and a brown shield.⁴⁷ This armament would not have applied to everyone, however, as is evident in other old legal texts where a distinction is made according to categories of wealth and ability. The twelfth-century *Old West Frisian Skeltana Riucht*, for example, distinguishes four categories.⁴⁸ The first is meant for the wealthiest men, with an estate of thirty pounds: they were expected to be equipped with a horse and a sword. The men with goods between twenty and thirty pounds in value had to have a well forged (*truchslayn*) sword. Those with property between twelve and twenty pounds had to have a spear and shield. Finally, those with less than twelve pounds of property had to serve the land with a bow. Notwithstanding these categories, a spear, sword and leather shield were the standard equipment of the two main groups.

47 W.J. Buma and W. Ebel (ed.), *Das Rüstinger Recht* (Göttingen 1963) 90.

48 S. Fairbanks, *The Old West Frisian Skeltana Riucht* (Cambridge Mass., 1939) 80–83.



Fig. 13. Frisian camp fighters, first half of the fourteenth century: vault painting in the church of Westerwijtwerd. Photo Kerkfotografie.nl.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century this seems to have changed in so far as the shield disappeared from sight and the metal plate armour in combination with a helmet was made compulsory for the more affluent men. At least that is what we read in the prescriptions for the equipment of the Drents, which were issued at the court session of the *Etstoel* in Rolde in the year 1399. These regulations would not have deviated much from those for the Frisians. At that time, it was a requirement for any freeholder who possessed a large area of arable land to have an armour, an iron hat, and a pike or skewer. The tenant (*meyer's man*) also had to have an iron hat and a pike or crossbow, but he was allowed to protect his body and limbs with a leather coat. It is of course questionable whether the peasants of Drenthe were able to achieve these standards.⁴⁹ There were fines for not observing the rule, but the required weapons and armour were expensive to purchase.

In practice, the inhabitants of the Frisian coastal areas between Vlie and Lauwers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were able to cope well with their equipment in war situations. Oliver of Cologne sang the praises of their achievements at Damietta. The author of the *Quedam narracio* underlines the Frisians' efforts in the crusade against Drenthe in the years

49 F. Keverling Buisman (ed.), *Ordelen van de Etstoel van Drenthe 1399–1447* (Zutphen 1987) I, 1 (1399).

1228–1232, in which their opponents proved at least as strong.⁵⁰ From the chronicle of the Bloemhof monastery, it is clear that Frisians from the entire coastal area also distinguished themselves during the crusade in 1270 to Tunis.⁵¹

As far as activity closer to home was concerned, from 1309 onward there were reports of a series of wars and raids by the Frisians from Stellingwerf, Schoterland, and Oosterzeeïngerland towards Vollenhove, Giethoorn, and the surrounding area. The purpose of these expeditions was to safeguard the interests of the Frisian and Stellingwerver peasants in the Kuinre region against the prince bishop of Utrecht and his men. There was also the already mentioned victory of the Westerlauwers Frisians over the Holland-Hainault knights of Count William IV at Staveren on 26 September 1345.⁵² According to a Hainaut chronicler, the Frisians, equipped with large boots and long clothing of heavy fabric, spared nothing and no one in this battle.⁵³ They took no prisoners of war but rather cut and stabbed their way with their long swords and large pikes unchivalrously, ‘sans pitié ne nulle merchy’, as if they were fighting Saracens.

There is no evidence that the wealthy, i.e., the noblemen and rich freeholders, operated in units other than with the tenants and less wealthy farmers and citizens. All the men per church village and per *grietenij* fought together under the leadership of the village *hoofdelingen* and *grietmannen* or their deputies, whether they were elected for the occasion or not. As a rule, those village and district leaders would have been noblemen. The urban contingents were mostly led by patricians who had some military experience. For both the rural and urban sections, we may assume that the rich and the poor fought side by side. For the army as a whole, the commanders were appointed by the executive committee of the common land, which also considered the defence strategy for each event.⁵⁴ The Hainaut chronicler

50 H. van Rij (ed.), *Quedam narracio de Groninghe, de Thrente, de Covordia et de diversis allis sub diversis episcopis Traiectensibus* (Hilversum 1989) 96–97.

51 H.P.H. Jansen and A. Janse (ed.), *Kroniek van het klooster Bloemhofte Wittewierum* (Hilversum 1991) 434–435.

52 Analysed more in detail by De Graaf, *Oorlog om Holland, 273–297*, and Kelly Devries, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century: Discipline, Tactics and Technology* (Martlesham 1996) 145–155.

53 J.M.B.C. Kervyn de Lettenhove (ed.), *Récits d'un bourgeois de Valenciennes (XIV^e siècle)* (Leuven 1877) 203.

54 In the twelfth century, the *skelta* was the one who was in charge of the defence organisation and was also allowed to mobilise the free men: N.E. Algra, *Ein. Enkele rechtshistorische aspecten van de grondeigendom in Westerlauwers Friesland* (Groningen 1966) 95. The deans seem to have played an important advisory role in the crusade expeditions, of which two of them are known:

Froissart documented the preparation of the Frisians for the Holland-Hainaut invasion of 1396 noting that the elected judges ('les élus, c'est à dire les gentils hommes ou les juges de cause') discussed whether they would engage in an open battle and kill every opponent who they encountered.⁵⁵ Due to a lack of sources, we do not know by name the actual militia commanders from the previous period. The man who led the Frisians in the battle of Kuinre on 29 August 1396 and who would die in the battle was the *hoofdeling* and *alderman* of Bolsward Juw Juwinga. Froissart reports that he was called 'Le grant Frison' by the men of Holland and Hainaut and that he had fought in Turkey and Prussia.⁵⁶ So, in the eyes of non-Frisians, he was also considered a nobleman and a warrior of stature. His craftsmanship however, did not prevent the gathered Frisians, who had set up their formations in the field between Oosterzee and the Zuiderzeedijk behind an earth wall, from losing the battle in the end, although this did not have disastrous consequences for them.⁵⁷ The bad weather, the difficult marching route through boggy moors, and the fierce Frisian resistance along the way made Duke Albrecht decide after just a few days to embark his army again and return to Holland. The expedition of 1398 under the command of Count William VI led to the temporary occupation of Westerlauwers Friesland mentioned above.

In the period after the actual Hollandish presence, which ended in 1413 with the abandonment of the occupation of Staveren, freedom in the area between Vlie and Lauwers did not have to be defended against foreign powers. However, much fighting did take place intermittently in the period 1417–1422, when the Oosterlauwerse party strife between the Schieringers and Vetkopers resulted in a pan-Frisian civil war. *Grietenij*-groups certainly took action, also against each other, depending on the party alliance that was adhered to by their village *hoofdelingen* or the *grietmannen*. However, the military events that resulted are poorly documented, making it difficult to trace the principles of their commitment.⁵⁸ This also applies to the series of

the one at Damiate and lord Hessel of Leeuwarden, who fought in the expedition against the Drents.

55 Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, vol. XV, M. Kervyn de Lettenhove (ed.) (Paris 1867–1877) 287–290.

56 Werner Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels*, vols. I and II (Sigmaringen 1989/1995) I, 58, 100; II, 143. Compare J.A. Mol, 'Om riddereer of zielenheil? De Pruisenreizen van de Noord-Nederlandse adel in de veertiende eeuw', in: *Met het kruis getekend. Heilig geweld van Koningsbergen tot Jeruzalem*, special issue of *Leidschrift* 27 (2012) nr. 3, 113–126.

57 About the battle: Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, 123–133.

58 The only documented battle was at Oxwerderzijl west of the city of Groningen in 1417, in which a Westerlauwerse Schieringer force, led by, among others, the Franeker *hoofdeling* Sicke Sjaerda, suffered a crushing defeat against a Vetkoper army with a strong core from the city of Groningen: O. Vries, "Enen doetslach an de Westvrezén". Rond de slag bij Oxwerderzijl', in:

intertwined feuds in Westerlauwers Friesland in the years 1458–1464, which together became known as the Donia War. These were ephemeral acts of war in which, in addition to looting and destruction, robbery and hostage-taking were the most important means of fighting. These acts served to strengthen the positions of power of the important families of *hoofdelingen*, in the cities and other strategic points along the main waterways in the southwest corner. However, the existing political-communal structure does not appear to have been fundamentally altered by them. As far as the threats from outside were concerned, at the time of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold, the country's municipalities had to seriously fear a new invasion from Holland several times.⁵⁹ They often consulted, negotiated, and no doubt made plans for how a Burgundian invasion should be dealt with, but, in the end, such plans never had to be carried out.

The loss of freedom, 1480–1498, and the struggle for the Saxon legacy, 1514–1524

The main facts concerning the end of Frisian freedom can be quickly given. After an intermezzo between 1482 and 1487 in which the cities of Leeuwarden, Bolsward, and Sneek kept their own *hoofdelingen* in check and were able to assert their authority elsewhere by means of an alliance, the country once again fell into the grip of partial interests, feuds, and party disputes. The disruptive effect on society was exacerbated by the fact that the leaders increasingly resorted to the use of mercenaries.

The situation escalated further in 1491 when the city of Groningen got involved in the battle by entering into an alliance with the Vetkopers who dominated the northern part of Oostergo. This alliance operated as a true city-state by pacifying as much land as possible, and even managed to conquer Sneek and threaten Franeker. As a result, the cornered Schieringers were forced to seek outside help. They first turned to the Roman King, later Emperor, Maximilian of Austria, and later to Duke Albrecht of Saxony, who, as field marshal of Maximilian, had made a meritorious contribution to curbing the Flemish-Brabant uprising and who, as governor general of the Low Countries, often stayed in Holland in the 1490s. He was not displeased

D.E.H. de Boer, R.I.A. Nip and R.W.M. van Schaik (ed.), *Het Noorden in het midden. Opstellen over de geschiedenis van de Noord-Nederlandse gewesten in Middeleeuwen en Nieuwe Tijd* (Assen 1998) 46–60.

59 Mol and Smithuis, 'Frisians as a Chosen People', 29–32.

to take action. After all, the duke was still looking for a second sovereign territory for one of his two sons, assuming that a division of his estates and lordship in Saxony and Meissen, which had arisen from an earlier division of the old duchy of Saxony, was highly undesirable. On closer inspection, Friesland, which was subject to centrifugal forces, seemed to him very suitable to be developed into a second princely state under Saxon rule. His ambition was to acquire the entire Frisian coastal area as far as beyond the Weser, including the Ommelanden and the county of Ostfriesland. Westerlauwers Friesland could then serve as a springboard.⁶⁰ In the years 1495–1497, the duke allowed a group of unpaid mercenaries to roam freely to further destabilise the situation. Because Maximilian owed him lots of money, it was not difficult for him to obtain his cooperation. This was evident from the long-prepared agreement he entered into with the emperor on 6 June 1498 in Rottenburg in southern Germany and which was ratified by the electors on 20 July at the Reichstag in Freiburg, under which he was appointed by the emperor as a hereditary gubernator and ‘potestate’ (a title derived from the Charlemagne Privilege) over all immediate Frisian territories. In the meantime, the conquest operation was already underway. At the request of the most prominent Schieringer *hoofdelingen*, Albrecht was first honoured as Lord of Westergo at the end of April 1498. His army commander Wilwold von Schaumburg and his Saxon soldiers, who were already present in Friesland, managed to subdue the Vetkoper opposition in the south, tackle the Leeuwarden resistance, and, finally, were able to persuade the Groningers to retreat.

Although Albrecht Friesland did not receive a fief from the emperor, the broad package of transferred rights actually enabled him to build a completely new state in the area between Vlie, Lauwers, and Linde. He and his son Henry (Heinrich) were able to put aside any remaining opposition after crushing a rebellion in the summer of 1500. Albrecht himself would not live to see the sequel – he died shortly afterwards, on 12 September, of the same year. However, his name remains inextricably linked to the conquest of Westerlauwers Friesland. He also personifies the definitive end of the communal system, which had also existed in the Groninger Ommelanden and Ostfriesland, but which had perished there much earlier.

60 For the following, see: A.F. Mellink, ‘Territoriale afronding der Nederlanden’, in: (*Nieuwe Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden V* (Haarlem 1980) 492–505, there 496. Compare P. Baks, ‘Saksische heerschappij in Friesland, 1498–1515: dynastieke doelstellingen en politieke realiteit’, in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat and macht 1450–1650* (Leeuwarden 1999) 85–106.



Fig. 14. Duke Georg of Saxony, portrait by Lucas Cranach the elder, 1524. Collection Veste Coburg. Wikimedia Commons. Bildindex der Kunst und Architektur nr. 17011228.

However, the Saxon Frisian project would not last long. Albrecht's son Georg, who succeeded his brother Henry in 1504 as heir to the estate on behalf of the Empire, did a great deal to set up a new administration. Among other things, he had the judiciary centralised and carried out important infrastructural works. As indicated above, however, it had always been his father's intention, and also his own, to add the countries east of the Lauwers to the new state, which meant that sooner or later he also had to conquer and subjugate Groningen and the Ommelanden. In the end, that became too much for him.

Initially, the situation looked promising when the city of Groningen had to capitulate after a long siege in 1506. The problem was that Groningen did not surrender to Georg but to Edzard Cirksena, count of Ostfriesland, who formally acted as Georg's stadtholder in the Ommelanden but in practice supported the city to maintain his own autonomy. This meant that Georg had to make extraordinary efforts to deal with Edzard and Groningen, both diplomatically and militarily. He successfully challenged both parties to the Reichstag, whereupon they were put under the ban of the Holy Roman

Empire. However, he had less success in the new war he started in 1514 against Groningen, the Ommelanden, and Ostfriesland.⁶¹ We will come back to this in more detail in Chapter Six. The military enterprise cost so much money that Georg gradually lost the support of the population. Many Frisians between Vlie and Lauwers complained about the heavy taxes. In particular, resistance grew strongest in the earlier Vetkoper areas in the northeast, the Boorne area, and the Southwest part of the province. It is no surprise that when, at the end of 1514, Groningen had to turn away from the weakened Edzard and found a new protector in the French-backed Duke Charles of Guelders, the Westerlauwers malcontents led by freedom-loving Jancko Douwama saw new opportunities and made contact with Guelders. The opportunistic Charles of Guelders understood what the Westerlauwers men wanted. He hinted that he would grant the Frisians some form of self-government and promised them that they would pay little or no taxes. In the south of Friesland, many people thereupon adopted the Guelders' party when they landed in Gaasterland in November at the invitation of Douwama and his family. The success was so great that Guelders managed to conquer a large part of Westergo, with Sneek as its centre, from the Saxons in a short period of time. In this situation Duke Georg had no choice but to throw in the towel. He decided – also because he did not have a powerful dynastic successor at his disposal – to transfer his claims to Friesland for 100,000 gold guilders to Charles of Austria, alias Charles V, who then had to try to reclaim the lost territory out of his remaining strongholds at Harlingen and Franeker via his stadtholder Floris van Egmond. The sale was ratified on 19 May 1515.

The occupation of most of the land by the Guelders' forces heralded a devastating civil war, in which hundreds of people were killed and wounded and in which the fighting rippled up and down to such an extent that almost every part of Friesland was alternately occupied by one of the two main parties. Why Burgundy-Habsburg finally drew the longest straw, both military and politically, will be further analysed below. Suffice it here to say that after a period of predominance by Guelders in 1522, the odds turned and the new Habsburg stadtholder, Georg Schenck van Toutenburg, increasingly succeeded in reducing Guelders' influence, all the more so since the Frisian population had by now had enough of the poorly paid Guelders' mercenaries. Even though the position of Guelders remained strong in Groningen, Schenck van Toutenburg successively conquered their bases in Sneek and Staveren in 1522 and was able to drive them out of Sloten and Lemmer the following

61 Mellink, 'Territoriale afronding', 498–499.

year. In this way, Friesland, between Vlie and Lauwers, again came directly under the authority of a monarch. In December 1524, Emperor Charles V was accepted as overlord by the States of Friesland. The conditions under which he was allowed to exercise his authority differed little from those which had applied to the Saxon duke. As far as Friesland was concerned, therefore, the Habsburg monarchy relied very firmly on a Saxon foundation.

3. The mobilisation of able-bodied men in Friesland 1525–1552

Abstract

The third chapter examines how after 1525 the Habsburg authorities used the popular militias in Friesland until 1552. They continued to rely on the male population for defence, especially in support of the professional forces. To this end, they held regular arms inspections and issued ordinances for an ensign organisation modelled on the professional formations of the time. The government deployed the militias primarily for guarding services and actions against religious revolutionaries. However, at the beginning of 1552, it also considered the possibility of using them in turning an invasion by enemies of the Franco-Saxon coalition. All healthy men between sixteen and sixty were summoned to assist in this, with the understanding that only one man per household had to perform the service.

Keywords: Habsburg period, continuation of tradition, duty of military service, guarding tasks, household representation, ensign formations

Musterings and engagement 1525–1528

Whether the Habsburgs would have been able to acquire their authority in Friesland without the help of popular armies is a matter that will be discussed at the end of this study. What is certain is that shortly after the expulsion of the Guelders' forces, their governors and representatives saw the need to be able to deploy reinforcements. Block houses and small garrisons were not considered sufficient for adequate national defence, and the defence budget of Stadtholder Georg Schenck van Toutenburg was also inadequate. Unlike other Habsburg stadtholders in border areas, he did not have a mobile force of professional soldiers – known as an ordinance band in the terminology of the time. For any serious action, he had to request

both permission and money from Brussels, which severely restricted his freedom of action. Even though he had now driven the Guelders' soldiers out of Westerlauwers Friesland, his concerns were undiminished. Guelders still had support points in Drenthe and Groningen from which it could threaten the Habsburg power. For these reasons, at the end of May 1525, Schenck called on the city councils and *grietmannen* in Friesland to hold two musterings: a general and a particular one.¹ The general mustering was a general inspection of men, in which everyone who was 'put on arms' had to be present. If the men did not have armour and weapons, they were forced to purchase them as soon as possible. The particular mustering related to 'the best equipped and the third man', with specification of arms and armour. Cedulae of both musterings had to be made up and sent to Leeuwarden within a week. The accounts of the *grietmannen* that have been preserved mention this. For example, in the accounts of Leeuwarderadeel, the *grietman* neatly indicates that he inspected the men of the southern part of his district gathered in Wirdum on Whit Monday and inspected the men of the northern part on the following day in Stiens.² The accounts also confirm that cedulae were made, but these have not been preserved.

The stadtholder's need for these municipal militiamen really became clear the following year when large groups of unemployed mercenaries remained on the borders of Friesland, roaming the countryside of Friesland's neighbours and threatening to do the same in the Frisian areas. On 17 March 1526, Georg's brother, Willem Schenck van Toutenburg, who was stationed in Steenwijk with a small Habsburg detachment, called on the *grietman* of Schoterland and Aengwirden to come with fifty of his best men to help defend the town against the *Landsknechte* who were encamped in and around Kuinre and who were, it was rumoured, soon to be re-employed by Guelders.³ Men from Schoterland, together with 100 men from Weststellingwerf, answered Willem Schenck's appeal.⁴ They served, respectively, 24 and 31 days in Steenwijk, at their own expense. At the same time, armed

1 *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland*, vols. II and III, G.F. thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1773/1778) II, 499. Compare J.S. Theissen, *Centraal gezag en Friesche vrijheid: Friesland onder Karel V* (Groningen 1907) 112–113.

2 Tresoar, Archief Rekeningen en andere stukken betreffende Friesland, afkomstig uit de Hollandsche Rekenkamer (1515–1575), Rentmeestersrekening Leeuwarderadeel 1525, 38.

3 As was reported by the stadtholder Schenck van Tautenburg to Brussels: J.E.A.L. Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg 1492–1528* (Arnhem 1960) 303–304, note 15. The duke of Guelders had this rumour confirmed by his envoy on 2 June, in order to put pressure on governor-general Margaret of Austria. However, it was a bluff.

4 Tresoar, Rentmeestersrekeningen, nr. 45, 59; nr. 47, 50.



Fig. 15. George Schenck van Toutenburg, portrait from 1540, attributed to Ernst Maeler. Collectie Vereniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis.

peasants from Wonseradeel and Doniawerstal were briefly stationed in Lemmer. They had been commanded there by the bailiffs (*drosten*) of Sloten and Staveren, who aimed to prevent the unemployed mercenaries from evicting Oosterzee and Lemsterland. Furthermore, men from Wonseradeel were summoned to help guard the city of Bolsward against other itinerant unemployed soldiers.

In the northeast, the same need for local protection existed. Dr. Kempo Martena, councillor at the Court in Leeuwarden, mentions this need in a letter dated 28 May 1526 to *grietman* Syds Tjaarda, who was staying in Brussels on behalf of the States of Friesland to look after the Frisian interests with Margaret of Austria, governor of the Habsburg Netherlands.⁵ According

⁵ *Kempo van Martena, Annael ofte Land-boek van Vriesland*, in: *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland*, vol. II, G.F. thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1773) 1–203,

to Tjaarda, the unemployed mercenaries had entered the country on 27 May, where they roamed around Surhuizum in Achtkarspelen and other places in Kollumerland where they caused real worry for the locals: '[...] there thus is great lamentation in the land'. The stadtholder, who feared that they would take control of the weak blockhouse in Dokkum, had already on 7 May called on the districts of Northern Oostergo to come and strengthen the town with their best men armed and armoured. Leeuwarderadeel and Dantumadeel responded as asked, but the *grietenijen* of West- and Oostdongeradeel chose a different solution. In consultation with the most eminent nobles and freeholders, these *grietmannen* decided to employ 35 Frisian mercenaries to help guard Dokkum. This plan seems to have been realised because the *grietman* of Oostdongeradeel noted a daily allowance in his account for collecting the necessary contributions. Incidentally, the guarding provided by the local men around Dokkum, Steenwijk, and Lemmer could not have lasted very long. At the beginning of July, to everyone's relief, the unemployed mercenaries left for Denmark to enter the King's service there.⁶

However, vigilance was still required. Although the Habsburg government and Guelders had maintained a truce on the basis of the status quo since 5 June 1525, and continued to talk to each other via envoys, there was no definite demarcation of borders and spheres of influence. Invasion by a Guelders' army was always possible. Partly for this reason, on 20 December 1526, Stadtholder Georg Schenck van Toutenburg ordered all *grietmannen* to muster their men and to ensure that 'the third man' was well equipped with arms and armour to be mobilised in case of imminent danger.⁷ This was certainly the case when, at the beginning of August 1527, the duke of Guelders responded to requests for help from pro-Guelders citizens in Utrecht and he not only ordered mounted men to enter the city but also carried out surprise attacks in the north part of Overijssel, which resulted in the occupation of Hasselt and Genemuiden. As a result, Georg Schenck immediately, on 5 August, called on all *grietmannen* in Friesland to

there 162–165. See also *Friese brieven uit de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw*, P. Gerbenzon e.a. (ed.), Estrikken 42 (Groningen 1967) nr. 30 (84–87).

6 *Grietman* Syds Tjaarda van Dantumadeel mentions, without a date indication for the financial year 1526–1527, which ran from 1 October to 30 September, men-of-arms who caused the Klaarkamp monastery great inconvenience. Possibly this took place in the late autumn of 1526.

7 In the stewards' accounts, the ordinance to muster is in any case mentioned by the *grietmannen* of Schoterland, Weststellingwerf, Dantumadeel, and Baarderadeel. Schoterland's officer describes it as follows: 'that the third man of his district was prepared with arms and armour to make the sacrifice to offer resistance in case that Guelders would invade the country': Tresoor, Rentmeestersrekeningen, inv. nr. 45, 60.

hold a new inspection of arms and armour and prepare cedulae by Sunday 18 August at noon. Doniawerstal's *grietman* reports in his account that the mustering took place and that copies of the muster were delivered to the registrar's office in Leeuwarden, specifying the men who did not have their equipment in order.

The stadtholder then ordered the armed levies of the West- and Ooststellingwerf districts to come to the city of Steenwijk, which now seemed to be under real threat. This time, however, the men of Stellingwerf hesitated. In a letter dated 24 August to the governor-general Margaret of Austria, the stadtholder wrote that he needed 100 mercenaries for the defence of Steenwijk because the people of Stellingwerf did not want to act outside the borders of their country. If they did, they declared that should an attack take place, they would immediately return home to protect their own yards, animals, and property.⁸ To his dismay, however, the worried Schenck did not get permission to recruit professional soldiers. Therefore, since he considered the risk of a raid by men from Guelders to be high given that '[...] the world is unpredictable now and our neighbours can not be trusted', he hired 50 mercenaries at his own expense, which brought the defence of Steenwijk up to standard. In his next letter to the governor-general, dated 17 October, he asked her for permission after the fact and to be excused for this exceptional action.

Nevertheless, it appears from the accounts of the *grietmannen* accounts submitted to the steward general that both *grietenijen* of Stellingwerf (West and East) did perform guard duties with their men in Steenwijk on a number of occasions, albeit only after 1 October 1527. The *grietman* of Weststellingwerf reported that he had been there four times – once with 40 men, once with 50, and another time with 200.⁹ Furthermore, councillor Goslick Jongema had summoned the *grietman* and his municipality on behalf of the stadtholder to camp in Bakkeveen because, otherwise, it would have taken a great deal of effort to mobilise and move his men. Apparently, it was also difficult to maintain discipline among the men evidenced from the misconduct of a certain Claes Johannes, who supposedly beat and scolded his neighbours while keeping watch against the Guelders' army and was therefore imprisoned for four days and punished with a heavy fine. It is

8 Jantien G. Dopper, *'Die werelt loept thans seer aventuerlick'. Het optreden van stadhouder Georg Schenck van Tautenburg in de gewesten Friesland, Overijssel en Groningen en Ommelanden (1521–1540)*. Doctoraalscriptie middeleeuwse geschiedenis Universiteit Leiden 2007, 28–29.

9 Tresoar, *Rentmeestersrekeningen*, inv. nr. 47, 70–73 (boekjaar 1527–1528); Jerem van Duijl, Sjoerd Galema and Henk Bloemhoff, *Rentmeestersrekeningen van Stellingwerf-Oosteinde en Stellingwerf-Westeinde (1524–1531)* (Oldeberkoop 2017), 100–103.

also certain that the *grietenij* of Ooststellingwerf supplied troops for the guarding of Steenwijk, although it is not clear from the accounts exactly in which months this occurred. It goes without saying that the *grietenijen* did relieve each other there.

The *grietman*-accounts of Dantumadeel, Leeuwarderadeel, and Baarderadeel show that the tension increased even further in the first months of 1528. This was related to the agreements that the Regentess Margaret managed to make with the prince bishop of Utrecht, consisting of the Sticht (province of Utrecht) and the Oversticht (provinces of Overijssel and Drenthe) on behalf of her brother Charles V. At the end of 1527, the bishop had decided to temporarily transfer his secular authority in the Sticht to the emperor, in exchange for financial support. On 12 February 1528, the cities and knights of Overijssel had agreed to accept the emperor as their lord. This led to a Habsburg programme to recapture both the Sticht and the Oversticht from the Duke of Guelders, which surely provoked predictable counteractions from the duke. On 28 January, the *grietmannen* were ordered to go quickly to the villages with their scribes and village judges to muster and designate 'the third man'. The *grietman* of Dantumadeel immediately took action on 29 January. The *grietman* from Leeuwarderadeel went on 31 January and worked on this for three days.

On 23 March, a new muster meeting was called, which was held within a week in several *grietenijen* (Dantumadeel, Leeuwarderadeel, and Baarderadeel). The fact that this occurred so quickly after the previous meeting was due to the surprising and unexpected plunder raid that the Guelders' commander, Maarten van Rossum, undertook from 5 to 10 March from Utrecht to The Hague. This raid was a bold piece of military craftsmanship, which caused great panic in Holland and Brussels but, at the same time, had an adverse effect on Guelders: the States of Holland were now willing to put money on the table for a large-scale Habsburg campaign against the Duchy. This meant, among other things, that Georg Schenck van Toutenburg could hire professionals and open the attack on the Guelders' army in the north part of the province of Overijssel. He did not have as many men in service as he would have liked, but he managed to conquer Zwartsluis with them and, after a long siege, took Hasselt on 21 May. Then, together with Floris van Egmond, who was advancing from the south, he continued the expedition to Hattem, only to return across the Veluwe via Harderwijk to Rhenen at the request of the government. Because the Guelders' troops managed to maintain possession of Coevorden and Groningen, Stadtholder Schenck remained worried about looting in northern Overijssel and eastern Friesland.

In between these events, on 30 April, Schenck had the country again call for a general mustering.¹⁰ The accounts of Baarderadeel and Hennaarderadeel show how this was organised in Westergo. This time, the *grietmannen* did not go from village to village but called on the able men to appear in Franeker, each with armour and weapons. And it was not the *grietmannen* themselves who inspected the troops. Rather, the councillors Gerrold Herema and Tjalling Bottinga and the latter's brother Juw apparently acted as muster commissioners. The context is not entirely clear, but the fact that at least two *grietenijen* were commanded to a town outside their area suggests that an attempt was made to merge the units of a number of municipalities and then make a suitable selection. In this case, it would have been the five *grietenijen* of northern Westergo that were called to muster.

Table 1. The distribution per ensign (company) of 'the third man' in 1528; the number of armour-bearers in 1535 appears after the dash (–)

1. (N-Oostergo)		2. (S-Oostergo)		3. (Zevenwouden)		4. (N-Westergo)		5. (S-Westergo)	
Oostdongeradl.	100–33	Ferwerderadl.	95–26	Doniawerstal		Franekeradl.	80–26	Wymbritser.	160–43
Westdongeradl.	75–25	Tietjerksteradl.	60–20	Lemsterland	150–50	Menaldumadl.	130–43	Wonseradl.	200–63
Kollumerland	80–27	Idaarderadeel	30–10	Gaasterland		Hennaarderadl.	80–30	Rauwerderh.	45–15
Dantumadeel	70–22	Utingeradleel	30–10	Hem. Oldeferd	200–60	Baarderdadl.	115–40		
Achtkarspelen	70–22	Opsterland	80–5	Aengwirden	10–2	Barradeel	72–25		
		Smallingerland	71–5	Hasker Vijfga	30–10				
		Leeuwarderadl.	127–40	Stellingwerf	118–30				
		Lwrder trimdl.	23–7	Schoterland	40–12				
Total	395–129		516–123		548–164		477–164		405–121

I suspect that it was precisely this mustering, to which an undated but surviving ordinance from 1528 relates, that concerned the whole of Friesland.¹¹ In this ordinance, the stadtholder orders the country to make a certain number of men available '[...] who are always ready armed to *reysen* for the sake of the country's needs, defence and protection'. *Reysen* in this context means

10 'Item noch van een brieff int deel om toe schicken dat alle die huijsluijden opten vijften maij komen solden met hoere geweer bynnen Franicker omme van heer Tzalingh, heer Julius en Gerrolt van Herema munsteren toe laten, daer toe sulcx gecommittiert waeren [...]' (transl.: Item of a circular that was distributed in the district with the order that all able-bodied men should come to Franeker on the 15th of May with their armament to be mustered by Lord Tzalingh, Lord Julius and Gerrolt van Herema, who were charged with that task). 'Actum den lesten aprilis anno XXVIIIo': Tresoar, Rentmeestersrekeningen, nr. 40 (Baarderadeel), 133. On the previous page the fines are noted for five men who failed to take this mustering.

11 *Kempe van Martena, Annael ofte Land-boek van Vriesland*, 181.

nothing less than undertaking a military campaign. The interesting thing about this piece is that it offers precise figures for the countryside, with the exception of the new *grietenij* Het Bildt, for which the stadtholder still had to work out a more detailed proposal. He also had to make a separate arrangement for the cities, after consulting with the city councils. According to the stadtholder's calculations, which undoubtedly relied on older muster lists, the countryside had to bring together 2,246 men.¹² In the case of military expeditions, these men would be brought together into five large *vendels* or ensigns (i.e., companies, each under a banner) of roughly 400–500 men, rather than taken up separately for each *grietenij*. It is clear that the total number mentioned could not have represented the entire male population of able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty but was only a portion of men available. The concern was the selection of the third man, which has already been discussed several times. In the table above, one can find the distribution of the ensigns per *grietenij* and per region.

It does not seem that these ensigns really engaged in any action in 1528 or the following years, except to guard the borders of Friesland. The campaign of Georg Schenck van Toutenburg and Floris van Egmond van IJsselstein, also known as Buren, was so successful that the duke of Guelders had to withdraw his most valuable professional troops from the Oversticht in order to use them to defend his own country. The two Habsburg commanders conquered Hattem,¹³ the Guelders' towns along the coast of the Zuiderzee, and, after some wrangling, laid siege to Tiel in July. Although this city did not give in, Duke Charles of Guelders was forced to make peace with Emperor Charles V in Gorkum on 3 October, at his expense, due to the loss of support from France. This meant that he had to renounce Overijssel and the Sticht of Utrecht to the emperor. The duke was allowed to keep his positions in Groningen, the Ommelanden, and Drenthe (including the castle of Coevorden!) as hereditary stadtholder under the emperor. This was against the wishes of Schenck van Toutenburg, the Habsburg stadtholder of Friesland, who, in the meantime, had become stadtholder of Overijssel as well. Schenck had to consider that the Guelders' troops stationed in the city of Groningen and in strategic places in Drenthe would continue to exert pressure on the eastern borders of Friesland.

12 Our addition comes to 2,341. After calculation it appears that the ordinance for ensign 2 (S-Oostergo) is 100 men too few. At the same time, it can be observed that Ferwerderadeel is noted for 100 men, while only 95 were counted when the villages were split up. The missing five make the difference between 2,241 and 2,246, or rather between 2,341 and 2,346.

13 The Frisian army commander Tjaard van Burmania was subsequently appointed as *drost* there.

However, this danger was no longer as acute as before because the Guelders' connecting lines between Arnhem, Coevorden, and Groningen had been severely weakened.

In 1529, the *grietenijen* therefore no longer had to be mustered. Only in 1530 can we find a call for weapons inspection for Ooststellingwerf and Oostdongeradeel.¹⁴ The reason was the same as in 1526: there were unemployed mercenaries present in the surroundings of Groningen city who could make the border area with Friesland unsafe. In the years that followed, this no longer seems to have happened. The Habsburg-Guelders struggle then moved to East Frisia, where the *hoofdeling* Balthasar van Esens made a pact with Guelders against the count of (the nowadays German) Ostfriesland and Lady Mary of Jever, both of whom had secured the support of Emperor Charles V. After interim peace in 1534, new difficulties seemed to rise for the regions around Groningen caused by Guelders' soldiers in Danish service, under the leadership of the condottiere Meindert van Ham who settled in Appingedam in 1536. This compelled the endangered city of Groningen to recognise the emperor as its overlord in order to secure his military support. Georg Schenck van Toutenburg then succeeded in subjugating the Ommelanden with mercenary forces by defeating a Danish aid corps near Heiligerlee. As a result, the entire North, including Coevorden, passed into Habsburg hands and the emperor had a monopoly of power and violence in these areas.

Fighting the Anabaptists at Oldeklooster, April 1535

The fact that the Frisian borders thus became increasingly secure did not in any way mean that the Habsburg regime no longer called upon the Frisian popular militias. There were more threats than those of Guelders, which had not yet been definitively curbed. One of these threats came from within: from revolutionary religious who hoped to bring the Kingdom of God closer to the earth and were willing to use violence to do so. In February 1534, a large group of Anabaptists seized power in the Westphalian city of Münster and expelled the bishop, after which they spread the news that Münster was the new Jerusalem. Those citizens who did not join them to be re-baptised were expelled. The city attracted many new believers who wanted to be part of the community and help defend it against the troops and allies of the expelled bishop. In fact, this was quite successful, since Münster was not

14 Tresoar, Rentmeestersrekeningen, nr. 36 (Oostdongeradeel) 127.

taken until the beginning of 1535, although the situation became increasingly difficult for the besieged. The self-crowned king of the new Sion, Jan van Leiden, called on fellow believers in the Netherlands to assemble arms and provisions and carry them to the besieged city. This call had resonance not only in Holland but also in Friesland.¹⁵ Driven in part by rumours that a strong persecution was imminent, shortly before Easter, a large number of Anabaptists – including women and children – gathered near the village of Tzum, just south of Franeker. Easter was the time when, according to Jan van Leiden, redemption would come.

As soon as Schenck van Toutenburg heard the news about the meeting of the Anabaptists, he recruited 200 professional infantrymen in Leeuwarden to march to Tzum. At the same time, he gathered the ‘fourth man’ of the cities and, in Franeker, ‘the third man’ of the rural districts. However, his first attack with the mercenaries on the armed and highly motivated Anabaptists near Tzum was met with so much resistance that he had to turn back. The Anabaptists, who numbered about 300 men, then headed for the city of Bolsward and, on 28 March, entrenched themselves in the nearby large Cistercian abbey of Bloemkamp, alias Oldeklooster, just northeast of that city. They expelled the monks, destroyed the statues in the church, and waited behind the strong walls and moats for developments to come.

The stadtholder, together with his mercenaries and the urban and rural militias, moved from Franeker to Oldeklooster to encircle the abbey precincts. It is not known exactly how large his army was. However, if he was actually able to call upon the third man of Westergo and a similar selection from the cities of Leeuwarden, Franeker, Harlingen, and Bolsward, he must have had approximately 2,000 men at his disposal. Yet, even with all these men – professionals and amateurs – plus an artillery of ten guns, it took him great effort to conquer the strongly fortified monastery. It was only on 7 April, after several negotiations, two unsuccessful storms, and prolonged shelling, that he was successful. He had the wounded Anabaptists killed. The unharmed were either hanged on the spot or transported to Leeuwarden where they were beheaded and drowned. That the battle was fierce is evident from the fact that the stadtholder’s loss list after the conquest numbered no less than one hundred men.

15 A clear overview of the events is offered by S. Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden. Geschiedenis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden 1531–1675* (Hilversum/Leeuwarden 2000) 139–141. For the sources, see *Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica* I, Friesland and Groningen (1530–1550), A.F. Mellink (ed.) (Leiden 1975) I, 29–46.



Fig. 16. The siege of Oldeklooster in 1535. Etching by Pieter Hendricksz. Schut, 1629–1652, printed in Lambertus Hortensius, *Van den oproer der weder-dooperen* (1614). Collection Rijksmuseum, nr. RP-P-OB-78.512.

In view of the experience gained from this time, the stadtholder issued a new ordinance on national defence on 24 April 1535.¹⁶ This document, published *in extenso* in the *Groot Placaat and Charterboek van Vriesland*, builds on the ordinance of 1528 already discussed above. With its statement of exact numbers, the 1528 ordinance showed how to interpret the selection of the often mentioned ‘third man’. In nominal terms, this would have included one-third of all physically fit men but, in practice, this ratio could never be reached. How many men were included in the selection depended on the habit per city and region, as well as on the wealth of the population. We shall elaborate on this in more detail below.

The ordinance of 1535 again assumed a distribution over five ensigns. The proposed division of the *grietenij*-quotas over these battle groups, each with its own commander, was not quite the same as in 1528. Oostergo’s *grietenijen*, were now more appropriately grouped in ensigns for the west and east. Rauwerderhem, for instance, was no longer part of South Westergo but part of West-Oostergo. There was certainly no new political structuring motive behind this reorganisation. It simply was more in line with the traditional division and the geographical connecting lines of Friesland.¹⁷ The numbers

¹⁶ *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland* II, 674–675.

¹⁷ The first ensign (West-Oostergo) now consisted of Leeuwarderadeel, Leeuwardertrimdeel, Tietjerksteradeel, Ferwerderadeel, Idaarderadeel, Rauwerderhem, and Utingeradeel. The

of militiamen that each *grietenij* had to supply were exactly the same as in 1528. Interestingly, for each municipality it was specified how many men had to have full armour and how many could be designated as diggers. By full armour, we may mean the standard equipment, consisting of at least a chest cuirass or breast plate, a steel ring collar (*rinckelder*), and a simple helmet (*bekkeneel*).¹⁸

This corps of the third man was explicitly meant to operate under the leadership of professional soldiers, not only for a few days but also for a longer period of time. All militiamen and mercenaries involved were obliged to serve for two weeks when they were called up. If the action took longer, there had to be 'andere nyeuwe luyden in heure stede' (other, new men in their place), probably from the same parishes and *grietenijen*. This way, in the extreme cases, all able-bodied men would get their turn. Furthermore, the payment of a daily allowance was provided. Mercenaries and ordinary militiamen could count on four pennies a day. The commanders at the various levels, as well as the specialists, of course received more. The leadership was in the hands of a *hopman* (captain). As ensign commander, he was assisted by an adutant (*vaandrig* = ensign bearer), a scribe, a piper, and a drummer. For the rest, the organisation was in the hands of two *webels* or *weyfels* (non-commissioned officers or sergeants; compare the German *Feldwebel*) per ensign and a large number of so-called *rot masters* (one in every ten men), comparable to corporals. The regulations stipulated that these *webels* and *rot masters* were professional soldiers. Also, the *grietmannen* and *heerschappen* (lordships c.q. members of the Frisian nobility) were supposed to go along in person. For the latter, this was obvious as they were considered to come into action as the main fighters per village contingent, each with the most complete armament a man could have. Traditionally, the *grietmannen* were the leaders of the *grietenij* militias. How they and the *heerschappen* had to operate hierarchically in the field under the *hopmans* and between the *webels* and *rot masters* is not explained. It seems that an attempt was made to pour old wine into new bags by combining the

second (of East-Oostergo) was composed of Oostdongeradeel, Westdongeradeel, Kollumerland, Dantumadeel, Achtkarspelen, Smallingerland, and Opsterland. The third (Zevenwouden) was to be organised by Doniawerstal and Lemster Vijfga, Gaasterland and Hemelum Oldeferd, Aengewier, Hasker Vijfga, Stellingwerf East and West, and Schoterland. The fourth ensign (Northern Westergo) included Franekeradeel, Menaldumadeel, Hennaarderadeel, Baarderadeel, and Barradeel. Finally, the fifth one (Southern Westergo) consisted of the large *grietenijen* Wymbritseradeel and Wonseradeel.

¹⁸ At least for Leeuwarderadeel it is stated in more detail: 'this includes 40 *harnassen*, *rinckolders*, *backeneels*, and twelve diggers'.

traditional mobilisation of the land by village and district with the hierarchy of orders and organisational structure of the professional units of the time.¹⁹

The more detailed organisation of the third man's corps in the regulations of 24 April 1535 thus had its origin in the experiences Schenck van Toutenburg had with the militias that were called according to older custom. The *grietenijen* and cities had made an effort to bring a selection of able-bodied men to their feet. But their efforts had apparently been problematic due to a lack of professional guidance and a modern chain of command.

New threats and musterings in 1542, 1543, 1546, and 1552

The later calls for arms inspection that we know were issued in Friesland during the time of Charles V seem to have been the result of a concrete threat and motive. The ordinance of 15 June 1542 for the *grietmannen* to hold a general mustering on St. John's Day (24 June) followed an alarming letter from the stadtholder in Deventer stating that enemies of the emperor were gathering mercenaries everywhere to invade his lands.²⁰ The letter referred to actions in Guelders and Denmark that were part of the battle plan of a large coalition against the Habsburg Empire, consisting of France (Francis I), Denmark and Sweden (Christian III), the Electors of Mainz and Saxony, and the duke of Guelders and Cleves (William of Cleves).²¹ The latter had his general, Maarten van Rossum, who was still feared, carry out a plunder *chevauchee* through Brabant in July, which was stopped at Antwerp with difficulty.

From the following year, we know of two orders to the cities from Stadtholder Maximiliaan van Egmond, a son of Floris van Egmond, and the president of the Court of Friesland. The city councils called upon their citizens to arrange at their homes the armour for which they were listed for inspection. Similar orders are lacking for the countryside from the sources,

19 A good picture of the organisational framework of the professional units at that time (of mercenaries, led by military enterprisers) is offered by Walther Lammers in his study on the battle of Hemmingstedt in 1500, in particular for the Great or Black Guard: *Die Schlacht bei Hemmingstedt. Freies Bauerntum und Fürstenmacht im Nordseeraum* (second edition, Heide 1982) 71–85.

20 *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland* II, 862. In this call, the *grietmannen* are also asked to report which mercenaries had left their jurisdiction (to join the enemy).

21 W.P. Blockmans and J. van Herwaarden, 'De Nederlanden van 1493 tot 1555: binnenlandse en buitenlandse politiek', in: (*Nieuwe*) *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* V (Haarlem 1980) 443–491, there 478.

but they no doubt existed. The first city order dates from 20 January 1543, the second from 20 June.²² In all probability, these measures were also related to the constant threat of invasions from Guelders and Cleves. The fall of Venlo and the subsequent peace treaty, which the incorporation of Guelders in the Habsburg Countries was laid down, put an end to this.

Once again, it is doubtful whether the mustered men of Friesland actually appeared in the field, except to show their armour. The same applies to the citizens and inhabitants of Leeuwarden who were called to be inspected more than three years later, on 27 August 1546, and had to have 'the third man' ready on 5 September.²³ The ordinance came from Winand van Breyll, one of Charles V's army captains and lieutenant of the aforementioned Stadtholder General Maximilian van Egmond. This must have concerned an action as part of the Habsburg preparations to organise troops for the Schmalkald War. Possibly Van Breyll thought that an urban selection of men – which by then would not only have come from Leeuwarden – could have been useful to take along as an auxiliary force to Germany. However, any report about this is missing from the sources.

The last known call to arms inspection of the Frisian popular militias during the reign of Charles V dates from the end of January 1552. It is also the most interesting one because its muster-rolls have been preserved for half of Friesland. They will be dissected and discussed below.²⁴ Their background is not difficult to determine. In the autumn of 1551, the emperor was confronted by a broad coalition of the king of France (Henry II) with a number of German Protestant princes, including Maurice of Saxony, who had previously served Charles V as a general. The real threat hit the Southern Netherlands first. Panic reigned at the court of governor Queen Mary of Hungary in Brussels. Not only was there a great French campaign in the south supported by German princes to be feared, but there was also concern that the French, English, and Scots would organise landings on the Flemish and Dutch coasts. Furthermore, the Brussels administrators also meant to discern numerous potential opponents and apostates at home who could make enemies of the emperors: the population of rebellious Ghent, for example, or that of the Duchy of Guelders, which only recently had come under Habsburg.

22 *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Friesland* III, 5 and 24.

23 *Ibidem*, 111.

24 The lists were edited by Peter van der Meer and me as an appendix in the Dutch version of my book on the *De Friese volkslegers tussen 1480 en 1560* (Hilversum 2017) 175–336, under the title 'Monsterlijsten van Friesland 1552 en Ameland 1558'.

Then there was the formerly autonomous province of Friesland. It was learned that agents of Maurice of Saxony were active there to encourage former, possibly now Protestant, party members of his uncle Georg of Saxony to stand up for the rights of the House of Saxony in Friesland. Rumour had it that the agents were using not only the old Frisian ideal of freedom but also new religious doctrines as decoys.²⁵ On closer inspection, the people who reported to Queen Mary and her council about this must have been very poorly informed. After all, the Saxon party of the years 1498–1515 in Friesland was the same as the one that had helped Habsburg against the duke of Guelders who, for his own purposes, had beaten the drum of Frisian freedom. It is certain, however, that Protestantism regularly manifested itself in Friesland, in an Anabaptistic form. It was also worrying that the Frisian mercenaries in Maurice of Saxony's army had not obeyed Mary of Hungary's order of 15 November to return to their country of origin, nor had the Guelders' and Cleves' *Landsknechte* done so.²⁶

In this context, it cannot be a coincidence that also for a number of other Habsburg regions muster lists and arms inspection data from the first months of 1552 have also been preserved. For certain parts of Flanders and Guelders, just as for Friesland, these involve complete registers of individual villagers with their equipment.²⁷ A brief exploration of the available sources and archival muster lists shows that at least in the Flemish *Zuidwesthoek*, the *Vrije* of Bruges and the Land of Waas lists of militiamen men have been kept and recorded. This also applies to the Overkwartier of Guelders and part of the county of Zutphen.²⁸

In Holland, an inspection of arms was held at the same time as well, all over the county. Apart from the musterings at Alkmaar, which will be

25 A. Henne, *Histoire du règne de Charles-Quint en Belgique*, vol. IX (Brussel/Leipzig 1859) 162–164, for Friesland in particular, see 164: 'En Frise, leurs agents réveillaient les espérances des anciens partisans de la maison de Saxe et ressuscitaient ses droit sur ce pays, en y parlant de liberté et du triomphe des nouvelles doctrines'.

26 *Ibidem*, 172.

27 Those of the Land van Waas are presented in the publication of H.C.E.M. Rottier, *De weerbare mannen van het Land van Waas in 1480 en 1552 van C.P. Serrure* (Nieuwenhagen 1991), republication of the edition of 1861 (Gent 2003). Margaret of Parma, the governor-general, requisitioned 3,824 able-bodied men to form two ensigns in the army. The authorities of the Land of Waas offered 1,000 armed warriors. The obligation here was to summon one in six able-bodied men. See also the list published by P. Vandewalle, 'Weerbare mannen in enkele plaatsen van de kasselrij Veurne in 1552', *Vlaamse Stam* 16 (1980) 77–84.

28 Gelders Archief Arnhem, Archief Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, inv.nr. 2018: Monstercedullen: lists of *weerbare mannen*, issued by the judges, drosten, and sheriffs of the respective districts and offices, 1552.

discussed further on, the individual muster-rolls have not been preserved. However, we do have a summary of the most important data from the Holland lists. The title of this summary is clear enough: *Recuel uyte overgeschonden cedullen van de wapenschouwinghe over Hollandt belast te doen* (collection from the cedulae of the weapons inspection ordered for Holland). The economic historian E.C.G. Brünner, who published the piece in 1921, had some difficulty dating it exactly. This is understandable because it contains little or no day and year indications. Brünner was able to find an exact date *postquam*, i.e., 13 January 1551.²⁹ At that time, the village of Charlois to the south of Rotterdam was hit by a flood; as a result, the *Recuel* says that no cedula had been sent in. The fact that a little further on in the piece about the muster list of Alkmaar it is reported that it was received on 27 April, gave Brünner reason to date the inspection of arms in the spring of 1551. This is how it has been presented in military-historical literature so far.³⁰ In his brief introduction to the piece, Brünner notes that this dating cannot be associated with the threat of war because peace prevailed between France and Habsburg for a short period of time. For him, this was reason to assume a connection with the reform of the financial system.³¹ However, this is not really obvious. The muster-rolls of Alkmaar, which up to now were dated 1555, but which were drawn up on the last page of the last section on 18 February 1552,³² leave no further doubt. The Holland inspection of arms thus fits in exactly with the above-described mustering of the urban and rural militias over militarily important parts of the Netherlands, which therefore included Friesland, ordered from Brussels.

The set-up of the 1552 mustering in Friesland

The anxiety in Brussels must have been great. According to the decree issued by the Court of Friesland on 15 January 1552 at the instigation of the governor, the cities and *grietenijen* were each required to carry out their inspections on 16 February – or in the event of frost or bad weather,

29 E.C.G. Brünner, 'Recuel uyte overgesonden cedullen van de wapenschouwinghe over Hollandt belast te doen', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 42 (1921) 115–143.

30 J.W. Wijn, 'Het Noordhollandse regiment in de eerste jaren van de opstand tegen Spanje', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 62 (1949) 235–261, there 251, note 22.

31 Brünner, 'Receul uyte overgesonden cedullen', 118.

32 Stadsarchief Alkmaar, inv. nr. 2075, f. 22v: Actum den XVIIIen februarij anno XVC twee ende vyftich'. It is not clear why these documents were thought to be of 1555. Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 48, gives the wrong year (1555) and may not have seen the piece.



Fig. 17. Frontpage of the muster list of Barradeel. Photo J.A. Mol.

one week later.³³ The written report had to be submitted to the Court in Leeuwarden within twelve days of the mustering. Thus, the responsible administrators were given roughly one and a half months to complete their mission. But on 20 January, Jean de Ligne, Count of Aremberg, who had succeeded Maximiliaan van Egmond in 1548 as stadtholder of Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, and Overijssel, sent them a missive in which he ordered them to organise the event not on 16 February but thirteen days earlier, on 3 February.³⁴ In the event of severe frost, the *grietmannen* and mayors were not given a week's respite, but only one day, or an additional day if the frosty weather was expected to continue. The completion and submission of the cedulas was then not allowed to take longer than a week. Apparently, there were no troublesome weather conditions because on all of the muster-rolls we note that the inspections took place on 3 February.

Some of the rolls were delivered to the Chancellery of the Court within a week. The lists of Ferwerderadeel, Leeuwarderadeel, and Lemsterland are dated on the day of the mustering (*actum*) and were therefore delivered in Leeuwarden on the same day or a day later. Those of Idaarderadeel,

³³ *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland III*, 291–292.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

Wonseradeel, and Barradeel are dated 8, 10, and 11 February, respectively, which was still within the prescribed period. On the roll of Hemelumer Oldeferd, it is mentioned that it was handed over on 14 February. For the other lists submitted, there is no date indication concerning the completion or dispatch. On ten of the twenty cedulas, however, we do find the abbreviation *Ra* for *Recepta* written in another hand – sometimes in combination with a repeated title or *grietenij* name – which can be interpreted as initials of receipt, presumably by a chancellery clerk in Leeuwarden.³⁵

That the preserved copies are not found in the archives of the Court in Friesland, but in the archive of the administration of the central authority in Brussels relating to Friesland, in the *Papieren van Staat en Audiëntie* (Papers of State and Audience), suggests that they were transported to the capital of Brabant quite soon after arrival and registration, for the information and reassurance of the governor Mary of Hungary and her council of advisors. This is all the more likely because each muster-roll is written by an individual hand in a separate tape or section, and also on different paper with a different watermark. It is therefore not the case that the whole roll was brought together by one or more copyists of the Court in one or a few volumes for the benefit of the Brussels administration. In other words, the preserved lists are locally produced copies or duplicates of the original lists kept in the *grietenijen* and city administrations.³⁶ They would also have been drawn up by the representatives of the *grietenijen* and the cities, by the district or city scribes, or by the responsible *grietman*³⁷ or city magistrate in charge himself or by one of his fellow magistrates. Two authors, namely those of Barradeel and Leeuwarderadeel, were proficient in Latin, as evidenced by the many notes in that language.

35 It concerns Achtkarspelen, Het Bildt, Gaasterland, Harlingen, Hemelumer Oldeferd, Idaarderadeel, Kollumerland, Leeuwarderadeel, Sneek, and Wymbritseradeel.

36 Only two cedulas are reported as copies: those of Barradeel and Workum. Precisely these two are also the only ones with a collation statement: Barradeel: 'Gecollationierdt tegen den principael monster cedullen, welke in pampier stondt geschreeuen ende is mitten selven befonden te accordeeren bij mij als secretarijs van Barradeel van woerd tot woerd [w.g.] G. Walikama, 1552', Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 192; Workum: 'Gecollationeert jegens den principale monsterschedule ende metten seluen accorderende beuonden bij mij [w.g.] Bernardt Martini', *ibidem*, 317. The latter was city scribe of Workum in 1540: *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland* II, 229.

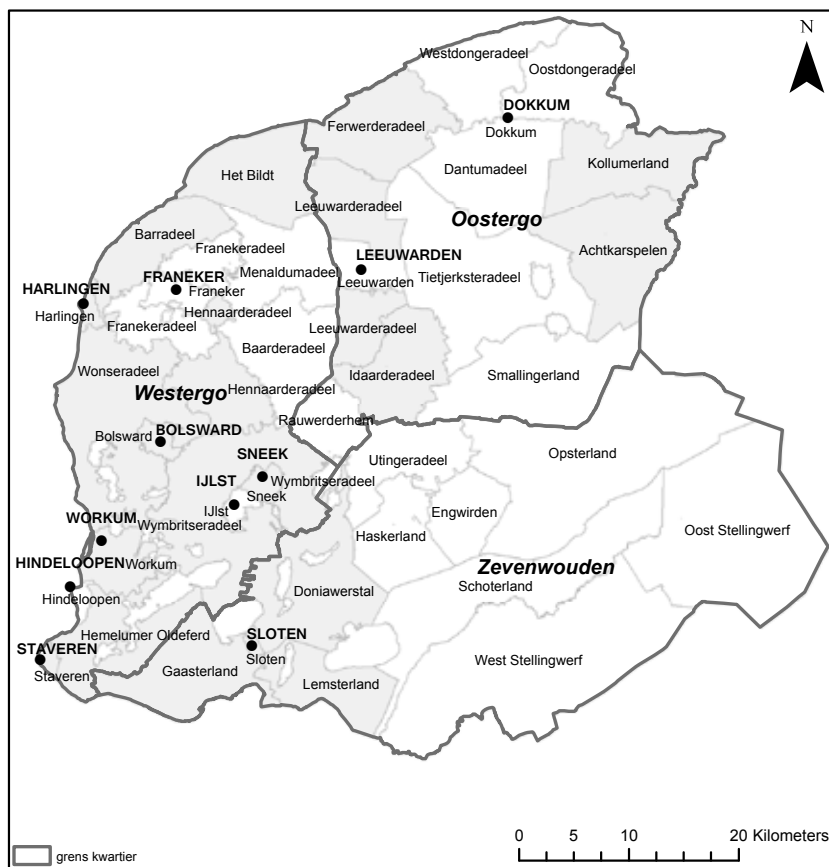
37 Thus, the muster list of Het Bildt was written by *grietman* Boudewijn van Loo himself, witness the hand with which he signed the piece: Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 193. Furthermore, we only find the signature of the *grietman* on the list of Idaarderadeel. In this case, however, the writer's hand seems to have belonged to someone else.

As mentioned above, muster lists have been handed down for fourteen of the thirty-one *grietenijen* and for six of the eleven cities. We do not know why the collection is not complete. One possibility is that half of the *grietmannen* and city magistrates in charge did not have their documents ready on time, and the Stadtholder did not want to wait for them to be handed in and sent the first documents to Brussels in a single parcel so as not to disappoint the governor or others; in that case, the second mission could have been omitted when clear conclusions had already been drawn from the first. However, more scenarios are conceivable. Of course, it is also possible that the other documents were never properly filed and have been lost somewhere in the central administrative circuit.

As far as the rural areas are concerned, for the provincial region – then called quarter – of Oostergo it covers Leeuwarderadeel, Ferwerderadeel, Kollumerland, Achtkarspelen, and Idaarderadeel. For the quarter of Westergo it covers Barradeel, Het Bildt, Hennaarderadeel, Wonseradeel, Wymbritseradeel, and Hemelum Oldeferd. For the Zevenwouden quarter we have the cedulae of Gaasterland, Lemsterland, and Doniawerstal. From the cities there are rolls for Harlingen, Bolsward, Sneek, Workum, Staveren, and Sloten. What is evident all over Friesland is the emphasis on the West, more specifically on the relatively wealthy clay area. This is also because the two cities in Oostergo, Leeuwarden and Dokkum, are missing in the overview. The poorer sand and peat areas in the centre and east of the province are poorly represented. Nevertheless, there are some inventories of so-called Wold (heath and woodland) *grietenijen* that can be considered representative for the other districts in their region, namely those of Hemelum Oldeferd, Gaasterland, Lemsterland, Doniawerstal, Idaarderadeel, and Achtkarspelen.

As far as the cities are concerned, it is regrettable that material is missing from Friesland's capital Leeuwarden, which grew strongly in the sixteenth century. The data for Harlingen, Bolsward, Sneek, and Staveren can compensate for this to some extent. For Workum, the muster-roll covers both the city and an extensive rural area to the east (the so-called Heidenschap). As a result, the Workumer militia seems to have been more rural than urban in character. A similar combination can be found in the Kollumerland muster-roll, which shows that the Kollum militia had a more urban character than that of the surrounding villages. All in all, however, at first sight, the lists provide reasonable coverage for the region as a whole.

The assignment was to inspect the militiamen for the arms and equipment they had to have *van ouden heercomen* (according to old custom). It had to be ensured that the third man would be equipped with arms and armour or



Map 3. The *grietenijen* and cities for which muster-rolls have been preserved. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.

otherwise 'according to the demands of war'. Whoever did not produce the weaponry for which he was registered could count on a high fine. Anyone who was obliged to present a harness and/or a steel ring collar and could not show it, forfeited three carolus guilders, a sum which at that time could be used to rent half a hectare of fertile clay land.³⁸ Those who had only been booked to present 'defence equipment' and could not, were fined half of this, i.e., 30 pennies. The negligent men were then given three weeks to bring their equipment up to standard and present it to the authorities. If they failed again, they were fined twice.

³⁸ M. Knibbe, *Lokkich Fryslân: Landpacht, arbeidsloon en landbouwproductiviteit in het Friese kleigebied 1505–1830* (Groningen 2006) 90–91.

Differences in handling per city and per *grietenij*

When reading the cedulas, it is immediately apparent that they have been drawn up in various ways. There was no fixed model for the whole of Friesland. This applied to the order and manner of notation as well as to the degree of detail concerning the statement of arms and armour. A few examples may clarify this. We can look at the detailed muster list of Barradeel, drawn up under the responsibility of *grietman* Marcus Egidii Vilsecher, who was also alderman (city administrator) of Harlingen and assisted by his substitute *grietman* Adriaan Michiels.³⁹ This list is arranged by village, according to the geographical order known from other administrations from northeast to southwest, starting at Minnertsga and ending with Harlinger Uitburen. By way of illustration, we offer here only the text for the second village Firdgum,⁴⁰ which in the sixteenth century comprised ten full-fledged farms and had twelve able-bodied men. The enumeration is as follows:

- [1]⁴¹ *Ffrans toe Campstra van weegen Campstra zate: harnas (non habet), rinc. (non habet) oft stalenkraech, bacco. (non habet), sp., d.;*
- [2] *Ffrerijck Riuert z: harnas, rinc. (non habet) oft stalenkraech, sp., d., bacco.;*
- [3] *Tonijs Liiue z: sp. (habet hellebaert [?]), d., bacco.;*
- [4] *Pieter IJntze z: sp., d.;*
- [5] *Hans Oedt z: sp., d., bacco.;*
- [6] *AEde Wijtze z: sp., d., bacco.;*
- [7] *Dirck IJsbrant z: sp., d., egrotat, abest.;*
- [8] *Euert Wibo z: sp., d.;*
- [9] *Pieter Gerrijt z: sp., d.;*
- [10] *Jan Claes z: sp., d.;*
- [11] *Cornelis Hermen z: sp., d.;*
- [12] *Sicko Sicko z: sp., d.*

At the top is the most significant inhabitant of the village: the nobleman Frans Campstra, who owned the eponymous Cam(p)stra-stonehouse⁴² with the corresponding estate farm. He was supposed to possess a harness, a

39 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 186–192.

40 See for the village area of Firdgum (Fr. Furdgum), with its constituent vote-entitled farms and *stins* (a defensible stonehouse): www.hisgis.nl/fryslân (last accessed 12 May 2022), with the map layers *stemkohieren*, *floreenkohieren*, parish borders and stonehouses.

41 The numbering is mine. In the original, the names are always written down under each other.

42 About Camstra-stonehouse, see: Noomen, *Stinzen in middeleeuws Friesland*, 154–155.

steel ring collar, a helmet (*bekkeneel*) plus a *speets* (pike) and a sword. The abbreviations sp. and d. stand for the latter standard weapons. It immediately becomes clear that an older list with armour determined for each individual was used as a basis and starting point. Frans Campstra and the others were assessed against this checklist as to whether or not they had their required equipment at their disposal. Campstra was very much in default because a non-compliance entry was made for him no less than three times. The second man in the village, the wealthy farmer Frerijck Riuert's son, also did not have his things in order. He was missing his steel ring collar. For the others, we do not find such omissions registered. Only one absence is reported in Latin: Dirck Ijsbrant's son was absent due to illness.

The order of the notation per parish was the rule for the *grietenijen*, with the exception of Lemsterland.⁴³ *Grietman* Karste(n) Piers of that municipality did not find it necessary for his men to make a distinction according to their origin from the five villages. He immediately classified them for the whole of his district according to their combination of arms and equipment, starting with the wealthiest who had armour and/or a ring collar at their disposal, and ending with the vast majority who only had a pike. All the other *grietmannen*, who did set up their inventory per church village, usually started per parish with the main and best armed inhabitant, often mentioning each one's housing. In a minority of cases, in Leeuwarderadeel among others, the others are listed in geographical order.⁴⁴ See, for example, the village of Finkum, where, after the first three men, the able-bodied inhabitants of the Nyehuys and Poelstra-zate farms are successively discussed:

Taecke te Nyehuys: an armour (rustingh) and a pike; he also must have a bascinet. Tyaerdt Poelstra; Willem Poelstra: these are both living on Poelstra farm (zate), and have an armour (rusting) and a pike; they are required to have another armour and a pike, and two bascinets.

In this case, the order concerns men in the countryside. They are mentioned first, followed by the men who had their homes near the church. That tour of houses and farms, sometimes clockwise but also anti-clockwise, would have been traditional and would have been self-evident for the locals at that time. However, today, one can rarely or only with difficulty reconstruct the

43 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 280--284.

44 Ibidem, 270-279.

order because few farm names are mentioned. It can be assumed, moreover, that the administrators in Brussels did not understand the order either.

In at least two of the six cities, i.e., Bolsward and Staveren, the division by quarter had been set up, with a perimeter along the houses per street. For Sneek, Harlingen, Workum, and Sloten, the quarter names are missing, but it is possible that the men listed one after the other for these cities are registered per street and house. In order to establish this, further research into contemporary citizen registrations, tax lists, and the like is necessary. For Bolsward, which included the quarters Merkstraet, Dilaeckster verndeel, Dyckster verndeel, Haytyebaen and the area outside the ramparts and city moats under the name Uytburen, despite the absence of street names, the order can be partly traced.⁴⁵ For example, one who knows that in 1552 the nobleman Douwe van Hottinga lived in the present-day monumental corner building Grote Dijklakker 19, and that he, of course, would have had to confirm he had his complete equipment, can connect the names listed after Hottinga with the houses along Grote Dijklakker that follow in ascending numbering.⁴⁶

In some *grietenijen*, however, the enumeration of equipment per village does not follow the order of houses but, rather, an order by weight, type, and size of equipment and armament. Take, for example, the list for the ten-man village of Genum in Ferwerderadeel.⁴⁷ Registered first, of course, is the *hoofdeling* Jeppe Groestra. He had to present a harness, pike, and sword. Then, five men with pikes and swords are mentioned. Next, two men follow, each with a *roer* (primitive gun) and sword. Finally, the least well-off militiamen each with a boarspit and a sword are listed. As a result, men from the same farm are classified under different groups. For Ferwerd, for example, we find Jan ter Stadt, Ijsbrant ter Stadt, and Roeloff ter Stadt not together but in different places.

In general, there is a lot of variation with regard to the explanatory remarks and notes on the armament. For Ferwerderadeel, brackets have been used for grouping in the text. In many cases, however, after the names of the men, abbreviations for weapons and equipment are used, such as *h.h.* (*heel harnas*) for a full armour, and *hell.* for halberd. But these abbreviations are not standard because in Doniawerstal *r.* must mean a *roer* while in

45 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 199–206.

46 Other contemporary serial sources may be helpful in identifying and locating the able-bodied men per house. For Bolsward, the so-called *Postboek* of 1562, the *Register of Personele Impositie* of 1577 and a muster list of 1582, all of which seem to have followed the same route of registration along the streets, lend themselves for this purpose.

47 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 219.

Bolsward it stands for *rusting*, in the sense of complete equipment with armour protection and weapons.

It is not clear in the muster list for every city and *grietenij* who was found to be at fault for not presenting their required equipment. Of course, for each place an existing list of what was obligatory was used. But apart from Barradeel, such a list is only visible through the text for Leeuwarderadeel. In the text of the Leeuwarderadeel village of Swichum, for example, there is an octogenarian, Tzaecke Sickes, who was 'armed but unfit for war because of a lame right hand'.⁴⁸ He would have shown up because he was called up on the basis of an older muster-roll. It is certainly difficult to determine from which time the checklists would date. On the basis of notations like 'is dead, *fruit pauper*' with one Andries Jacobs from Sexbierum, Barradeel,⁴⁹ we are inclined to think of a recent cedula from the 1540s.

For a few municipal districts, including Hennaarderadeel and Staveren, it is only reported that the responsible authorities met shortly after 20 January to order the 'wapeninghe'. In Hennaarderadeel these were, according to the introduction to the muster-roll, the village judges with a number of senior men as representatives of the village communities. This means that the previous, still available, arms administration was reviewed first, before the individual militiamen were registered. For Hennaarderadeel, a concordance was even made with the so-called *Register van de Aanbreng* or Landtax Registry of 1511, containing information on income, owners, and users of all farms, in order to make a link between the able-bodied men and the farms on which there was apparently also a duty of defence from time immemorial.⁵⁰ However, this is exceptional.

The administrators who did record the omissions did so in various ways. For many municipalities, such as Het Bildt, the correction was formulated by writing behind the name of the person in question that he is set on a harness and a steel ring collar or something similar. In Staveren, such remarks are missing. There, the city authorities proudly reported at the end of the list that due to good preparation they hardly handed out any fines and there was 'very little defect in it'.⁵¹ Only four or five citizens had

48 'Tzaecke Sickez: *octogenarius, aderat in utcumque armatus, sed frigida dextra bello quamvis consiliis non utilis ...*', Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 277.

49 Ibidem, 191.

50 Ibidem, 241–253. For a precise link between the militiamen and the separate farms for this *grietenij*, see D.J. van der Meer, *Boerderijenboek Hennaarderadeel 1511–1698* (Leeuwarden 2004) passim.

51 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 299. After receiving the missive of Johan van Ligne on 20 January on 24 January, the city council sent out the call for mustering the citizens 'myt



Fig. 18. Sixteenth-century helmet or storm hat from Sneek, thought to have been worn by Grutte Pier. Collection Municipality of Súdwest Fryslân, Sneek.

emerged without the ring collars prescribed for them, as well as a few men with pikes of inferior pinewood. In accordance with the stadtholder's ordinance, they had to show they had their proper equipment within three weeks.

The fact that the manner of administration was entirely a local matter is underlined once again by the divergent arrangements and annotation of the selection of the third man. It is noteworthy that an explicit allocation of the third man is included in only six of the fourteen surviving rural district lists, and not in even one of those of the cities, while the decree emphasizes the proper equipping of the group to be selected in case of action. In Leeuwarderadeel's muster-roll, the choice was made to simply place the digits '3' or 'o' in front of the name of the selected men in question: the 3 for the armed and the o for the diggers, alias the men with 'leap and shovel'. Doniawerstal's roll first gives the names of the selected men per parish – here called *monstermannen* (muster-men) – while in the lists of Ferwerderadeel, Hemelum Oldeferd, Idaarderadeel, and Lemsterland, the complete selection with all the names – already noted per village or otherwise in total – is given separately at the end.

guede specificatie van de persoenen ende wapen zulx elck in zyn regaerdt gehad heeft' (transl.: with a good specification of the persons and the weapons which each had at his disposal).

In short, there really is not one list equal to the other in terms of design and layout. This would also have applied to older records of militiamen, some of which were demonstrably used in the compilation of these lists in 1552. The administrative variation seems even greater than those in the so-called *Beneficiaalboeken* of 1543, registers containing records of ecclesiastical property,⁵² where they follow a fixed pattern with a fixed order, although the degree of detailing differs from one book to another. This leads us to suppose that, in spite of the basic principles followed, each city and *grietenij* had hitherto organised its defence in its own way. It also suggests that Leeuwarden or Brussels had not yet exercised much executive control over the practice of compulsory defence.

Obligation and exemption: widows, the poor, and conscientious objectors

Before we look at and compare the armament of the Frisian militiamen, we still need to understand who could and could not be counted as part of that group. As stated before, in theory, every physically fit man between sixteen and sixty years of age had to help defend his country, armed if necessary.⁵³ In practice, there are a few questions about this, including ones concerning the participation of older men, who were supposed to be excluded from the service. We sometimes come across elderly men in the rolls because they had been registered in earlier lists that were used for control purposes, or because a few thought they could still be of some use in cases of urgency.⁵⁴ Other questions to be discussed concern the participation of wealthy widows, paupers, seafaring men, and the delegation per household.

The fact that women and widows were sometimes mentioned in the rolls has to do with the defence obligation of their husbands who resided elsewhere or were deceased,⁵⁵ and with the duty that rested on their property

52 P.L.G. van der Meer and J.A. Mol, 'Inleiding', in: P.L.G. van der Meer and J.A. Mol (ed.), *De Beneficiaalboeken van Friesland, 1543* (Leeuwarden 2013) 15–48, there 37–41.

53 Sometimes the starting age is eighteen years.

54 See some *sexagenarii* in Leeuwarderadeel: Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 270, 271. For Idaarderadeel, the diligent *grietman* made good notes of the heads of the family who were sixty years and older, of which there were apparently only eight out of 344. There must have been more, having been housed in composite households and one-room dwellings for the poor, near the church.

55 Gerbe Rintzes wed., Engel Sipckes wed. and Jan Rueloffs wed. in Minnertsga, who are noted with an armour behind their name, are most likely to have been mentioned because their (recently?) deceased husbands had been obliged to be present: Mol and Van der Meer,

to have certain equipment available in the house in proportion to its value. This would not have been any different in the cities than it would have been in the countryside.⁵⁶ The *grietman* of Idaarderadeel systematically mentioned rich widows on tax-paying farms, without noting any armour for them. He thought their equipment should be noted but hesitated to do so of his own accord, and so asked his superiors for advice on what to do.⁵⁷ Had he consulted his colleague from Leeuwarderadeel about this, the latter would certainly have advised him to list all wealthy widows on full-fledged or qualified farms with certain armour. The widows in Leeuwarderadeel were neatly listed as to the arms and armour they had to provide according to their economic standing.⁵⁸ With that armour, a physically strong family member could be equipped when the need arose. Poor widows, however, did not appear in any *grietenij* or city list.

Poor men were not in principle excluded from compulsory defence. But this category of men was broad: we can read between the lines that the authorities always wanted to appeal to young and physically strong men, rich or poor. If some able-bodied but poor men did not have a weapon of their own, there was an option to stock equipment for them at the municipality's expense. However, there was no general rule for this. In Ferwerderadeel, the *grietman* proposed eventually forcing the paupers without equipment to buy a weapon: 'hereafter follow the craftsmen and poor people, who partly lack an equipment and are now ordained to present one'. Of course, most of the lists also mention many paupers who came forward with inexpensive weapons such as a club, or with a spade and a shovel.⁵⁹ In the latter case, it was their job to dig trenches and build bulwarks. In Idaarderadeel, however,

'Monsterlijsten', 187. Of the latter two it is said that they were absent (*abest*), which suggests that the former did stand up in person.

56 In the muster list of Alkmaar, 22 widows appear and two women with no indication of a widow. Jeroen Benders noted that in the Hasselt 'arms list', dating from 1535, seventeen of the 232 names refer to women: *Hasselt, 1521, een Overstichts stadje in de greep van Hertog Karel van Gelre*, Doctoraalscriptie Geschiedenis en Mediaevistiek Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 1992, 22, 169–174. It is not mentioned whether they were widows. For a number of them, marked 'huysfr.', it will be the case that their husbands were absent due to residence elsewhere.

57 This comment is placed at the end of the overview for the village of Idaard: Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 258.

58 For example, under Finkum, concerning the farm of Bennert Lauthies widow, the village judge would have declared there was a pike and a sword at the place: Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 271. In the same village, Claes Wobbes' widow appears to have been summoned '*ad primam* [to] exhibit pike and sword'.

59 In Leeuwarderadeel, for example, we encounter under Stiens 'Joannes Henrics z *et pauper*, sal *ad primam* compareren myt leppe ende sceppe': Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 271.

several poor men reported that because of the high costs of living in lengthy times of hardship they had no money for spades or shovels either. They asked the emperor to relieve them of their arms obligation.

Forty-four out of a total of 281 militiamen for Idaarderadeel were noted as poor – or more than 15 percent. In many *grietenijen*, however, the paupers just did not show up, or the *grietmannen* refrained from mustering them. In the Idaarderadeelster villages of Aegum and Wartena, for example, it is stated that all residents were mustered except ‘the absentees and ones who are poor’. Hennaarderadeel also counted large numbers of absentees and poor people. Of its 357 called-up men, no less than 103 were recorded as absent, 89 of whom were poor and paltry.⁶⁰ The number of paupers was not mentioned separately for other *grietenijen*. However, we may assume that roughly the same proportion of the summoned poor men were not employable due to weakness or need. A hint in that direction is given in the statement of *grietman* Holle Piers for Gaasterland. Holle Piers reported that he had noted down all the paltry people but, at the same time, had to establish that many of them were too poor to be forced to stand up with their own weapons.⁶¹ Gaasterland would have also counted many seafarers who were too destitute or at least so impoverished that they could not afford to arm themselves at their own expense. Some of them were already at sea; others would be on the water within two weeks. That was reason enough for the *grietman* to advocate an exemption for sending a selection of the third man. The fact that, unlike his colleague from neighbouring Lemsterland, he had not appointed any *monstermannen* must have had something to do with this exemption. There were also the men who were absent due to illness: identifiable for Leeuwardereradeel only because *egrotat* is written behind their names.

It is difficult to say what percentage of the poor was still qualified to be provided with weapons by the municipality – if the municipality had a provision for them. In the already cited overview for Holland, the so-called *Recuel*, we find that only the city council for Rotterdam had 202 small arquebuses in the arsenal for ‘[...] poor fullers, weavers and other fishermen below the [the age of] LX years, [who were not] able to buy a weapon’.⁶² That is at least quite a share for a town with only a few thousand able-bodied

60 These ‘scamele ruyters’ (i.e. poor men; ‘ruyter’ probably refers to Fr. *roturier*) seem to have lived for the most part in the village centres, presumably in one room-dwellings on plots of land belonging to the church, in Hennaarderadeel as well as in the other *grietenijen*.

61 Mol and Van der Meer, ‘Monsterlijsten’, 225–226.

62 Brünner, ‘Receul uyte overgesonden cedullen’, 142.

men. But Rotterdam was one of the Holland cities that, apart from the artillery on the ramparts, already had quite a lot of weaponry for public use stored so that it could be distributed among the citizens in the event of a threat. In this respect, it joined the ranks of Hoorn (48 city-owned arquebuses), Geertruidenberg (25 skewers, 40 halberds, and 44 arquebuses in the arsenal), and Amsterdam (336 large and small arquebuses).⁶³ In Alkmaar, where the city had no weapons for poor citizens, 421 of the 1,385 registered men were found not to have a weapon due to poverty. That is more than 30 percent. The commitment of the poor was therefore partly dependent on the availability of equipment purchased by the community. Where such equipment did not exist, the result was that between a quarter and a third of men did not serve due to poverty, illness and early old age. This seems to be the rule rather than the exception, both for urban and rural areas. Instructive in this respect are the detailed assignments from the same Holland *Recuel* concerning the rural area of Waterland, north of Amsterdam.⁶⁴ In the village of Ransdorp, there were a 100 well-armed and 25 less well-armed villagers, but there were almost as many men who were not capable of providing any defence. 36 more men who were less than sixty years of age may have turned up with a pike, sword, or other weapon but they were still incapable of serving for reasons such ‘as being goutish, deficient, lame or sick’. Beyond that, there were another 102 citizens ‘that have neither money nor property’. If we count only the latter, we arrive at almost 38 percent of total men who could not serve – almost the same as that of Schellingwoude, where, out of a total of 104 men, it was recorded that there were forty poor beggars without arms, ‘who could be in their neighbourhood today and elsewhere tomorrow’.

There is an additional question as to whether there were also men who deliberately did not show up to the muster, and willingly received fines, because of their religious convictions. It is certainly the case that around 1550 there were already many Anabaptists in Friesland. Menno Simons, who acted as their leader, would not have been against carrying weapons if it was according to the custom of the country. However, he forbade any use of them.⁶⁵ Since participation in a militia always implied a future use of weapons, he would have encouraged his followers to show up unarmed at the muster meetings. If this norm was indeed followed, we would find

63 Ibidem, 139–140. Presumably, a part of the weapons entries for other cities also came from the city depots, but their origin is not specified in the entries for the ‘Recuel’.

64 Ibidem, 125–127.

65 Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente*, 195.

Anabaptists on the lists as men without weapons, for example, in Heme-lumer Oldeferd and Idaarderadeel where they later proved to be strongly represented. However, identifying these men is impossible because the muster-rolls logically do not mention conscientious objectors and we do not have lists of Anabaptists before 1552.⁶⁶ It is striking that in a much later muster list for the *grietenij* Rauwerderhem, dating from 1586, several Mennonites appear with spades and shovels.⁶⁷ We also find this a decade earlier in the Noorderkwartier (North-Holland), when Diederik van Sonoy, on behalf of William of Orange, had to mobilise armed peasants there.⁶⁸ The Mennonites had to appear with a spade and a basket. Thus, they did not really have to deal with weapons but fulfilled their defence obligation as diggers.

Representation per household

Another, perhaps more important, issue is whether every physically fit man really had to come forward, as we have assumed so far.⁶⁹ When reading through the cedulas it is noticeable that there are few or no names in succession, which would indicate a father-son relationship, for example, with patronymics such as Douwe Jansz and Jan Douwes, or names which indicate that we are dealing with brothers. This can be ascertained for the rural municipalities in which the relationship runs per church village and within it per (family) farm. It seems that only one respondent per house or farm was summoned. There were undoubtedly many families with only one adult man. But there must have been many families with a father and one

66 This is also obvious because, of course, due to severe persecution, no one publicly expressed his Anabaptist conviction at the time; the *grietmannen*, who undoubtedly had suspicions as to who of their men had Anabaptist sympathies, would not have woken up sleeping dogs in Leeuwarden or Brussels either. As far as personal identification is concerned, the well-known baptismal list of Leenaert Bouwens, on which reconstructions of early Anabaptist congregations are based, does not start for Friesland until 1552.

67 Tresoar, Archief Eysinga-Vegilin-van Claarbergen, supplement, inv. nr. 31.

68 H. van Nierop, *Het verraad van het Noorderkwartier. Oorlog, terreur en recht in de Nederlandse Opstand* (Amsterdam 1999) 100.

69 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 186–187. This issue has already been raised by J.A. Faber, *Drie eeuwen Friesland: economische en sociale ontwikkelingen van 1500 tot 1800*, 2 vols. (Leeuwarden 1973) I, 24; however, Faber has not devoted any further detailed research to it and took the view that 'indeed in the muster-rolls all able-bodied men are listed' and that they made up one-third of the total male population. K. Kuiken, *Het Bildt is geen eiland. Capita cultuurgeschiedenis van een vroegmoderne polder in Friesland* (Wageningen 2013) 61, speaks without further explanation (rightly so) of 'defence obliged heads of households'.

or more boys over the age of sixteen, or families with unmarried brothers as the head who were healthy enough to be deployed.

In order to be able to confirm whether conscription was really limited to one man per house or family farmstead, we need to know the family composition for one or more representative *grietenijen* on 3 February 1552. Given the time available and scope of this project, I refrained from genealogical research and limited myself to a few samples for a number of farms in the relatively well-documented municipalities of Barradeel, Hennaarderadeel, and Leeuwarderadeel. For Barradeel, the initial registration of the first and most important church village within it, Minnertsga, seems to indicate that all eligible men from a family were summoned. For example, three (noblemen) brothers from the Hermana family (Vincent, Hessel, and Wybrant) appear immediately after each other in the registration list.⁷⁰ Upon further examination, however, we see that the matter is not as clear as it may seem. In 1552, there were at least two noble Hermana estates made up of large farmsteads, for which Vincent and Hessel probably had to represent. However, their younger brother, Wybrant, was married in that same year and, thus, may well have been listed for a third farm. The Hermana case is one of the only instances for Barradeel where a number of names of brothers appear listed in succession. Given that there were 318 militiamen summoned for this municipality, we see that the ‘one man per family’ principle was not contradicted.

For Hennaarderadeel, we see something similar. There are, at first sight, a few exceptions to be noted, but these turn out to fit the ‘one man per household’ pattern just as well upon closer look. They concern, respectively, two brothers and two brothers-in-law who, each with their own family, ran one large farm together.⁷¹ Thus, the decisive factor seems to have been the family as the basis for recruitment, with the father as the centre of attention. As long as the father was living and healthy and the sons had not founded a family of their own, the father remained the head of the

70 See, for their genealogy: M. de Haan Hetteema and A van Halmael Jr., *Stamboek van den Frieschen, vroegeren en lateren, adel*, 2 vols. (Leeuwarden 1846) s.v. Hermana.

71 With thanks to Ype Brouwers in Leeuwarden. It concerns: 1. the farm Sibada, located in Oosterend, which was operated in 1552 by Obbe and Laes Rienickz, who each came up with weapons; 2. the farm Tekema in Swyns under Wommels, used by Jelte Andriesz and Bouue Tomasz, who was married shortly before 1552 to the widow of Jeltens’ deceased brother Here: Mol and Van der Meer, ‘Monsterlijsten’, 251, 246 See resp. Van der Meer, *Boerderijenboek Hennaarderadeel*, 127, 220, and Y. Brouwers, ‘Parenteel Walpert’, *Genealogysk Jierboek* 2013, 111–186, nrs. 212–213. See also the above under Finkum, Leeuwarderadeel, the brothers Willem and Tyaerd Poelstra, who were together on a large Poelstra-zate farm and each had a family: Mol and Van der Meer, ‘Monsterlijsten’, 270.



Fig. 19. 'Katzbalger'. Landsknecht sword, made in Munich between 1520 and 1550. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, collection nr. 13212.

family. It is therefore that in Leeuwarderadeel we encounter no less than six absent men who were represented by their sons. For example, in Stiens: 'Joost Symons, *egrotus*, compares with pike and sword *per filium*'.⁷² The fact that three widows were also represented by their (apparently unmarried) sons, such as 'Syuw Wythie widow *per philium*: pike and sword' fits into the same picture.

This does not mean that unmarried young men could not be deployed. On the additional list of selected *monstermannen* for the third man at the end of Idaarderadeel's roll, for example, 30 names have been noted. If one compares these with the total list per village, seven of them do not appear to be among the previously registered men. It is certainly the case that these were sons who took the place of their fathers. All patronymics of these seven are found under the first names of mustered men.

72 Mol and Van der Meer, 'Monsterlijsten', 271.

Finally, for the cities, there is the question of whether the inhabitants who did not enjoy full citizen rights could be summoned to contribute to the defence. For the Frisian cities no insight into this is possible because no data exist for 1552 on the size of the total population versus that of the citizens. For Alkmaar, however, there are a few indications that there were quite a few men in the city who could not be called upon. We have already mentioned that, in principle, there were 1,385 men in 1552 who belonged to 1,338 houses. This number of houses does not correspond to the entire stock of houses in the city at that time because there were no fewer than 1,707 house entries in a 1561 tax register. Some houses may have been built in the nine years between 1552 and 1561, but certainly not 369. Intrapolation with older data of 1519⁷³ suggests a total of at least 1,640 inhabited houses for the year 1552. Since the muster-rolls for the eight quarters of the town appear to have been preserved completely – it is also clearly in line with what is known about the extent of the civil defence of the city at the time of the Revolt⁷⁴ – the only explanation is that there were quite a few houses with inhabitants who had not sworn an oath to the city law and therefore could not be forced to participate in guarding and defending the town: inhabitants who could not by definition be equated with the poor and paupers.⁷⁵ I cannot say for certain that for Alkmaar this amounted to 302 male residents out of 1,700 houses, which would mean no less than 18.4 percent. But it was certainly a substantial number. *Mutatis mutandis*, therefore, for the Frisian cities, we must also take into account a group of residents who would not have been obliged to possess and present weapons in the event of military emergency for the town.

This leads to the conclusion that the duty of defending ultimately did not affect every fit man but was limited to one per household – of which the main resident in a city had to have the status of citizen. To what extent the former also applied to other regions should be further investigated. For Ameland, it certainly applied. The list of 1558 for this island only mentions

73 Named by H.E. van Gelder, 'Een Noord-Hollandse stad 1500–1540', in: H.E. van Gelder, *Alkmaarse opstellen* (Alkmaar 1960) 29–41, there 33–35. It is a list of 1,477 heads of households: Stadsarchief Alkmaar, inv.nr. 326). Compare W.J. van den Berg and J.L. van Zanden, 'Vier eeuwen welstandsongelijkheid in Alkmaar, ca. 1530–1930', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 19 (1993) 193–215, there 200, who speak about ca. 1,580 houses with a population of 7,270 people in 1534.

74 In his *Kort verhaal van het beleg van Alkmaar. Een ooggetuigenverslag*, introduced by H.F.K. van Nierop, transliterated by M. Joustra (republication, Alkmaar 2011) 10, about the siege on Alkmaar by the Spaniards in 1573, the Alkmaar patrician Nanning van Foreest gives a number of 1,300 able-bodied citizens and 'inwoonders' (inhabitants).

75 Benders, *Hasselt 1521*, 19.

the heads of households – occasionally also a widow. This does not seem to have been the case specifically for Friesland alone, evidenced in a provision in the recently found fourteenth-century land law of Stellingwerf, which in turn is related to a similar article in the land law of Drenthe. That provision states that if someone, with the permission of the judges, is allowed to enforce his right by force against a manslayer or other criminal and he has to be supported by his neighbours, each house has to supply (only) one man for that purpose, but the best.⁷⁶ There is a certain logic in this. Even in times of need it was not wise to send the entire male population out to fight due to the risk they could be completely eliminated. A balanced selection always had to be ensured. Territorial muster-rolls therefore never offer a complete inventory of all physically fit men between sixteen and sixty.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter may be that the Habsburg regime in Friesland attached great importance to having an active share of the male population in national or provincial defence, supporting and complementing its professional armed forces. To this end, it continued the existing tradition of popular defence and tried to improve its quality by holding regular arms inspections and issuing ordinances for an ensign organisation modelled on the professional *Landsknecht* formations of the time. The regime used the popular militias for guarding services and actions against unemployed roaming mercenaries and religious revolutionaries. In early 1552, it also took into account the fact that these militias could offer help in turning a possible invasion from the sea or over land by enemies of the Franco-Saxon coalition – or possibly associated rebels. All physically healthy men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were summoned to assist in this, with the understanding that only one man per household had to perform the service. In both urban and rural areas, the number of men who did not participate in such service due to poverty and illness was between 20 and 30 percent.

76 O. Vries, 'Het landrecht van Stellingwerf: een eerste verkenning', in: H. Bloemhoff and C. Zuil (ed.), *Soe sullen die Stellinge ... Lezingen van het Historisch Symposium 'Stellingwarf 700' op 18 september 2009* (Oldeberkoop 2010) 32–49, there 43.

77 Anyone who wants to use them for demographic research should take this into account. See for example, Faber, *Drie eeuwen Friesland* I, 24–26, and II, table 1, who does assume a total and, moreover, makes the mistake with Hennaarderadeel of adding the names from the checklist of 1511 to that of 1552 so that he arrives at a double number.

4. The equipment and organisation of the militiamen in 1552

Abstract

Chapter Four analyses the surviving muster lists for Friesland of 1552, by counting, ordering and dissecting the numbers of men and weapons. It appears that the equipment of the Frisian militias was relatively basic, although it did not consist of forks and sticks alone. The chasers, carried by the poorest category of men, had sharp spearheads. Most of the other conscripts had the standard combination of pike and sword. The wealthier part of the clay-district militiamen had halberds and sometimes even broadswords. Firearms were more often carried by townsmen. A comparison with Holland shows that this equipment of the rural and urban contingents in Friesland did not differ much from that in other parts of the Low Countries.

Keywords: mustering practice, militia equipment, stick weapons, stabbing weapons, firearms

Weaponry and wealth

How were all these militiamen equipped and organised? It may be superfluous to note that they were not supported with any equestrian armament. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Friesland, as in most parts of Holland, fighting occurred almost always on foot.¹ The clay and peat landscape, intersected by canals and ditches, did not lend itself to cavalry

¹ J.A. Mol, 'Frisian Fighters and the Crusade', *Crusades* 1 (2002 [2003]) 89–110, there 101. It is unclear on what sources Kuiken based his statement that 'whoever was mustered with a harness was supposed to fight on horseback': K. Kuiken, *Het Bildt is geen eiland. Capita cultuurgeschiedenis van een vroegmoderne polder in Friesland* (Wageningen 2013) 91.

manoeuvres.² In the case of defensive actions, divisions into equestrian and foot-soldier sections would also have been extremely impractical.

If we are talking about the relationship between weaponry and wealth, it was not so much the weapons of attack and defence that counted. Only the broadsword, referring to a six-foot weapon to be handled with two hands³ – can be found in small numbers for noblemen, wealthy freeholders, and well-to-do citizens.⁴ The same goes for the *Katzbalger* mentioned only a few times.⁵ This was a relatively short but handy sword with a wide blade, used by *Landsknechts* during battle in the *mêlee*, when they could no longer cope with their long pikes. As far as hewing and stabbing weapons are concerned, it seems that almost everyone, rich or poor, had a *degen* at their disposal – *degen* was then the name for the lightweight standard sword of the time. Apparently, even men with few funds could buy such a weapon for little money. This was very different in the sixteenth century than in the thirteenth when swords were still elite weapons.⁶ In 1552, little remains of this high medieval arms hierarchy.

The *degen* was usually combined with a pole pike or a firearm. Crossbows (of steel) or *armborsten* rarely appear in the muster-rolls of 1552.⁷ Also the *morgenster* (morning star: a club with iron points) was a seldom-emerging tool.⁸ The most common weapon was the pike, usually called *speets* in the texts, probably after the word ‘Spiess’ used by German mercenaries. This was the well-known, cheap but effective, pole-spear of the Swiss and German *Landsknechte*, which, in the fifteenth century, had a length of ten to twelve feet and, in the sixteenth century, could even be fourteen to eighteen feet long. We know that around 1500 many Frisians owned a jumping pole-spear: a long pike which they could use both to stab and to cross ditches. They must even have been known for this unique weaponry, given the fact that in the picture story, *Der Weisskunig*, from the years 1505–1516 in which the

2 The muster-rolls for the Guelders’ Overkwartier that have been preserved for 1552 do mention men who were obliged to come up with *heerpaarden* (lit. army horses). For them, however, no armament is specified. Perhaps they had to use the horses for the transport of forage.

3 Also called *Biderhänder*, such as the famous sword of the Frisian freedom fighter Grutte Pier: J.J. Kalma, ‘It swurd fan Greate Pier’, *It Beaken* 15 (1953) 112–120.

4 From what we know: twelve in Sneek, eight in Harlingen, six in Staveren, five in Barradeel and one in Idaarderadeel.

5 Among others under Tjummarum, Barradeel. Obe Postma meant in his otherwise informative booklet about the Frisian farm: *De Fryske boerkerijen it boerelibben yn ‘e 16^e en 17^e ieu* (s.a., Sneek) 45, mistakenly that the *kaetsbalger* was a sort of tennisracket!

6 Mol, ‘Frisian fighters and the Crusade’, 103–104.

7 We count only five: two in Ferwerderadeel, two in Doniawerstal and one in Workum. On Ameland in 1558 there were four men with a bow and twelve arrows: three in Hollum and one in Nes.

8 Only mentioned for Harlingen (five), Workum (four), Sloten (one) and Ferwerderadeel (one).



Fig. 20. Representation of an ensign or company of well-equipped mercenaries in the painting *David and Abigail*, by Jacob van Oostsanen, 1507–1508. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Art, nr. KMSsp734.

life of Emperor Maximilian of Austria is glorified and his indirect military involvement in the coastal area is discussed, the Frisians are called *Springer*.⁹

⁹ *Der Weisskunig. Tableau des principaux événements de la vie et du regne de l'empereur Maximilien*, 2 vols., I: Textband, II. Tafelband, Maximiliaan I and Marx Treitz-Saurwein fec. 1505–1516 (Vienna 1799, facs. Stuttgart 1956) I, 273–274.

We already saw in Cornelis Kempius' print of the Frisian peasant warrior that the pike has a gaff or cube at the bottom, just like a jumping pole, which prevented sinking into the mud while jumping. It is quite possible that a large part of the pikes noted in the sample lists had this double function. Clear references to it, however, are missing.

Another commonly used pole weapon was the *knevelstok*, also called the boarspit, swines' rod or 'distant chaser'. Like the pike, it had a sharp point but was shorter and therefore easier to handle. It was also cheaper, which made it even more suitable than the pike for men with few funds. For Ferwerderadeel and Het Bildt, we count 45 and 46 boarspits, respectively. For Ameland even, 68 households had a boarspit. Elsewhere, however, the numbers did not exceed six. A similar distribution was also found for the *gavelijn* or javelin, which is usually described as a throwing spear or short lance. Possibly this was lighter and thinner than the boarspit, because it is distinguished from it in several *grietenijen*. In Ferwerderadeel and Leeuwarderadeel there were, respectively, 26 and 16 men equipped with it. Furthermore, for Ameland, the specific weapon of the *sparre* (spruce) is mentioned, which was found in 35 households, mainly in the poor villages of Nes and Buren. It must have been a lighter variant of the boarspit, equipped with an 'iron cap'.

Table 2. The 1552 figures on arms and armour in the *grietenijen*. Light blue = clay districts; white = newly reclaimed; beige = mixed districts; grey = sand and peat districts

<i>Grietenijen</i>	Total	Armour	% Armour	Firearms	% Firearms	Pikes	Halberds	Javelins	Br.swords	Degens	Other
Barradeel	309	109	35,3	29	9,4	229	16	3	5	301	10
Hennaarderadeel	214	25	11,7	40	18,7	213	9	5		255	3
Ferwerderadeel	482	61	12,7	43	8,9	295	22	26		478	48
Leeuwarderadeel	418	166	34,4	31	7,4	332	27	16		415	2
Wonseradeel	697	138	19,8	133	19	562				714	64
Wymbritseradeel	563	131	23,2	56	10	455	43			463	
Het Bildt	303	25	8,3	60	19,8	172	30			306	46
Achtkarspelen	233	63	27	26	11,2	200	14	5		233	
Kollumerland	320	89	27,8	52	16,3	241	4			320	
Doniawerstal	269	39	14,5	32	11,9	229	1	1		262	2
Idaarderadeel	274	9	3,3	29	10,7	207	27	2	1	267	4
Gaasterland	162	20	12,3	15	9,3	139	8			160	
Hemelumer Oldef.	441	3	0,7	23	5,3	393	22			441	1
Lemsterland	198	15	7,6	32	16,2	166				198	
Total	4883	893		601		3833	223	58	6	4813	180

More common than the boarspit and the javelin was the halberd or poleaxe, which was also usually kept in combination with the sword. In most cities and towns, between 15 and 30 of these were registered, except in Sneek where

168 men were equipped with it – which was more than the number of pikes (133). On the isle of Ameland, too, the halberd was the standard weapon, registered with 178 men out of 392. The combination of the halberd with a sword was nevertheless less popular than that of the pike with a sword due to the fact that the halberd, with its forged hack, butt and draw iron of point, axe and hook was much more expensive than the pike, of which the stabbing part consisted only of a solid metal pointed construction. An overview of the prices for the weapons that the city of Leiden, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, bought for resale to its citizens shows that a halberd cost three times as much as a pike.¹⁰ However, this did not make it an elite weapon.

This also applies to the shooting equipment mentioned in the muster-rolls. Of course, we know nothing about the calibre and quality of the firearms. The distinction is relatively rough: there were *roeren*, arquebuses (hookguns), and half arquebuses, which must have been smaller versions of the hookguns.¹¹ It can be assumed that *roeren* represented the lightest category. They were the successors of the fifteenth-century *knijpbuis*, had a butt, and could be operated from the shoulder. However, they were imprecise and had only low firepower with low penetrating force. The arquebus was larger and heavier and equipped with a hook. The hook was meant to be attached to a wall or a movable support, to absorb the recoil. Relatively few Frisians were equipped with it. Nine out of ten firearm owners had a *roer*.¹²

Table 3. The 1552 figures on arms and armour in the *grietenijen*

Cities	Total	Armour	% Armour	Firearms	% Firearms	Pikes	Halberds	Javelins	Br.swords	Degens	Other
Sneek	489	215	44	98	20	133	168	2	12	345	7
Bolsward	487	136	27,9			351				351	
Harlingen	384	71	18,5	68	17,9	179	124	2	8	378	6
Workum	445	38	8,5	25	5,6	392	12	1		445	12
Staveren	203	74	36,5	54	26,6	117	28		6	191	
Sloten	67	3	4,5	8	11,9	39	16	3		56	4
Total	2075	537		253		1211	348	8	26	1766	29

The ratio of firearms versus pole, stabbing, and hewing weapons varies per *grietenij* and city. Wealth does not seem to have played a decisive role in

10 J.P. Ward, 'Prices of Weapons and Munitions in Early Sixteenth Century Holland during the Guelders War', *Journal of European economic history* 33 (2004) 585–618, there 590–591.

11 See for these weapons and their various calibers: R.T.W. Kempers, 'Haakbussen uit Nederlands bezit', *Armamentaria* 11 (1976) 75–97.

12 It remains to be seen what exactly the difference was between the half hook (or arquebus) and the *roer*. In the muster list of Ameland, a distinction is made, but twice there is a 'half haack or 1 roer'.

this. As far as rural municipalities are concerned, for example, there was little difference between the districts on the clay and those in the sand and peat areas. The percentage in both types of areas of arquebuses and *roeren* taken together, was around 12 percent. Remarkably, the recently armed Het Bildt shows a relatively high firearms possession rate of 19.8 percent. On the isle of Ameland, where the gun possession was inventoried only six years later, this rate was even higher. Out of 392 households, 102 half arquebuses and twelve *roeren* were counted, which together gives a ratio of no less than 29 percent. Thus it was certainly also a question of modernity. Perhaps the picture for the sand and peat districts is somewhat distorted because we have included Kollumerland, with its urban-like village Kollum standing out in this respect, so much so that 16.3 percent of the armaments for this *grietenij* consisted of firearms. Kollum, which also had a large rural area, presented 41 *roeren* for a total group of militiamen of 182 (= 22.5 percent). If we could further divide the group of firearm carriers between the men in the urban centres and those in the countryside, we would probably come across an even higher percentage of *roeren* for the men within the actual townlike settlement of Kollum. This was also the case for the 'real' cities: in Sneek and Staveren we arrive at percentages of 20 and 22.6. For Harlingen, which like Workum had a large *contado*, a percentage of 17.9 is counted. Bolsward's number of firearms is unknown. If we had access to the data of Leeuwarden and Franeker – cities in which a shooting guild was active – their percentages would certainly have been higher. In short, especially in the cities, people were interested purchasing arquebuses and *roeren* and were willing to learn how to use them. This may have to do with the fact that at this time, most firearms, and especially the heavy arquebuses with their hook construction, were not very suitable for mobile deployment on the battlefield. They were more useful in sieges, in positions behind entrenchments and walls.

Those who had an arquebus or a *roer* usually also had a sword or other *zijdgeweer* (lit. side weapon). The reason for this was that the shooter could defend himself with it if his gun no longer worked or if the enemy had already come too close. It is difficult to determine which of the Frisian townspeople and countrymen had bought such a firearm and why. The noblemen and wealthy farmers seem to have had no preference for it because most of the shooters had little or no armour. Only occasionally is it reported that the owner of a *roer* or arquebus had a ring collar.¹³ For Sneek, which had relatively

13 However, we found two exceptions to this rule: in Staveren, 22 of the 47 firearms shooters had some iron plate protection. Usually this was a cuirass, less often an iron ring collar.



Fig. 21. Arquebus from the sixteenth century. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, collection nr. 13226.

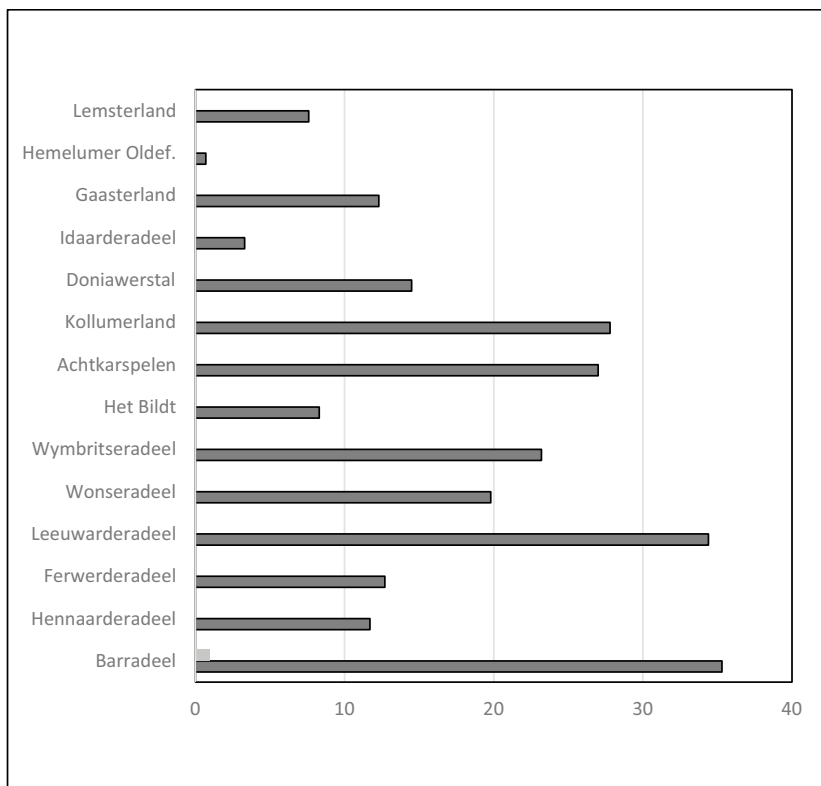
many militiamen with firearms, it is striking that they bear professional names such as carpenter, shoemaker, dyer, and the like. Further investigation of their antecedents is needed here.

Armour

The big difference between the rich, the middle group, and the poor is the amount of protective iron clothing they each possessed. Those who were wealthy were supposed to be equipped with certain kinds of armour.¹⁴ The richest had to have at least a *rusting* or harness, which was not so much a body covering from head to toe as a chest cuirass or breast plate. This became apparent because for many men, in addition to their harness, various other armour parts were mentioned, such as a 'lobster' or ring collar, arm pieces, a storm hat, or a bascinet. The well-equipped or fully armoured man was to have all this at his disposal. In practice, this was the case for all the noblemen, the richest citizens, and the well-to-do freeholders. The middle group of craftsmen in the cities, wealthy tenants, and small freeholders were not provided with a cuirass but sometimes possessed a steel ring collar and/or a bascinet. The large group of men who were neither rich nor part of the middle group lacked all the protective iron pieces and had to rely on their skill in dealing with pikes, halberds or boarspits and swords. This was also true for the paupers who only had to equip themselves with a spade or a shovel. When we classify all militiamen per city and *grietenij* into two categories according to their iron protection, namely, armour-bearers, full or half,¹⁵ and those without armour, the graph shows the following for the cities and *grietenijen*, respectively.

¹⁴ The inventory of Ameland, which had nothing to do with the 1552 mustering ordered from Brussels, does not contain any mention of armour.

¹⁵ Half harness stands for the possession of one or more loose parts such as a ring collar or arm pieces. I did break these down as a separate category, but they turn out to be so small that

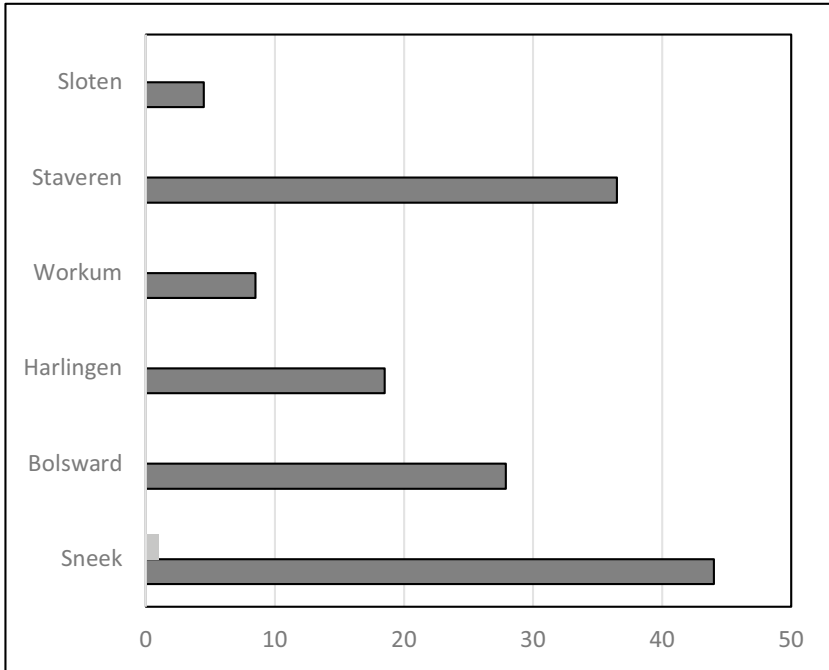


Graph 1. Percentage of the militiamen with armour in *grietenijen*

The picture is quite clear when one knows that, below the towns, the *grietenijen* are placed in two groups one after the other: the municipalities in the sand and peat area – roughly called the Wolden – in the south and middle of the province (from Hemelumer Oldeferd to and including the southern part of Achtkarspelen), and the ones on the clay in the west and north (from Wonseradeel to and including Kollumerland). One then notices that the *grietenijen* in the Wolden were the least armoured, both in absolute numbers as well as in percentages.¹⁶ This applies in particular to Hemelumer Oldeferd, Gaasterland, Lemsterland, Doniawerstal, and Idaarderadeel. There is no doubt that this was a result of their poverty. There were simply not many rich farmers who could equip themselves with

the distinction disappears. The men with only a steel ring collar etc. are therefore here among the armour wearers classified as 'tout court'.

¹⁶ Achtkarspelen, however, shows a mixed picture, as the northern part consisted of clay land on which relatively prosperous farmers were located who were better armed.



Graph 2. Percentage of the militiamen with armour in cities

armour. Het Bildt and Hennaarderadeel in particular scored relatively low among the clay *grietenijen*. As for the former, this can easily be explained by the fact that Het Bildt was won from the sea in 1505. Only from the end of the sixteenth century was it known as a rich grain producing region with large numbers of wealthy farmers who could afford a lot of luxury.¹⁷ In the first half of the sixteenth century, however, it was still a pioneering area whose inhabitants only slowly came to prosperity.¹⁸ The urban contingents of Sneek and Stavereen were best armoured. Bolsward, with a quarter of its men in armour, was also well equipped. This can also be said for Harlingen. The fact that Workum did not exceed 10 percent must

¹⁷ Kuiken, *Het Bildt is geen eiland*, 77–106.

¹⁸ From the 1540s onwards, Kuiken sees an increasing prosperity, which would have manifested itself among well-to-do tenants in a rich funerary culture and the possession of a harness and a ring collar in 1552. Apart from the issue of burial culture, Kuiken seems to overestimate the status importance of the possession of armour and ring collars, especially when we compare the data of Het Bildt with those of the neighbouring *grietenij* Barradeel. In the first place, Het Bildt had relatively few armour-bearers and, in the second place, a part of them still had to be encouraged to buy the equipment: they had, as it was called, to be 'put on it': Kuiken, *Het Bildt is geen eiland*, 73.

have had something to do with the circumstance that there were many men from the relatively poor rural area to the east of the city called the Heidschap.

Finally, no general statement can be made about head protection. No recordings regarding who possessed a storm hat or a *bekkeneel* (bascinet) are noted for any of the cities and only a minority of the *grietenijen* have this noted. It could be that it was simply assumed that every man had a helmet if he had a full armour and so no specific note was made. But that is by no means certain. In the prosperous *grietenij* Barradeel, for which 50 storm hats and bascinets are noted for 62 full and 50 half armours, enough armoured men without an iron headgear show up. This also applies to Kollumerland which showed 43 helmet covers for 96 full and half armour wearers. Only for Achtkarspelen were the proportions more favourable, with 50 helmets for 63 complete or half harnesses.

Extra armour ‘on the community’ and the corps of ‘the third man’

The differences in wealth between the clay and Wold districts, as reflected in the level of armour, could have caused problems for the fighting strength of the various municipal armies. However, there was a solution to this. For some of the *grietenijen*, mention is made of *rusting*, in the sense of complete personal armour equipment, which had been purchased at the expense of the village and could therefore be given to unarmoured men. These were separate from the armour that the wealthy residents were obliged to wear. It is not a coincidence that a few poor *grietenijen* were reported to have this municipal equipment. This is the case for Hemelum Oldeferd, with no less than 41 instances, Idaarderadeel with fifteen, and Achtkarspelen with eight community armour equipment units. They are also mentioned for the clay *grietenijen* Wonseradeel (64) and Hennaarderadeel (35), neatly subdivided per village. For Surhuizum in Achtkarspelen this is reported as follows: ‘The village of Surhuizum will keep available above the armaments registered here, five complete armour with their accessories’. For brevity’s sake, Hemelum Oldeferd’s *grietman* announced that one *rusting* stood for 1C fl. ren., which possibly means that *grietenijen* had to buy one armour per 100 rhine guilders of rent income in their territory. Perhaps this arrangement applied to more *grietenijen*.

That brings us back to the theme of the third man. We remember that the *grietenijen* were explicitly instructed to make sure that ‘the third man’ would be equipped with good armour. This meant – although it was not

demanded in so many words in the ordinance – that they had to indicate how many men made up this selection and which men were part of it. Of the municipalities known to us where a mustering was organised, the cities did not make any arrangements for this. Perhaps they were already known to the Court in Leeuwarden. Of the *grietenijen*, there are six for which notices are given regarding the third man. We review them all here because they offer a sharp look at the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the selection. For Barradeel a selection list is missing, but halfway through his survey the *grietman* reported that he certainly did his best to appoint certain persons as the third man, but that among them there were many unwilling to be selected as such. In short, he had to deal with resistance and asked if he could compel the unwilling men by means of power as well. Maybe there were more *grietmannen* with such selection problems.

This does not apply to the administrators of Ferwerderadeel, Doniawerstal, Hemelum Oldeferd, Idaarderadeel, Leeuwarderadeel, and Lemsterland. We already reported that the selection for Leeuwarderadeel was indicated by the number ‘3’ for the name (and ‘o’ for the diggers) and that the total men making up the third man for that municipality was 123, including some men with a shovel. On the list of Doniawerstal, the so-called muster-men per village were always placed at the top of the list. The expression ‘third man’ is appropriate here. There were 79 in total, which is a little less than a third of the total (266). Of them, 29 (about three out of eight) were equipped with a harness and a ring collar; beyond these, there were ten more harnesses out of a total of (266-79 =) 187 summoned men. All this leads to the conclusion that almost three-quarters of the men who were obligated to come up with armour on the basis of their wealth were included in the group of the third man.

The same calculation can be made for Ferwerderadeel. The muster-men are named at the very back of the inventory, unfortunately without a reference to their equipment. Because the names sometimes differ there, it is not so easy to make a precise concordance. It is also difficult because for some people it seems as if a son has been delegated instead of the previously mentioned father.¹⁹ The number of muster-men for Ferwerderadeel was 95, out of a total of 507 men, which means a ratio of roughly one to five. If we limit ourselves to the main village of Ferwerd, we can conclude that the selection there included 26 of the 117 militiamen. Seven of them were

19 That might be the case for Evert op Haescampen instead of Peter op Haescampen; and Tijaerd to Oldtstens instead of Tako to Oldtstens: Mol and Van der Meer, ‘Monsterlijsten’, 212, 221.



Fig. 22. Village armour and other equipment in the Mendlesham Church of St. Mary, Suffolk, England. Photo Peter Wyatt.

equipped with a harness and a ring collar. Apart from these seven, there were only four others in Ferwerd who had armour, out of a total of 91 men who were not selected as muster-men. The number of selected men is, not only for Ferwerd itself but also for all the other villages, exactly equal to the quota imposed on Ferwerderadeel in 1528.²⁰ If we look at the number of armour for which Ferwerderadeel was selected in 1535, it matches the total of 1552. In 1535 the *grietenij* had to supply 100 men, 33 of whom had to have armour and six of them had to present themselves as diggers.

Also for Idaarderadeel a direct link between the declarations of 1552 and those of 1535 can be observed. At the end of his muster list of 1552, the *grietman* ended up with thirty names, which, in fact, resulted in a ninth rather than a third of the total of 281 men mustered. This was exactly the number for which this poor municipality was charged in both 1528 and 1535. In 1535, the *grietman* had to equip ten of the men as armour-bearers. In 1552 he was able to reach this number without any problems with eight municipal armours and a few of the fifteen personal armours already available. The ratio of harnesses to the total of the third man was therefore, in principle,

20 'Ferwert xxvi; Blye x; Hoegebentum v; Geenum ii; Jeslum 111; Reysum iii; Lichtaert ii; Wanswert vii; Hallum xxv; Marrum vii; Neyekercke v. Somma xxv man'. Note that Ferwerderadeel here is subdivided by village because the total of 95 did not correspond to the 100 for which the *grietenij* was charged: 'Ferwerderadeell in de Ordonnantie moeten i c man hebben, ergo te breke v. man': *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland II*, 181.

one to three (1:3).²¹ We find this in the muster-roll of Lemsterland. At the end of his *cedula*, the *grietman* gives 107 names of men out of a total of 198, which he considers to be competent for the war, ‘... if necessary, [a number] of which the third man would have to go out to the aforementioned war’.²² From these 107 competent men, thus 34 – in the end only one sixth of the total – would be chosen, according to the old custom, where the third man would have armour and ring collars. The latter ‘third man (*daerden man*)’ would then be the third man of the third man. Lemsterland, despite its poverty, could easily send out the eleven or twelve to be selected armour-bearers because within the entire *grietenij* eighteen men had already been equipped with complete harnesses.

In 1528 and 1535, the Wold-*grietenijen* Doniawerstal and Lemsterland, as well as Gaasterland and Hemelumer Oldeferd, were brought together. They had to provide, respectively, 150 men (with 50 harnesses) and 200 men (with 60 harnesses). It was impossible for them to achieve this in 1552. For Gaasterland we do not know the total of the third man, but its sum was just over half of that of Hemelumer Oldeferd, which consisted of no more than 75 muster-men, albeit with 41 harnesses. Doniawerstal and Lemsterland combined in 1552 to make $79 + 34 = 113$ muster-men with $29 + 12 = 41$ harnesses. All in all, this is reason enough to assume that in the meantime these *grietenijen* had been granted some alleviation of their defence burden.

We do not know how the selection of the third man in the different cities and *grietenijen* came about. In Holland, at the time of the Guelders’ wars, a lottery took place.²³ That may have happened as well in Friesland in 1552, although it is also conceivable that a rotation system per farm and per house was used here. In Leeuwarderadeel, it is noticeable that the third man was evenly distributed over the village centres and surrounding number of farms.

Recapitulating, it can be said that the selection of the third man in 1552 could only be brought into the field with a third of them in armour, just like in 1535. This may not sound impressive, but the detailed muster-rolls show that except for the poor *grietenijen* in the southwestern part of the

21 In 1528, five ensigns of 30 *grietenijen*, excluding Het Bildt, counted 2,256 men, of whom 717 had to be armoured and 226 had to serve as diggers. This gives roughly the same ratio of one to three.

22 ‘Indient van noeden syn solde, waerfan den daerden man solde wtreysen totten voersz oerloch’: Mol and Van der Meer, ‘Monsterlijsten’, 283.

23 J.P. Ward, *The Cities and States of Holland (1506–1515). A participative system of government under strain* (Leiden 2001) 258.

province, the available equipment for the rural areas was sufficient to meet the standard of 1535. As mentioned above, the third man data for the cities is missing in this respect. The figures for the equipment of the urban militiamen in total suggest that the cities also easily met the obligation of one armour per three muster-men.

Organisation and leadership: captains, ensign-bearers, rot masters, pipers, and drummers

Instructions on the organisation and management of the *grietenij* and city quotas are extremely brief. The selection to be sent out could only have been under the command of, respectively, the *grietman* or an alderman for each municipality and city. The roll of Ferwerderadeel indicates that the designated 95 men of this *grietenij* would, during an army march, be led by *grietman* Haring Sythiema, with the assistance of the nobleman Sypt Goslingha of Wanswerd. Both names are mentioned first on this list, separately from the group selected per village.

Separately for Leeuwarderadeel in 1552 there is talk of a *provoest*, equipped with a staff, called *provoeststock*. Possibly, he was in charge of maintaining discipline and presiding over the court-martial in the event one of the muster-men had to be punished for misbehaviour during the army expedition. It remains to be seen whether this provost alone was responsible for the 123 strong group from Leeuwarderadeel, for the more than 500-man ensign of Western Oostergo in which this *grietenij* was to be included, or even for the entire rural militia of five ensigns in total.²⁴

This structure of command, under the lead of the *grietman* with one or more noblemen experienced in war, would have been common up to this point in time. According to the *Old West Frisian Skeltana Riucht*, a codification of customary law from the twelfth century, the *frana* was originally in charge of the *Landwehr*, and probably also of the *Heerfahrt*. It is difficult to say how large a territory the area of office of this *frana* was by then, but it would have been larger than it was in the fifteenth century when the process of division had progressed much further. The *skelta* or bailiff had the power

²⁴ *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland II*, 675. The latter does not seem likely in view of the reference in the ordinance of 1535 concerning the *generael provoest* of the five ensigns. When there was a 'general provost' for the whole army, there must also have been separate provosts per ensign unit. Compare the function of the provost further with that of the bailiff or *Schultheiss* in the ranks of the Great Guard in 1500: W. Lammers, *Die Schlacht bei Hemmingstedt. Freies Bauerntum und Fürstenmacht im Nordseeraum* (second edition, Heide 1982) 85–86.

and responsibility to call the able-bodied men in his district under arms and to fine those who refused service. He also led operations of limited scope, such as the prosecution of rebellious members of the civic community (*contumaces*) and the tracing of thieves and stolen goods.²⁵ In the era when Friesland had no overlord anymore, after around 1300, the *grietman* was his successor in this respect. The *Papena Ponten* of Wymbritseradeel, another legal codification dating from 1404 which the clergy helped to name, gave the *grietman* the task of carrying out *manschouwinghe*; he was also the one who was allowed to impose a financial penalty on defaulting men.²⁶ If the *grietman* was thus responsible for both the mustering of the men and the organisation of the expedition, he must also have been in charge of the command in the actual battle. Those tasks were difficult to separate.

We already learned from the regulations of the ordinance of 1535 that the old *grietenij* units had to be hierarchically and organisationally squeezed into the new ensign model. This meant, among other things, that in the case of real action, professional soldiers had to be appointed as hopman (captain), ensign-bearer, and sergeant. In that case, the *grietman* and the assisting nobleman would only have had to promote the cohesion of the *grietenij* quota in the big picture. With 400 to 500 men, the ensigns were quite large in size at that time. In the following decades, the size of the ensign in general was greatly reduced in order to increase its effectiveness. We can see this for Friesland in the muster-roll of Rauwerderhem from 1586.²⁷ This shows that the entire *grietenij* contingent, with a total of 224 men (152 men from fully taxable farms, plus 72 mostly poorly armed or unarmed paupers), is understood as an ensign: *grietman* Sijrck van Boetsma acted as a hopman or captain and he was assisted by a lieutenant, two sergeants, four corporals, and one provost.

For the cities, the muster-rolls of 1552 provide even less information about the organisation than those of the *grietenijen*. However, three entries in this field suggest that a crystallised system was in place. The fact that only

25 N.E. Algra, *Ein. Enkele rechtshistorische aspecten van de grondeigendom in Westerlauwers Friesland* (Groningen 1966) 37.

26 W.J. Buma and W. Ebel (ed.), *Westerlauwersches Recht I, Jus Municipale Frisonum*, 2 vols. (Göttingen 1977) II, 614: 'Die viij pont is: Hweer soe ma brect manschouwinghe, ist jn dae heringhum iefta bijjna tha onfrede ende jn alla reysem, deer dio meente wtketh wirth, dat dae greetman bij namma schillet scriuwa din riuchtsuldighem ende naeth dio meente' (transl: The eighth provision is: If anyone does not turn himself in for military service, whether for raids or during war, or for all campaigns for which the judicial community is summoned, the *grietman*, and not the judicial community, shall record the guilty person by name as liable to be fined).

27 Tresoar, Archief Eysinga-Vegilin-van Claarbergen, supplement, inv. nr. 31.



Fig. 23. A drummer and piper. Drawing from the sketchbook by Paul Dolnstein (ca. 1503). Landesarchiv Thüringen Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Reg. S (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 5v.

for Workum an ensign-bearer – *Jacob Reyners z ffernick*, without a specific weapon – was mentioned, does not mean that this position was not filled in other city quotas. This also applies to the pipers and drummers. We do not find them for the *grietenijen*. As for the towns, they only appear in the rolls of Harlingen and Sneek: *Willem Hans z drummeslager* (Harlingen); *Sijmon Jan z piper*, pike and sword; *Heercke drumslaeger*, *degen* and *drum* (Sneek), but it can be assumed that they were also part of the other city militias. For the orderly raising of the formation, for marching or in the field, such specialists could not be missed. The city militia of Leeuwarden, for which

the chronicler Worp van Thabor reported, for the year 1498, that unlike the militia of the Wold-men it knew how to keep the ranks closed, would certainly have had a captain, an ensign-bearer, a number of sergeants, rot masters, a drummer, and a piper at its disposal.²⁸

As far as the city of Bolsward is concerned, the preserved muster-roll of 1582 provides some extra information.²⁹ It has the same division into neighbourhoods as that of 30 years earlier, but is much more detailed in terms of the organisational structure and armament, with relatively small units. Possibly, just as with Rauwerderhem in 1586, this was the result of further development. Not the entire quota, but every quarter of the town, with a size of around a hundred men, was conceived as an ensign or company. The four quarter units were each led by a hopman or captain with a lieutenant and an ensign bearer, plus a few sergeants and *aedelboers*,³⁰ the latter of which could also be regarded as (lower) non-commissioned officers. Rot masters are not mentioned by name. However, they were certainly there because the militiamen in each quarter are all mentioned under the heading *Den Rotten*. Even though the ensign service per quarter was in all probability relatively new, this was not the case for the *rotten*. *Rotten* meant – at least in Franeker and Leeuwarden – a unit of twelve permanently located houses of which the heads of the family were obliged to provide certain services in the interest of the district and the city, such as, for example, taking care of icebreaking in the canals when they froze. From the surviving *Franeker Rotcedel* (rot cedula) of 1536, which could be reconstructed precisely in terms of its circumference, it can be deduced that each *rot* was under the supervision of a rot master, who sometimes, but not always, lived in one of the houses or chamber dwellings within the *rot*.³¹ Although it is not said in so many words, it strongly seems that the *Rotcedel* was also used as a basic list for the mustering of militiamen, otherwise it would have made little sense to refer to one of the mentioned house dwellers as *Tyerck trommeslager*.³² If this was indeed the case, Franeker must have been able to bring a total of 464 armed men to their feet in 1536, under the subaltern leadership of some 36 to 40 rot masters.

28 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken van Friesland, boeken IV en V*, J.G. Ottema (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1850/1871) IV, 301.

29 Tresoar, Archief Staten van Fryslân na 1580, inv.nr. 2981.

30 P. Knevel *Burgers in het geweer. De schutterijen in Holland, 1550–1700* (Hilversum 1994) 116–117.

31 W. Annema, 'De stad Franeker omstreeks 1535: een prekadastrale reconstructie', in: J.A. Mol and P.N. Noomen (ed.), *Prekadastrale Atlas fan Fryslân 4. Frjentsjeradiel and Frjentsjer* (Leeuwarden 1990) 123–149, there 123–124.

32 *Ibidem*, 131 (nr. a101).

Leeuwarden had a similar organisation per quarter, which was called an *espel*. In the list of inhabitants from 1547 of the Oldehoofster *espel*, covering almost half of the city, we come across no fewer than 42 rot masters.³³ We also know the rot masters of the Leeuwarden militia from this period. According to the ordinance for the militia of 1564, each of them was responsible for a rot of, again, twelve men.³⁴ According to the same ordinance, because there were only eighteen rot masters at the militia – and so the whole militia consisted of 216 shooters, apart from the commanding officer(s) – the rot masters of the militia were different men from those of the *espels*. Assuming that in 1547 there were at least 84 *rotten* – by the beginning of the seventeenth century their number had grown to no less than 190³⁵ – we can suppose that in 1552 Leeuwarden was able to muster some 1,000 heads of households or their representatives as armed men: more than double what Sneek, Bolsward, or Franeker were able to bring into the field or on the ramparts. This *rot* division of Leeuwarden, Franeker, and Bolsward would certainly have been used in the other cities as well and would have given structure to the militia units of the city.

The relationship between the shooting guilds and the city militias

The observation that in Friesland, the urban militias were organised per city quarter does not yet clarify the relationship between the militia as a whole and the shooting guilds. It is not easy to get a grip on it because the Frisian shooting guilds have left few traces – much fewer than, for example, the Flemish, Holland and Utrecht shooting guilds.³⁶ However, it is certain

33 M. Schroor, 'Fontes Leovardienses. Zestiende-eeuwse bewonerslijsten van Leeuwarden en zijn Klokslag (1522–1581)', *Leeuwarder Historische Reeks* 7 (2002) vii–xxx, there xvii–xix.

34 *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland* III, 631.

35 According to the *Diarium Furmerii. Dagboek van Bernardus Gerbrandi Furmerius 1603–1615, landsgheschiedschrijver van Friesland*, D.W. Kok and O. Hellinga (ed.) (Leeuwarden 2006) 53, the militia of Leeuwarden in 1605 was divided into eight *burgher* ensigns (one per *espel*), with 190 *rotten* all together.

36 For an introduction to the Flemish and Holland shooting guilds, see the books of Laura Crombie, *Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Medieval Flanders 1300–1500* (Woodbridge 2016), and M. Carasso-Kok, 'Der stede scut. De schuttersgilden in de Hollandse steden tot het einde der zestiende eeuw', in: M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van Halm (ed.), *Schutters in Holland. Kracht en zenuwen van de stad* (Zwolle 1988) 16–35;

compare the older studies of T. Reintges, *Ursprung und Wesen der spätmittelalterlichen Schützen-gilden* (Bonn 1963), and C. te Lintum, *Das Haarlemer Schützenwesen (De Haarlemsche schutterij)* in

that in the middle of the fifteenth century a number of them existed in Friesland. Shooting guilds were associations or groups of citizens, organised as brotherhoods, who regularly practiced shooting with each other, first with hand- and crossbows, and later with firearms. They often bore the name of guilds, referring to a more or less martial patron saint like St. George and St. Sebastian. They were facilitated by the city and could therefore also be used by the magistrate for military tasks and the maintenance of law and order. The members were volunteers, mostly from the wealthy bourgeoisie. In addition to their military function, the shooting guilds also had important social and religious functions, in so far as they had memorials read for the deceased members, often took part in processions in groups, and its members regularly came together – sometimes after training sessions or tournaments – to eat and drink.³⁷ The annual highlight of their activity was the shooting of the parrot: aiming at a wooden bird attached to a stake or windmill wing. Whoever shot this bird first was proclaimed king of the guild.³⁸ The shooters practiced on specially equipped shooting grounds: the *doelen* (lit. targets). In cities where there was talk of city *doelen*, as in Leeuwarden, Bolsward and Franeker, there were always shooting guilds as well.³⁹

Regarding the Franeker guild, some details are known for the year 1462 because the statutes issued at that time (in Old Frisian) have been preserved.⁴⁰ It appears that it was a fraternity of archers. This is not said explicitly, but the fact that the members not only had to have a bow with a quiver and arrows, but also had to be equipped with a sword and a shield, points into that direction. Had the men had to handle the heavier crossbow, carrying a shield would have been impractical. Apart from bows, swords, and shields, the archers were also provided with uniform clothing in the form of a *cappa* (hood) and a *leverey* (livery). The city *hoofdeling*, Douwe Sjaerda, and the city council of Franeker allowed them to draw income

seinen militärischen und politischen Stellung von alten Zeiten bis heute (Enschede 1896). Compare also Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 36–53.

37 According to city historian Wopke Eekhoff, the Leeuwarden shooting guild had a separate chapel in the St. Vitus church, *Geschiedkundige beschrijving van Leeuwarden van den vroegsten tijd tot den jare 1846* (Leeuwarden 1846, reprint Leeuwarden 1967) 171.

38 Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 42.

39 For Franeker, see Teltling, 'De statuten en privilegiën van het schuttersgild te Franeker', *De Vrije Fries* 11 (1868) 203–236; for Bolsward: H.T.J. Miedema, *Bolsward en Bolswarder namen in Oudfriesche bronnen (1402–1541)* (De Bilt 1984) 17, 52; and for Leeuwarden: H. Nijboer, 'Een rekening betreffende de bouw van de schuttersdoelen in 1540', *Leeuwarder Historische Reeks* 7 (2002) 185–202, there 186.

40 *Oudfriesche oorkonden*, vol. II, P. Sipma (ed.) (The Hague 1933) nr. 50.

for their expenses from urban fishing fees and the excise duty on the sale of beer.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, nowhere in Friesland was the longbow in use anymore. Presumably, the crossbow or foot bow had already been given up by then as well. According to the ordinance on the Leeuwarder militia, shooters at that time were only active with *roeren*. The transition from longbows and crossbows to firearms is not easy to follow for Friesland, but it would not have started much later than in Holland, which is well documented by James Ward.⁴¹ He noted that in 1511 the city council of Leiden withdrew its material support to the guild of long bow archers in favour of those of the *kloveniers*, that is men armed with *culverins*, a generic term denoting small firearms, including small cannons. Also, in other cities a change took place in the decades after 1510, in which the handbow was exchanged for the arquebus or the *roer*.⁴² Although the crossbow guilds continued to exist for a longer time, they, too, had to give more and more priority to the shooting guilds equipped with firearms. This change followed the more radical transformation that had taken place in the professional armed forces not long after 1500,⁴³ particularly during the Italian wars, thanks to the innovative application of the fuse lock to the arquebus. In the large formations of Swiss and German *Landsknechte* and Spanish foot-soldiers that were brought into the field there, more and more firearms shooters appeared who were posted in between the pikemen and halberdiers, in proportions of 1:6 and 1:5 over time. Crossbows – which, incidentally, were more expensive than small arquebuses – clearly were less functional than the newer types of firearms in terms of manageability. Because of their penetrating power they were still used on ships and city walls.⁴⁴ We already saw that only a few in the Frisian militias of 1552 still owned one.

Thus, after 1520, the shooters guilds were mainly organisations that were facilitated by city councils to handle small firearms, on the walls and ramparts, to defend the city when it was attacked.⁴⁵ After all, cities were still well defensible places. Their defensibility was made even stronger by the new fortification techniques that spread during the sixteenth century,

41 Ward, *Cities and States of Holland*, 317–325.

42 See, for example, the development in Maastricht in the period 1510–1520: Henk Thewissen, *De gezwoeren schutterijen van Maastricht 1374–1579* (Maastricht 2008) 63, 191–192.

43 B.P. Hughes, *Firepower: Weapons effectiveness on the battlefield, 1630–1850* (London 1974) 73.

44 An advantage for the application on ships was that bows did not present a fire hazard.

45 Reintges, *Ursprung und Wesen der Schützengilden*, emphasizes, rightly, their function as shooting clubs; compare Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 38–39.



Fig. 24. Silver parrot of the shooting guild of Bolsward from the middle of the sixteenth century, with five medallions of archers' kings. City Museum Bolsward.

so that the need for militarily deployable citizens remained. Now it was not only about the use of *arquebusiers* because pikemen and sword fighters could also help the city to endure a siege. But the handling of firearms required, just as with the bows and crossbows, a skill that had to be practiced and maintained on a regular basis. However, unlike the contingents of archers in the glory days of the long bow,⁴⁶ the firearms guilds were not yet separate formations that were brought into the field independently under the leadership of a professional commander. The deployment of the 2,000 citizens of Utrecht at the siege of IJsselstein in 1511, for example, did not involve separate contingents of shooters guilds. In the short statements concerning the mustering of the Holland cities from 1552, there is mention everywhere of the possession of arquebuses by shooters, but the shooting guilds are only listed as separate units in two cases, and even then, the question is whether they were commanded separately in practice.⁴⁷ As far as we can determine, in Friesland in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, shooters were never brought into action in separate groups. None

46 In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and in the case of the Arkel wars (which mainly concerned sieges) some urban shooting guilds were (still) used as separate units: H.P.H. Jansen and P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Heervaart in Holland', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 94 (1979) 1–26J, there 9–10; Carasso-Kok, 'Der stede scut', 30. Nevertheless, the contingents of archers in the city armies that had to serve the count around 1400 were rather small. Compare Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 50–51.

47 It concerns Naarden (old and new shooting guild, of 107 and 127 men respectively, next to 417 militiamen with all kinds of weapons), and Rotterdam (two guilds of 100 people each, next to 788 other able-bodied men): E.C.G. Brünner, 'Recuel uyte overgesonden cedullen van de wapenschouwinghe over Hollandt belast te doen', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 42 (1921) 115–143, there 131–132, 143.



Fig. 25. Medallion with the coat of arms of Tjaard Jongema as archer king of Bolsward in 1542. City Museum, Bolsward.

of the Frisian chroniclers mentions a guild of shooters as an independently operating army unit.

The conclusion must therefore be that, in 1552, the members of shooters guilds were included individually among the militiamen of the cities, just as the other men, but armed with a *roer* or arquebus. Because the muster-rolls for Franeker and Leeuwarden have not been preserved, this will also at least apply to Bolsward, and presumably also to Sneek, which must have also had a guild of shooters at its disposal.⁴⁸

Comparing with Holland

How to assess the equipment of the Frisian militia, in terms of stabbing, striking and firearms as well as armour? Although there is little simultaneous text material available for other regions, we can attempt to compare the Frisian information with the previously mentioned Holland data on Alkmaar and Waterland to gain some insights. Waterland stood for the rural areas, Alkmaar for the cities. We also have at our disposal a small 'armament' list for the militiamen of the small town of Hasselt in Overijssel,

⁴⁸ I have not been able to find any sources so far, but there was a 'Schuttersdoelen' in Sneek: Kuiper, 'Macht en politiek in Sneek 1580–1795', in: M. Schroor (ed.), *Sneek. Van veenterp tot Waterpoortstad* (Leeuwarden 2011) 67–94, there 79.

dating from 1535, which was laid out in connection with the threat by the Anabaptists.⁴⁹

Starting with the Hasselt armament list, this mustering does not provide any specific information about the armour. It does, however, show that, with the combinations *roer*-and-*degen* (or rapier) and pike or poleaxe-and-*degen*, the better equipped men, such as those later on in Friesland, were always expected to be equipped with two weapons, so that they could defend themselves when fighting at close range with a cutting or hewing weapon when their pike, halberd, or firearm was no longer usable. For a total of 232 men, the main arms were: 59 pikes or skewers, 77 halberds, and 67 *roeren* (in other words, 136 stabbing weapons and 67 firearms), combined with 137 rapiers. In addition, there were 60 clubs, which can be characterised as low-budget weapons. The club-bearers in general did not have a sword. The ratio of firearms to total men (67:232) was considerably higher than that of the Frisian cities, at about 29 percent, and that was already seventeen years earlier.

For Alkmaar, we found similar figures as those for Friesland. The analysis of the Alkmaar lists, however, is somewhat hampered by the method of mustering applied, which differed from that of the Frisian cities. The inspection per city quarter – actually, there were eight districts, each of which was responsible for defending a piece of the city ramparts – was left to two commanding ‘headmen’. These headmen did not summon the militiamen to appear at a certain place with their equipment at a certain time, but went street-by-street and door-to-door to take stock of what each resident had in his house. In the vast majority of cases, they found no more than one or two arms that could be taken on an expedition or for the guard: for example, one *halsgeweer* (lit. neck weapon, i.e., a polearm carried over the shoulder along the neck) and/or a *zijdgeweer* (lit. a side arm, that could be carried at the hip). Poor weavers were often found to possess only a club or nothing at all. But in the houses of some rich patricians, the headmen sometimes stumbled upon a whole arsenal. For instance, the first man to be mustered in Quarter A, the steward Dirck Sijmonssoon, had no less than two halberds, two javelins, two *roeren*, one broadsword, two rapiers, and two bows in his house, plus a so-called *outscutterij* weapon, which was a

49 Edited by J. Benders, *Hasselt, 1521: een Overstichts stadje in de greep van Hertog Karel van Gelre*, Doctoraalscriptie Geschiedenis en Mediaevistiek Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 1992, 169–174. Benders states that these were weapons that still had to be purchased, but from the list it is clear that the heads of the households had all the necessary weaponry in store; it was a question of bringing the armament up to date within a month. In that respect, the Hasselter list has the same character as the Frisian muster-rolls.



Fig. 26. Partisan from the first half of the sixteenth century. Dutch National Military Museum at Soest, collection nr. 12782.

firearm he was proficient at using at the 'Old shooting guild'.⁵⁰ The latter must have been the weapon with which he and other shooters had to appear on the ramparts and walls for the defence of the city.

Alkmaar, then, is not considered a city with large differences in prosperity. The economic historian Herman Kaptein portrays it as a town without extremes, with many small traders and craftsmen, and a normal number of poor people.⁵¹ Whether the latter is true is open to question. Earlier we pointed out the relatively large percentage, just over 30 percent, of men who were too poor to possess any kind of weapon. The wealthier segment included about one hundred men, each of whom had at least one armour, with or without a steel ring collar, and three to four hand arms. Among these hand arms were remarkably many firearms, which may have been related to the highly socially valued membership of a shooting guild. Furthermore, the headmen came across many broadswords, small hacking swords, and a large number of halberds and partisans, which meant that they were equipped with good quality weapons.

Out of the total number of 1,769 weapons that can be counted for the 964 armed citizens (of the 1,385 mustered men), about 400 to 500 can be assigned to this first group. In other words, the group of one hundred wealthiest civilians accounted for 30 percent of the possession of weapons. The middle segment consisted of men who possessed a combination of two weapons – usually a cutting, striking, or hewing weapon together with a stick or stabbing weapon, but sometimes it was a combination of a firearm with a sword or another striking weapon. This group of about 500 men was only partially armoured. For them, we can count about one hundred armour pieces such as breast plates, ring collars, and iron gauntlets or arm protectors.

⁵⁰ Strictly speaking, it can also be an 'old' shooting weapon, an old crossbow for example, but that is not obvious because further on in the text there is also talk of a *jonge schutterij geweer* (lit. young shooting guild weapon). In this day and age, the term *schutterijgeweer* in Alkmaar always refers to firearms (*roeren* or arquebuses).

⁵¹ H. Kaptein, 'Streekcentrum in wording. De economische ontwikkeling van een marktstad', in: D. Aten e.a. (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Alkmaar* (Zwolle 2007) 91–103, there 102–103.

Finally, the third and least equipped group included about 400 men who only had one weapon in the house. It is striking that this weaponry was very varied and of moderate quality. We find many boarspits (44) among them, as well as numerous *kodden* or *kusen*, which, according to literature, must have been iron maces or clubs. There were also skipper's hooks, forks, and long knives. The long pike was not nearly as popular as in Friesland (73 in total). Much more widespread was the *gavelijn* or javelin, which, incidentally, was also used by a large number of the well-to-do citizens discussed above.

At first glance, the possession of firearms seems to have been quite substantial: 268 *roeren*, heavy and light arquebuses, and *zinkroeren* together. Out of a total of 985 arms-bearing militiamen, this would mean 28 percent had firearms. But this is not entirely true because a number of men from the high and mid-range segments had more than one arquebus or *roer* at their disposal. The actual ratio for what the group normally brought into the field in firearms probably meant about 20 percent had firearms, similar to that of the Frisian cities. Unlike in Friesland, there were still a lot of crossbows or footbows in circulation, and there was also a bow maker active in the city in those years. However, since the possession of these bows and crossbows almost always coincided with that of firearms, I suspect that, in most cases, the former pieces were old or that the owners – who for the city's defence had switched to *roeren* or arquebuses – still kept bows to use for tournaments and hunting parties; reason enough for wealthy citizens to have them in their homes and show them to visitors. Possession of many weapons certainly contributed to the status of the well-to-do citizen.⁵²

All in all, the Alkmaar equipment, as well as the number and quality of armour, did not differ much from the Frisian equipment. If the people of Alkmaar could be labelled as egalitarian because of their armament before the middle of the sixteenth century, so too could the Frisian cities. For the time being, we cannot test this against the total figures for other Holland towns. If we can say something further about this on the basis of the total figures for the cities of Oudewater (89:315 = 28.5 percent) and Geertruidenberg (85:358 = 23 percent),⁵³ it is that an average of one in four of the urban militiamen was equipped with a firearm, which was just a little more than what we found for Sneek and Staveren.

52 Compare the high military profile of the patriciate in the cities of southern Germany: David Eltis, 'Towns and Defence in Late Medieval Germany', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 1989, 91–103, there 99–101.

53 Brünner, 'Recuel uyte overgesonden en cedullen', 124, 139.

As far as the countryside is concerned, the number of firearms counted for some Holland villages for which we have some details, was higher than those of the Frisian rural districts, although it remains difficult to make an overall judgement because many militiamen in these districts seem to have been kept out of the count as 'incompetent'. For what it is worth, I can report that the militiamen of Hazerswoude carried slightly more firearms and better quality stabbing and striking weapons than their counterparts in the average Frisian village.⁵⁴ The 303 men from this parish east of Leiden showed up with 33 buses (= roughly 11 percent), eight swords, and 96 halberds. The Waterland villages show rather urban percentages when it comes to firearms. Ransdorp had 29 men with a small arquebus (hookgun) or a *roer* (= 18 percent), three men with broadswords, and 43 halberds.⁵⁵ Zuiderwoude had 32 arquebus shooters out of 95 men (= 33.6 percent), Schellingwoude had 25 out of 64 (= 39 percent), Broek in Waterland had 20 out of 45 (44.4 percent), and even Zunderdorp had 25 out of 55 (= 45 percent). Further research is needed here also into the arming of the rural population in the Guelders' Overkwartier.⁵⁶ For the time being, however, I do not have the impression that the arming of the rural militias in Friesland differed much from that of the militiamen elsewhere in the northern Low Countries.

Summary and conclusion

All this gives us a detailed comparative insight into the armament and organisation of the Frisian urban and rural militias in the Habsburg era. The muster-rolls of 1552 make it clear that the mustering was still traditionally organised per *grietenij* and per city. Attesting to the complete lack of uniformity in approach and layout, people everywhere followed their own existing practice. This is true for the cities and the rural districts, both for each one as a whole and for each one's sub-organisation per quarter and parish. In the case of real action, the aim was to include the municipalities' and cities' quotas in large ensigns of 400 to 500 men. These units would then each be under the command of a professional captain and his staff. Although the indications of the command per *grietenij* and city are scarce, we may assume that the *grietmannen* and village judges would then also have been under that authority.

54 *Ibidem*, 130–131.

55 *Ibidem*, 125–126.

56 Gelders Archief Arnhem, Archief Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, inv.nr. 2018.

We saw that the defence did not rest on every physically healthy man personally, but on the heads of families (which could also be unmarried widows), who could delegate another male member of their house if necessary. The total number of mustered heads of households amounted to 5,353 men for the fourteen *grietenijen* whose inventories have been preserved for 1552. If we extrapolate this number for the other districts, on the basis of the proportions for the municipalities mentioned in the ordinances of 1525 and 1535, we arrive at 9,638 men, including the 321 men for Het Bildt, which did not yet belong to them in 1535. For the eleven cities this would, if extrapolated in a slightly different way, result in a total of 4,199 men. All in all, that would have amounted to 13,737 men for the whole of Friesland, excluding the islands. The number of able-bodied men between sixteen and sixty years of age who could have fought in battle would, in reality, have been greater if all young and unmarried men who had not yet started a family could have been included. However, this group was addressed when selecting 'the third man', and seems to have been the main category from which men were chosen. In fact, it was these youngsters who were actually called into the field when it was deemed necessary. This would have to be taken into account, both for the period 1525–1555 and, retrospectively, for the preceding period. The rural areas had 2,341 + about 80 (for Het Bildt) = 2,421 *monstermannen* (muster-men) available. This corresponds well with the number of 3,000 given by the Calvinist historian Everhard van Reyd before the beginning of the Revolt with respect to 'the third man on the huysluyden', which Friesland was able to summon. The cities would have offered $\frac{1}{3} \times 4,199 = 1,400$ men in 1552. Together that comes to 3,821 men.

According to the ordinances of 1528 and 1535, more than one third of that 'third man' selection had to be equipped with good armour. If we take this concept broadly, the mustering of 1552 shows that this distribution was achieved, partly with what the men had to bring on the basis of their own income and wealth, and partly with what some *grietenijen* had purchased in group armour. The purchase of group armour at that time would have been quite recent – as having been ordered to them and enforced by the stadtholder and the Court in Leeuwarden. In the period before 1525, the municipalities in question would not have had them at their disposal. It is reasonable to assume that the least equipped *grietenijen* were located in the peat and sand region or Wolden, in the southern and eastern part of the province. There were simply not enough well-to-do men there who could afford to buy armour. When Duke Albrecht of Saxony planned to lay siege to Groningen in 1499 after his inauguration in Friesland and summoned the 'fourth man' from Oostergo and Westergo to a muster place near the nunnery

of Fiswerd north of Leeuwarden, it turned out, according to chronicler Peter van Thabor, that many common men did not have armour and were only equipped with forks and sticks, which was reason why the duke sent them home immediately. Many of those men must have come from the Wolden.

In summary, we can say that the arming of the Frisian municipal militias in 1552 was relatively basic. However, it did not consist of forks and sticks alone. The boarspits or chasers, with which only the poorest category of men carried, were always equipped with spearheads with which opponents could be mortally wounded. Most of the men had the standard combination of pike and sword (*degen*). The wealthier rural muster-men, which we find mainly in the clay districts, had halberds and sometimes even broadswords. Firearms were more often carried by townsmen. One fifth of the urban militiamen were armed with them, against roughly one tenth of the farmers and peasants from the rural areas. The comparison with Holland, more specifically with the militias of Alkmaar and Waterland, showed that this equipment of the rural and urban militias in Friesland did not differ much from that in other parts of the Low Countries.

5. The deployment of popular militias in the period 1480–1500

Abstract

With the knowledge of the militias in 1552, Chapter Five retrospectively examines how the Frisian able-bodied men fought in the period 1480–1500 to preserve their country's autonomy. Three battles are analysed in particular, in which the Frisian amateurs were defeated by German *Landsknechte* of Albrecht of Saxony. The Frisian surplus in number appears to have been less than previously estimated. What counted was their inferior armament. Most militiamen were not afraid to get into combat without armour with just a pike. Their professional opponents were fully or partially clad in iron. The latter also had more handguns and even a few pieces of field artillery. The key factor, however, was that the Frisian amateurs lacked discipline and a one-headed command.

Keywords: independence war period, battles, militia defeats, small surplus number, command problem

The changing character of warfare after 1480

If we now project, with some success, the image of the organisation and armament of the Frisian militia units per city and *grietenij* half a century back in time, how can we interpret their efforts in the periods of intensive struggle shortly before 1500 and 1514–1524? First, we will start with a global overview of the battles between 1480 and 1500. The facts and deeds of the various parties are described in considerable detail in the chronicles of Peter and Worp van Thabor, the anonymous chronicle *De Phrisonum Gestis*, the so-called *Preliarius* chronicle of Abbot Jacob van Oest and his chaplain Paulus van Rixtel dealing with the Benedictine monasteries

Staveren and Hemelum, and the Groninger chronicle of Sicke Benninge.¹ It is not my intention to examine their explanations here with regard to all the separate events and to test them against other sources. That would require a study on its own.² Rather, I want to point out how often, in what way, to what extent, and with what result the Frisian urban and rural militiamen participated in the most important battles according to these texts.

In the 1480s and 90s in Westerlauwers Friesland there were often large-scale acts of violence by prominent *hoofdelingen*, trying to consolidate and increase their power and authority in and around their central location. One of the ways they did this was by entering into long-term alliances with one another, which resulted in the formation of two opposing factions or parties called Schieringers and Vetkopers. We already observed that since their inception in the fourteenth century, these parties had gradually grown into almost stable networks that were perpetuated and strengthened by fixed marriage patterns.³ The cities took part in them, often under the influence of the main families who were dominant within their territory.

Traditionally, the use of minor violence had been part of conflict regulation within Frisian society. The literature sometimes speaks of a feuding society in this respect.⁴ As we indicated in Chapter Two, the main protagonists were always prepared for violence, in the sense that each of them maintained at least a defensible stonehouse surrounded by a moat and employed one or more professional fighters. In the case of combat, they could count on the support of family members and certainly also tenants and subordinates, or, in the case of city chiefs, on a militia of able-bodied citizens. Of course, if they were *grietman*, they could call upon the *grietenij* militia, in which case they always had to convince the community of the necessity of the intended intervention. As a rule, their conflicts remained limited. They often settled them in conciliation proceedings in which

1 See the section on the sources in Chapter One.

2 Recent politico-military descriptions are missing for this period. For a brief overview, see A.F. Mellink, 'Territoriale afronding der Nederlanden', in: (*Nieuwe*) *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden V* (Haarlem 1980) 492–505, there 492–497. Compare O. Vries, 'De stêden oan it roer. It tiidrek fan stedske supremasy yn Fryslân (1482–1486)', *It Beaken* 2000, 73–99.

3 More about this in: G.J. de Langen and J.A. Mol, *Friese edelen, hun kapitaal en boerderijen in de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 2022) 156–157.

4 P.N. Noomen, 'De Friese vetemaatschappij: sociale structuur en machtsbases', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper en J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat en macht 1450–1650* (Hilversum 1999) 43–64, there 44–49.



Fig. 27. Tombstone of the Ommelander *hoofdeling* Haye Ripperda in armour († 1504) in the parish church of Farmsum. Photo Marten Timmerman.

arbitrators and mediators were called in. But it was precisely in the 1480s that some disputes got out of hand in such a way that they became intertwined and, despite many attempts at reconciliation, resulted in a civil war.⁵ The already existing dichotomy in Schieringers and Vetkopers was greatly reinforced by such disputes.

The Schieringer party had their centre of gravity in the cities and large villages of Westergo and Western Oostergo, which were dominated by considerable *hoofdelingen* families such as Harinxma, Sjaerda, Martena, Camstra and Camminga. In the 1480s and '90s, they tended towards cooperation with, and protection by, monarchs such as the Roman King Maximilian of Austria and his general Duke Albrecht of Saxony. The Vetkoper party consisted in essence of a large number of 'minor' *hoofdelingen* with positions of power in Northern Oostergo, the Boorne area, and the Southwest corner of the province. As a rule, these were always supported by freeholders from the sand and peat areas, who had inherited their own property but were not very wealthy and praised their self-government. They also had Leeuwarden as an ally – in times when it was not dominated by its prominent city *hoofdelingen*. They could furthermore count on protection from the city-state of Groningen, which had been busy imposing its own peace on the Westerlauwers Frisians since the 1420s, first in Oostergo and later also in Westergo. Because each of the two parties claimed total authority, non-alignment was not an option in the long run. Whoever had previously kept aloof had to choose sides in due course.

One factor that fostered the escalation was the deployment of mercenaries by both parties.⁶ Mercenaries were widely available after the death of Charles the Bold in 1477 and the long period of unrest that followed in the Burgundian Netherlands, the prince-bishopric of Utrecht, and the duchy of Guelders, especially during breakouts of combat there. Both parties in Friesland made use of these mercenaries. The inevitable consequence was that the conflicts became larger in scale, rougher and bloodier, and the

5 The most important and devastating of these, the feud between the *Vetkoper* Galema family and the *Schieringer* abbot Agge Thomasz. of the monasteries Staveren and Hemelum with his supporters, has recently been extensively reconstructed and dissected: M. Gerrits and J.A. Mol, 'Macht, geweld en monniken. Partijtwisten en kloosterhervormingen in de Friese Zuidwesthoek, 1482–1495', *De Vrije Fries* 93 (2013) 53–98.

6 J.A. Mol, 'Hoofdelingen en huurlingen. Militaire innovatie en de aanloop tot 1498', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat en macht 1450–1650* (Hilversum 1999) 65–84, there 77.

relationships hardened even further as a result. In all this, outside Frisian powers interfered in the conflicts, such as the aforementioned city-state of Groningen and Duke Albrecht of Saxony. They gladly responded to requests for help from one of the factions in order to realise their own ambitions. Groningen, in particular, was extremely successful until 1496, insofar as it was able to roll out its *pax Groningana* over almost all of Westerlauwers Friesland with the help of the Vetkoper party.

Nevertheless, during this period, Friesland was a communally governed area with a changing board of judges, who, for their main district (Westergo, Oostergo, Zevenwouden), district (*grietenij*, municipality), or city, had a seat in a central college (the College of *Recht en Raad*). In practice, however, the authority was largely decentralised. The real rule was exercised in the *grietenij*, the city, and even in the village. When it comes to the application of warfare on behalf of the community, it is often difficult, due to a lack of sources on the occupation of the *grietman* positions in rural areas, to determine whether the *grietmannen* went out privately, with only their own supporters, or whether they also appealed to the able-bodied men of their municipality or a number of *grietenijen* and cities. The latter seems to have regularly been the case.⁷ It will be clear that various urban and rural district militias could then come face to face with each other. During the many skirmishes, small battles, and sieges, we thus encountered groups of militiamen in the service of one of the parties or calling for, if the common land of Friesland or one of its constituent countries supported it, the turning of a common enemy, who could just as well belong to the Schieringers or Vetkopers.

In the attached diagram, the most important actions of the *grietenij* and city forces in Westerlauwers Friesland are listed. It is noted for which political unit they were deployed, to which party they belonged, who their enemy was, and by whom they were led. The numbers of men reported for each party have been taken from the chronicles, who, incidentally, hardly contradict each other. At first glance, the numbers may appear to make a real impression, but on closer inspection they cannot really, under any circumstances, be assumed to be true on the basis of the figures reconstructed for 1552.

⁷ See further on the details of the various actions in the southwestern part of Friesland (between Vlie and Lauwers) 1485–1486, with the actions of the Galamas supported by the district of Hemelumer Oldeferd versus those of the Harinxmas supported by the city of Sneek and the *grietenij* of Wymbritseradeel, among others.

Table 4. Actions of the popular militias in Friesland between 1480 and 1500

Year	Place	Land, municipalities, city, party	Enemy (Party side)	Leader(s)	Number	Result
1482	Poppin-gawier	Men from Sneek (Schierings)	Vetkopers: <i>hoofdelingen</i> Poppingawier	Edo and Hessel Jongema (Rauwerd) Pieter Harinxma (Sneek)	300	Win
1482	Engelum	Franeke and Franekeadeel (Schierings)	Vetkopers: Wybe Grovestins	Sicke Sjaerda (Franeke)		Win
1487	Leeu-warden	Oostergo and Westergo (Schierings), by ring of the bells	Vetkopers: citizens of Leeuwarden		8,000	Win
1488	Workum	Westergo? (Schier)	Vetkopers: Galama clan and helpers from Holland		4,000	Win
1491	Workum	North Wonseradeel, Wommels, Nijland, Sneker Vijfga (Schierings), bells	Vet: Galama clan, from Holland	Seerp Beyma	800	Win
1492	Barrahuis	Sneek, Wymbritseradeel and Gaasterland (Schierings)	Vet: cities of Groningen and Leeuwarden	Bocke Harinxma (Sneek)	2,000	Loss
1496	Sloten	Wold-men (Vetkopers)	Saxons and Schieringers	Ulcke Sickes, Keimpe Tjepkes	8,000	Loss
1498	Laaxum	Wold-men (Vetkopers)	Saxons and Schieringers	<i>Hoofdelingen</i> Zevenwouden	15,000	Loss
1500	Franeke (under siege)	Common land (in rebellion)	Henry of Saxony	Sjoerd Aylva, Wilcke Ringia	?	Loss
	Bomsterzijl	All districts and towns except the cities of Franeke and Leeuwarden		Tjerk Walta		
1500	Ee	Dantumadeel, Kollumerland, Achtkarspelen	Gerbrand Mockema	Schelte Tjaarda <i>grietman</i>	?	Win

A few performances from this series deserve to be highlighted. We do not start with the first one from the list (from 1482), but with an earlier one, from 1473, that still demonstrates the old model of communal deployment. In 1473, the judges of Oostergo summoned a force to besiege the *stins* (the

defensible stonehouse) of Bennert Donia in Engwierum, east of Dokkum.⁸ Bennert was, in the words of Worp van Thabor, ‘rebellious against the community, the law and the judges’. He was not really bound to a party, but he had resisted the justice of the country and therefore had to be punished with the destruction of his stonehouse. The armed forces that had been summoned were unable to take the *stins* immediately and, after three days, concluded a truce. When Bennert violated the truce, the judges of Oostergo again decided to summon their entire ‘power’ and conquer the stonehouse. After much effort, the expeditionary force captured Bennert, they threw his eighteen-strong squad into the water so that they drowned, and destroyed the *stins* by knocking down the walls. In this way, all of the members of the judicial community were able to call an unwilling *hoofdeling* to order by force of arms, without the party tie dividing the supporters.

In the years after 1480 we rarely see such an approach per municipality or group of districts. Rather, units were set up per *grietenij* or city, but always to support the party that was dominant in the territorial unit in question. For example, in 1482, the Vetkoper town of Leeuwarden attacked the Schieringer fighter Wybe Jarichs Jelkama at Heslingahuis in Poppingawier and restored the original owners to their power, who then apparently again harassed the surrounding area. This led the Schieringer brothers Edo and Hessel Jongema, at least one of whom was a *gietman* of Rauwerderhem, to summon the militiamen of Rauwerderhem and the Sneker Vijfega and also to ask the able-bodied men of Sneek under the leadership of alderman and burgomaster Pieter Harinxma for help. Chronicle-writer Worp van Thabor relays that Harinxma, after reading the letter from the Jongema brothers, got up from his bed and summoned the citizens ‘[...] in all the streets of the city of Sneek that they would be ready in armour to go to war with him’.⁹ Harinxma is said to have taken 300 men with him during Easter Week to besiege and storm Heslingahuis. If that number is correct, Harinxma’s forces would have covered three-quarters of the city militia, which seems unlikely.¹⁰ At most, the Sneker *hoofdeling* would have been able to get about 200 men.

The pattern in the 1480s was that the *hoofdelingen* of their town, *grietenij*, or a number of villages each formed a core force of a few permanent

8 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken van Friesland, boeken IV en V*, J.G. Ottema (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1850/1871) IV, 120.

9 Ibidem, 149–150.

10 See the numbers of men specified for Sneek above in the list of 1552: Mol and Van der Meer, ‘Monsterlijsten’.

men-at-arms and a few dozen mercenaries per action, to be supplemented with an auxiliary force of several hundred strong men from the town, city, or villages over which they directly (as a *grietman*, fellow judge or alderman) or indirectly (as an informal leader) wielded influence. In the chronicles these able-bodied men are usually called *huislieden*, which is to be understood literally that they each owned a house, be it as a freeholder or a tenant. As mentioned above, it is sometimes difficult to determine why groups of these men fell under the command of a particular rural *hoofdeling*. Was it because he could have summoned them to do so as a *grietman*, or rather because he had offered them compensation or other forms of *quid pro quo*? Unfortunately, we do not have enough reports of the *grietman* to be able to say anything about this. The archival sources are extremely scarce for this period and the chronicles hardly ever mention if or when these *hoofdelingen* were *grietman*.¹¹ For the already mentioned ongoing feud that was fought in the years 1482–1495 in the Southwestern region of the province, between the Vetkoper Galamas and the united Benedictine monasteries of Staveren and Hemelum with their abbot and secular retainers, we are missing all references to judicial functions of the leaders of the parties.¹² That is to say, of the Schieringer principals of Sneek, IJlst, and Sloten who supported the abbot of Staveren-Hemelum, it is known that they very regularly exercised the functions of mayor and alderman and on that basis could also call upon and lead the militias of their cities. For their opponent Galama, one mention of a *grietman*-function has been recorded, and only for an earlier period: Gale Galama was in 1467 *grietman* of Koudum, a village that was then part of the combined *grietenij* Gaasterland-Hemelumer Oldeferd and Noordwolde. We suspect that his son Ige Gales Galama and his brothers would not have been able to mobilise the men of Koudum, Warns, Molkwerum, and the Noordwolde, who followed them through thick and thin, if they had not had semi-permanent control over them as judges and administrators.

There are some indirect indications that the office of *grietman* certainly counted in this respect. One of them concerns the action that Ado Jongema, resident of Eysingahuis in Rinsumageest, undertook in 1475, together with

11 It is possible that due to short terms of office there were frequent changes of the *grietman*, which were difficult for chroniclers to keep track of for specific years. It is striking, however, that the existing *grietman* lists give very few names before 1500. See H. Baerdt van Sminia, *Nieuwe naamlijst van grietmannen van de vroegste tijd af tot het jaar 1795* (s.l. 1837), and A.J. Andreae, *Nalezing op de Nieuwe naamlijst van grietmannen van jhr.mr. H. Baerdt van Sminia* (Leeuwarden 1893).

12 Gerrits and Mol, 'Macht, geweld en monniken', 58 ff.

Syds Botnia from Tjaardahuis, and an armed retinue of an unspecified number of men, against the stonehouse of Offe Riemersma in Dokkum. They managed to capture seventeen soldiers of Offe, two of whom 'Ado Jongema, as a judge' subsequently had executed for their misdeeds.¹³ This must have meant that Ado was at that time a *grietman* of Dantumadeel and was therefore allowed and even obliged to exercise high justice and bid able-bodied men as members of his jurisdictional community to follow him. As such, he may have succeeded or alternated Syds Botnia. He was certainly the *grietman* of Dantumadeel in 1468.¹⁴

The other indication is the fact that at the election on 14 January of Juw Dekema as a *postestate* at the diet in Bolsward, the Vetkopers-minded Epo Tetes Hettinga and Tjerk Walta each had a noisy group of militiamen with them who came from the respective *grietenij* parts of Wymbritseradeel buitendijks en Wonseradeel buitendijks (i.e., the seaside parts of both districts).¹⁵ We know for sure that Tjerk Walta was Wonseradeel's *grietman* at the time.¹⁶ Epo Hettinga must also have been a *grietman*. Wymbritseradeel always had two *grietmannen* until 1498. It is possible that Epo was in charge of the southern part of the *grietenij* between the sea-dike and the inner-dike of the district. It can be added that before they were *grietmannen*, such principals could only call on the men from those villages and 'parts' that were in favour of their party. After all, it was certainly through large *grietenijen* like Wymbritseradeel, Wonseradeel, and Gaasterland that erratic dividing lines could be drawn.

It is clear that, since 1475, *hoofdelingen* who wanted to achieve military success could not do so without ad hoc hired professionals. They contracted so-called *Landsknechte* who offered themselves in fixed groups for a few weeks or months to anyone who could pay them a reasonable wage. In doing so, the *hoofdelingen* quickly responded to the new military reality of the predominance of the trained foot-soldier. In the last decades of the fifteenth century, hardened formations, acting in the form of ensigns or companies, showed themselves superior to indigenous forces everywhere in Europe, both on the battlefield and during sieges. The breakthrough was marked by the victories of the Swiss pikemen and halberdiers over the combined

13 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken IV*, 124.

14 Noomen, *Stinzen in Friesland*, appendix s.v. Rinsumageest, Tjaerda.

15 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken IV*, 213–214, literally talks about the 'huysluiden van buiten dycks, die met Epo Tetis Hettinga uut Wymbritzeradeel, ende met Tyerck Walta uut Wonseradeel, daer waeren gecoemen' (transl.: the men from the outer dike area who had come there with Epo Tetis Hettinga from Wymbritzeradeel, and with Tyerck Walta from Wonseradeel).

16 Andreae, *Nalezing lijst van grietmannen*, 86.

cavalry and infantry forces of Charles the Bold at Grandson, Murten, and Nancy in 1476 and 1477.¹⁷

The massive effort of the *Wold*-Frisians near Sloten on 13 January 1496

In Friesland, shortly before 1500, there were no Swiss infantrymen. There were, however, South German foot-soldiers, who used almost the same way of fighting as the Swiss. They hired themselves out to the highest bidders, even if this meant they had to fight each other. In 1495 and the years following, the Great Guard was particularly active in the coastal regions.¹⁸ This Guard was originally an extensive association of about 4,000 men, but it consisted of a number of loosely coupled ensign units that could also be contracted separately. It had come to the North of the Low Countries in the 1480s in the service of Maximilian of Austria and his war leader Albrecht of Saxony when they had to suppress revolts in Flanders, Brabant, and Holland. In the periods when Habsburg temporarily did not need them and could not pay them, the various Guard units also took on other jobs, including in the prince bishopric of Utrecht and the county of Cleves. In 1495 and 1496, Albrecht of Saxony had them involved in the Frisian party struggle – either to ally themselves with the city of Groningen and their *Vetkoper* friends or with the principal *Schieringer hoofdelingen* that had been cornered by Groningen and its allies – offering their services alternately to one party in turn for little money.¹⁹ In this way he did not have to pay them and was able to destabilise the situation in such a way that he could, precisely with their help, establish power there himself. The mercenary captain Wilwold von Schaumburg was his most important confidant.

17 Philippe Contamine, *La guerre au Moyen Age* (Paris 1980) 252–253.

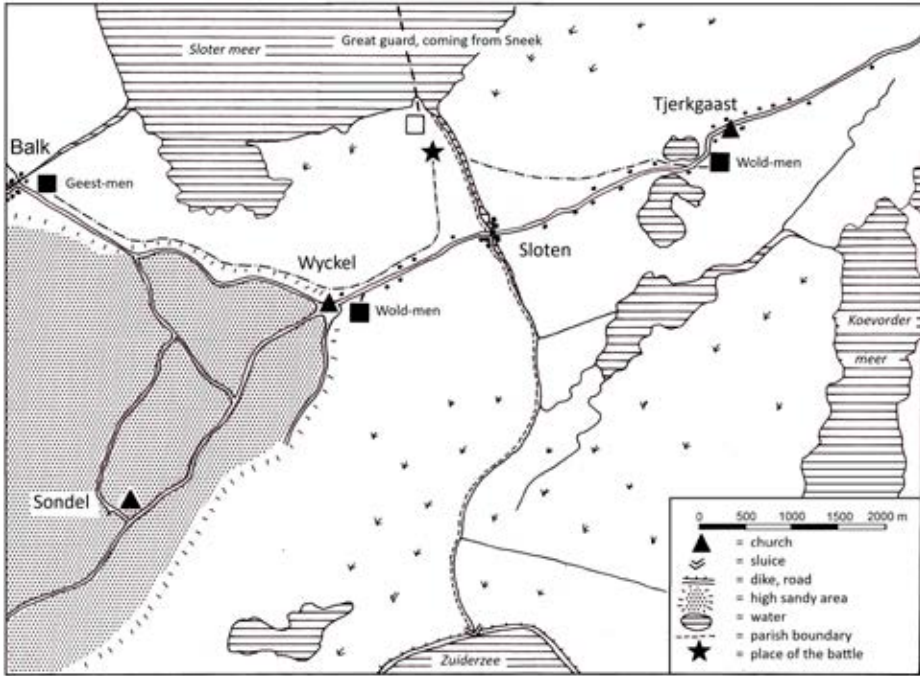
18 W. Lammers, *Die Schlacht bei Hemmingstedt. Freies Bauerntum und Fürstenmacht im Nordseeraum* (second edition, Heide 1982) 62 ff.; J.H.P. Kemperink, 'Aus der Geschichte der Grossen Garde', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte* 82 (1958) 253–264.

19 Paul Baks states that it was not until 1496, when his chances of acquiring a principality in Jülich, Berg and Ravensberg were lost, that Duke Albrecht began to show serious interest in Friesland: Paul Baks, 'Saksische heerschappij in Friesland, 1498–1515: dynastieke doelstellingen en politieke realiteit', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat and macht 1450–1650* (Leeuwarden 1999) 85–106, there 89. Compare: O. Vries, *Het Heilige Roomse Rijk en de Friese vrijheid* (Leeuwarden 1986) 170.



Fig. 28. The Great Guard at the suppression of the revolt of the *Cheese and Bread People* near Hoorn and surroundings in 1492. Engraving by Hans Burgkmair in: *Der Weisskunig*, nr. 174 (fol 280b).

The performance of the 800 men of the Great Guard, led by the infamous Neithard Fuchs, but contracted by the Schieringer *hoofdelling* Goslick Juwinga of Bolsward, who was fighting a feud that got out of hand with his Vetkoper cousins Tjerk Walta and Juw Juwinga, caused an enormous terror in Southern Westergo and part of Zevenwouden in 1495. Groningen dominated Leeuwarden and Oostergo at that time but seemed reluctant to tackle the mercenaries of Goslick Juwinga. Goslick, for his part, was not able to control his men, since he did not have enough money to pay them. The result was that the *Landsknechte*, with the city of Sneek and the small fortress of Sloten as their base of operations, robbed and set fire to the surrounding countryside. Around the turn of the year 1495/1496 this caused so much consternation



Map 4. The battle of Sloten 1496. J.A. Mol.

from the peasants in the neighbourhood that a general resistance from the *grietenijen* of Zevenwouden came about. Worp van Thabor writes that on 7 January the militiamen of the stricken district of Lemsterland came together at the stroke of a bell to resist the *Landsknechte*.²⁰ Initially, they were successful and killed more than 50 of them, including Captain Lubbert van Barneveld and an ensign-bearer. As a result, the other Wold-Frisians also found courage and decided to storm Sloten and Sneek united, in order to drive the foreign warriors out of the country.²¹

This was the moment in a long time when a massive military action of a united country was realised, at least for the still existing confederation of

²⁰ Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken* IV, 235. Compare Peter Jacobszoon van Thabor, *Historie van Vriesland*, H. Amersfoort and H.W.C.A. Visser (ed.), *Archiefvoor vaderlandsche, inzonderheit Vriesche geschiedenis, oudheid- en taalkunde* 1,2 (1824–1827) 1–110; 125–264. Reprint, with an introduction by R. Steensma (Leeuwarden 1973) 84–87, and the (unpublished) Latin chronicle *De Phrisonum Gestis*, 136–137, Tresoar Leeuwarden, Archief familie Thoe Schwartzenberg, inv. nr. 3992, which seems to have been used by Peter of Thabor as a source.

²¹ Jancko Douwama states that the district of Zevenwouden had called a meeting or a diet for this purpose: '... en de Soewen Wolden quemen vp enen dach': *Jancko Douwama's geschriften*, F.D. Fontein and J. van Leeuwen (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1849) 84.

Zevenwouden. The able-bodied men came from the districts of Lemsterland (including the regions around Oudemirdum and Oosterzee), Doniawerstal, Schoterland, Utingeradeel, Haskerland, and the small district of Aengwirden. In all probability, however, the Westergo part of Gaasterland and Hemelum Oldeferd also took part in the action because it is reported that the men not only gathered at Tjerkgaast, east of Sloten, but also at Balk, west of Sloten. The mobilisation thus applied to both the 'Wold-men' (the peat-dwellers) and the 'Geest-men' (i.e., men of the sandy regions). They had sent emissaries to the Groningers²² – who were in Leeuwarden with as many as 4,000 men – in order to persuade them to offer help and to drive the foreign soldiers out of the country.

The Groningers' initial response was positive. However, they hesitated to keep their promise because they were afraid of losing Leeuwarden since the Leeuwarders did not want to protect their city themselves. Without the Groningers, the army of Zevenwouden, according to Worp and Peter van Thabor, would have been as strong as 8,000. According to the Groninger chronicler Sicke Benninge, it would have had only 3,000 to 4,000 men.²³ Their opponents, with the 300 *Landsknechte* who camped in Sloten plus about 500 to 600 mercenaries hastily rounded up from Sneek under Neithard Fuchs, could not bring more than 800 or 900 men into the field. However, if we add up the maximum number of militiamen of the *grietenijen*, we arrive at no more than 548 men for a selection of the third man for the whole of Zevenwouden, including Stellingwerf. It is true that this third man did not represent one-third of all households. Calculated on the number of full-fledged agricultural farms in 1640, including Hemelum Oldeferd, which comprised some 3,900 farms and more or less corresponded to the number of families, it was more like one-sixth. However, if that proportion had doubled or tripled due to the high level of need, it would only have had a slight numerical predominance.

This places the battle of Sloten on St. Pontian evening (13 January) in 1496 in a different light than the one in which it has been discussed so far. The *Landsknechte* of the Great Guard coming from Sneek, with Goslick Juwinga in their midst, moved over the ice at great speed via Woudsend and set up with their colleagues from Sloten in battle order

22 It concerned Ydzert Janckis, *hoofdeling* at Langweer, Barra Rommertsma of Rottum, and Syrck Murcks.

23 *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher Landen mijten Zoeven Seelanden ende der stad Groningen*, F.A.H. van den Homberg, A. Rinzema and E.O. van der Werff (ed.): vol. I (The Hague 2012) 127–129.



Fig. 29. Field array of a *Landsknecht* formation (with the ensign-bearer in the middle). Drawing from the sketchbook by Paul Dolnstein (ca. 1503). Landesarchiv Thüringen Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Reg. 5 (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 7v–8r.

in the open field near the gallows of Sloten north of the town. They did this on purpose, it seems, because they were afraid to lose against the Wold-men in a possible siege battle. After all, the latter had previously shown themselves to be formidable opponents in man-to-man actions, showing no mercy to anyone who surrendered. That is why the mercenaries formed themselves in a closed rectangular formation or, as it was called in the military jargon of the time, they established their 'order'. That was no reason for the militiamen of Zevenwouden not to attack them. They had gathered at three places, namely, at Balk and Wyckel west of Sloten, and at Tjerkgaast on the east side. However, their commanders did not wait for all three contingents to come together (the men of Tjerkgaast first stayed where they were) and let the men of the Gaasterland side approach the *Landsknechte* at nine o'clock in the morning, which resulted in some of the mercenaries being killed and many wounded during the first storming. However, there were more casualties on the Frisian side because Neithard Fuchs and his men had a large number of arquebuses at their disposal and also managed to bring the large cannon of Sneek into position to deliver hail fire. The Frisian tactic was to surround the mercenaries and attack them from all sides, but with little success because their enemy kept rigidly in formation. As a result, many Frisians were killed or wounded, and their army had to withdraw at first. The intention was that they would then regroup by uniting with the not yet active Tjerkgaast contingent on the other side of the Sloter canal. To their surprise however, the ice on the canal, at the outlet into the lake, was weakened by water currents so that it could not carry the crowd and many drowned. The mercenaries then killed everyone who got in their way, partly as a reaction to what they had experienced before from the Wold-Frisians. The chronicler Worp van Thabor says that the mercenaries did not boast of their victory because they confessed that they would have been defeated had they not had the breaking ice on their side.²⁴ Indeed, their captains and non-commissioned officers had been wounded to such an extent that they would not have been able to lead their ensigns in the event of a renewed attack.

24 'Want sy selven bekenden ende seyden: hadden die Vriesen niet int ys verdroncken, sy hadden altesaemen geslaegen worden, ende dat daer om, want huer halue knechten waeren wel geuondt, met huer capeteinen, alsoe datse huer niet wel voel meer mochten weeren' (transl.: For they themselves confessed and said: had the Frisians not drowned in the ice, they would have been slaughtered all over, and that because their sergeants were well wounded, with their captains, so that they could not protect themselves any longer), *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken IV*, 235–238.

Rumour had it that 1,500 men had died.²⁵ In fact, the number was not this high, but the death toll was certainly considerable. Two priests who wanted to know the truth went to all the villages in Zevenwouden to count the dead and missing. They arrived at a number of 714.²⁶ Among those killed were well-known Vetkoper *hoofdelingen* such as Ulcke Sickes Douma from Akkrum, the brothers Keympe and Ulcke Tjepkes Oenema, respectively from Terkaple and Akmarijp, Hontye Bottes from Snikzwaag and Idts op Tjerkgaast. If this figure is correct, at least one-sixth of the able-bodied male population of these villages perished in the battle. This must have been a real tragedy for those who stayed behind. Jancko Douwama, who at that time was eight years old and had to mourn the loss of one (bastard) brother, three uncles, and 'many more cousins', highlights this tragedy in his *Boeck der Partijen*.²⁷ The Great Guard counted only eight dead but many wounded, including its commander Neithard Fuchs.

Renewed defeat at Laaxum and Warns, 10 June 1498

Almost two and a half years later this battle was repeated. It happened on the south side of the Warns sand ridge, not far from the coast of the Zuiderzee, in the southwestern part of the province.²⁸ Once again, it was the militiamen of the Zevenwouden rural confederation, with the assistance of contingents from Stellingwerf, Leeuwarderadeel, Achtkarspelen and Langewold, and Vredewold in the Westerkwartier district of Groningen, who marched up to defeat a *Landsknechte* group of the Great Guard. These opponents would have been largely the same men as in Sloten. However, they were not in the service of Frisian Schieringer *hoofdelingen* this time but came into action for their old general, Duke Albrecht of Saxony. He had helped the Schieringers in 1496 to expel the united Groninger and Vetkoper parties from Westergo. When that brought him too little profit, he had some of his mercenaries put into the service of the Vetkoper *hoofdeling* Tjerk Walta, in order to be temporarily relieved of the payment of wages but also to

25 Sicke Benninge talks about 1,300 of 1,400 men killed: *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher Landen*, 129.

26 Jancko Douwama mentions a number of 700: *Jancko Douwama's geschriften*, 84.

27 'God wants to comfort the souls! They shed their blood to protect their family and their possessions', was Jancko's comment on the efforts of the men of Zevenwouden: *Ibidem*, 85, and 521.

28 See in more detail J.A. Mol, 'Het militaire einde van de Friese vrijheid: de slag bij Laaxum, 10 juni 1498', *Millennium* 13 (1999) 3–20.

destabilise the situation in Westerlauwers Friesland so that he could bring it under his authority as ruler. This succeeded to such an extent that the Schieringer *hoofdelingen* were so cornered that in March 1498 they saw no other solution than to request the duke, who resided in Medemblik, to help them as a protector.²⁹ Of course, Albrecht responded to this invitation. He had himself accepted as the 'hereditary lord' of Westergo – as such he would be recognised by the Schieringers in Sneek on 30 April – and subsequently set foot on the Frisian shore under the leadership of Neithard Fuchs and Wilwold von Schaumburg. Of course, the mercenaries of Tjerk Walta did not fight their old buddies. 'One wolf didn't want to bite the other', remarked chronicler Worp van Thabor aptly. They just went back into Saxon service, to attack Oostergo with a few thousand men for Albrecht and then against Groningen. They did not succeed to take the city of Groningen, but at the end of April the Groningers were forced to conclude a very humiliating agreement, the most important provision being that they would pay the mercenaries 30,000 rhine guilders and in doing so they would relinquish their rights to and in Westergo and Oostergo to Albrecht.

After this action, Fuchs and Schaumburg retreated via Dokkum to Westergo, and dismissed most of their men in Harlingen.³⁰ The reason for this was that they had little money. Albrecht still had to pacify the rest of Friesland between Vlie and Lauwers but thought he could do so with about 1,000 men.³¹ Keep in mind that Schaumburg employed the most loyal combat units of 'Overlandtse' (= South-German) *Landsknechte* under the leadership of very experienced captains such as Thomas Slentz, Wilhelm von Harras, Bernhard Metsch, and Hans von Grombach.³² With these men and an aid corps of native-Frisian Schieringer soldiers and militiamen, Schaumburg believed he could force the city of Leeuwarden to accept and honour the duke as their new lord and break the still strong Vetkoper resistance in Central and Southern Friesland.

29 Baks, 'Saksische heerschappij in Friesland, 1498–1515', 90.

30 A large part of the Guard was active in May in the Oversticht, where they had to settle a feud with the bishop of Utrecht for the baronet Hendrik van Wisch: C.A. van Kalveen, *Het bestuur van bisschop en Staten in het Nedersticht, Oversticht en Drenthe, 1483-1520* (Utrecht 1974) 90.

31 In the (auto-)biography of Wilwold von Schaumburg, it is made clear that the protagonist only received a limited amount of money from the duke. He speaks of 1,500 'Rüstgulden'. If one knows that the average mercenary needed about 3 to 4 rhine guilders a day, that would have been an incredibly low amount. Perhaps it was presented this way, to give even more shine to Wilwold's achievement: A. von Keller (ed.), *Die Geschichten und Taten Wilwolds von Schaumburg* (Stuttgart 1859) 168.

32 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken* IV, 305. About Thomas Slentz, who would continue to lead the Great Guard after Fuchs' death, see Lammers, *Schlacht bei Hemmingstedt*, 68–71.

He gave priority to the latter. After first advancing to the Boorne area but having been able to achieve little because the Wold-Frisians near Terhorne stopped his ships with guns, he went, on 5 June, to the Southwestern part of the province, to Staveren to lure the enemy there. Because he did not have enough money and provisions to endure a long siege, it must not have been his intention to entrench himself in the town. Moreover, the number of men he had was insufficient. According to Schaumburg's biography, Fuchs and he were able to draw up 953 men in battle order ('in der ordnung bringen'), without counting the 500–600 Schieringer auxiliary troops led by Hero Hottinga and Hessel Martena.³³ This meant that their strength was little greater than that of two years earlier, which must also have applied to their opponents, the Frisian popular militias of Gaasterland, Zevenwouden, and Stellingwerf. The Schaumburg biography speaks of no less than 10,000 Frisians, in two formations of 6,000 and 4,000 men, respectively.³⁴ This number must have been grossly exaggerated by the author, again to put extra feathers in his protagonist's cap. The chronicles of Worp and Peter van Thabor, however, make it even more colourful by mentioning 15,000 Wold-men. The author of *De Phrisonum gestis* rightly notes this number appears to him to be improbably high because it would never have been possible to summon so many men from Gaasterland and Zevenwouden.³⁵

Indeed, some calculations based on the muster-rolls of 1552 discussed in the previous chapter, and the calculations we made in the previous paragraph concerning the battle of Sloten, indicate a size of at most 3,000 men, not quite double Schaumburg's quota. The Vetkoper force consisted of the militias of the Zevenwouden plus Gaasterland, Stellingwerf, Opsterland, and Smallingerland. The leaders of Zevenwouden had also sent bids for help to Leeuwarden and to Achtkarspelen and the districts of Vredewold and Langewold in the Westerkwartier in Groningen. According to Sicke Benninge, the latter two municipalities responded to this call.³⁶ If we allow that this is true, it means the able-bodied men of fifteen *grietenijen* would have risen up. The number of militiamen that is known for four of these districts in

33 *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 132–133, is talking about 600 or 700 German soldiers and 500 or 600 Frisians. The Schaumburg biography barely mentions the Frisian auxiliaries and presents it in such a way that the *Landsknechte* were able to manage on their own.

34 Von Keller, *Geschichten und Taten*, 170.

35 *De Phrisonum gestis*, 146: *Nam collectus erat in terra Geestensis, ingens exercitus ut aiunt quindecim milium virorum ex Silvanis et Geestensibus, quod mihi haud verisimile aparet tantum exercitum ex illis partibus rogi potuisse.*

36 Sicke Benninge, *Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 137.

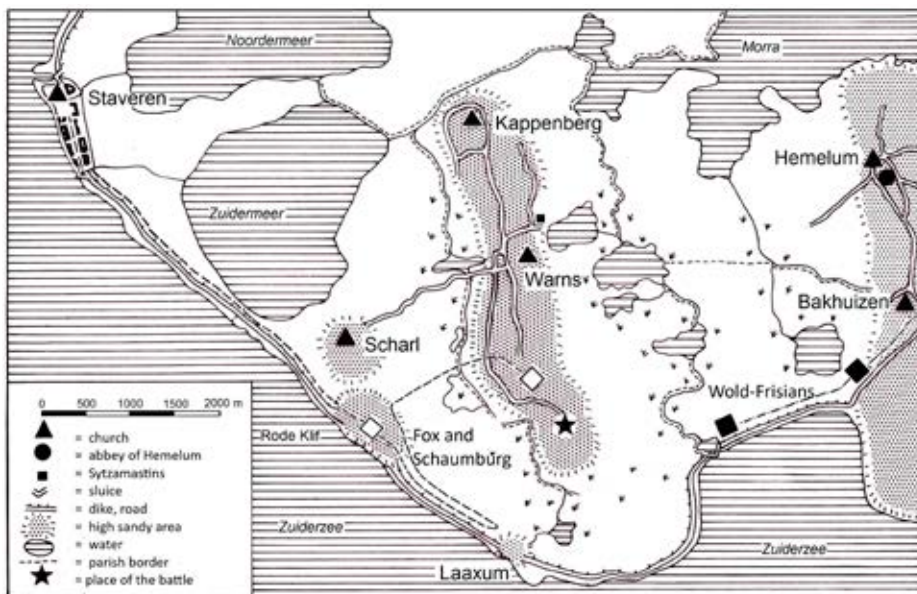
1552 does not exceed 950 men.³⁷ The mentioned *grietenijen* were not the most densely populated of that part of the province, but if we estimate with a high conversion factor for the rest, that brings us to barely 6,000 men who could handle a weapon, apart from the 300 men from Leeuwarden and Leeuwarderadeel. These 6,000 men could never have all gone to war at the same time.³⁸ Even then there must have been a selection of the third or the second man. After all, in an unexpected defeat in which all the fighters were killed, there had to be enough men left to keep the family businesses going. Reason enough not to estimate the size higher than the 3,000 mentioned above. It may as well have been a surplus, which will also have been a motive for Schaumburg and Fuchs to try to meet their opponents in battle order on the open field, just like in Sloten. This had to be done near Warns because the Wold-Frisians logically came from the east, gathering their troops at Bakhuizen and Mirns.

During the night, from Saturday to Sunday 10 June, Wilwold von Schaumburg and his men marched from Staveren along the sea dike to the so-called Red or High Cliff, just south of the village of Scharl. Peter van Thabor recounts that the battle started at four or five o'clock in the morning on the High Cliff, but that is impossible.³⁹ From the data provided by Schaumburg's biographer on the course of the battle it can be deduced that the Frisians were stationed behind a lock or sluice and were waiting there for reinforcements from Leeuwarden. He reports that at dawn the Saxon soldiers observed a large enemy force at a location from which water could flow out and into the land (or so it is explained to readers who were unfamiliar with the Frisian landscape). That could not have been any spot other than the sluice in the Ouddijk near the Kolk behind the Wielpolder. Its purpose was to discharge the excess water from the low land between the moraines of Warns and Hemelum-Bakhuizen into the Zuiderzee via the Potsloot. If one knows that this is a drainage sluice, one can easily see this spot from the twelve-metre High Cliff with good visibility. I therefore conclude that Schaumburg first stopped his formation on that Cliff. What

37 Namely, Achtkarspelen 231, Gaasterland (including Mirdumerland) 227, Lemsterland 223, and Doniawerstal 268.

38 In my 1998 essay on the battle of Laaxum, I wrongly made this assumption: Mol, 'Slag bij Laaxum', 12.

39 It is ironic, to say the least, that at the very place where the so-called Frisian Movement commemorates the victory over Holland invaders in 1345 (which took place just west of Staveren at the Benedictine St. Odulfs Abbey, rather than at the Red Cliff) every year on 26 September, and thus the preservation of Frisian freedom, the battle began that would eventually cause the Frisians to lose their freedom.



Map 5. The battle of Laaxum 1498. J.A. Mol.

the vanguard of the *Landsknechte* and, later, their captains saw was a forest of long skewers or pikes, carried by Wold-Frisians. The pikes were so long because they were also used as poles to jump across ditches.⁴⁰ It must have been easy for Fuchs' mercenaries to identify them because they had come into contact with these weapons before.

The situation forced consultations between the two chief commanders. While Schaumburg prepared his men in battle order, Fuchs took some time for further reconnaissance. With the words 'das ungeziffer ist viel' he would have noticed that the difference in numbers was very large. Taking into account the difficult low terrain to the east of the Cliff, Schaumburg decided to go forward in battle order but to simulate a retreat, in order to challenge the Frisians beyond the lock to a disorderly hunt.⁴¹ This was a

40 'Der [Schaumburg] besach sie selbst, liess sich beduncken das er in einen walt sehe, den die indem lant gar vil und vier schuech lenger spis den die unsern lantsknecht haben, heissen sie schotten; haben am ndern ort schuben, damis sie in dei mosigen graben setzen wen si uberspringen, das sie niet bestecken'. (transl.: He [Schaumburg] examined it himself, and thought he saw almost a forest of pikes, of which the Frisian possessed many; pikes which are four feet longer than the ones of our *Landsknechte*, which they call *schotten*; these have a disc underneath, with which they place the spears in the swampy ditches when they jump over them, so that they do not get stuck): Von Keller, *Geschichte und Taten*, 169.

41 *Ibidem*, 170.

daring manoeuvre, about which he first had to inform all his *Landsknechte* in order to prevent the organised flight from ending in chaos. However, the war plan did not succeed. According to Schaumburg's biographer, the Wold-Frisians were like geese: they stretched their necks but did not want to move. Schaumburg and Fuchs slightly panicked ('erschracken hart') and hesitated about what to do next.

The solution was offered by a Frisian soldier from Hero Hottinga's aid contingent. He proposed going 'across the moat' to the nearby village past a nobleman's house he knew, from where the troop could approach the enemy with dry feet. This moat must have been the Potsloot flowing west of Warns. The village was then of course Warns, with the stonehouse called Sytzama east of the church. The unpublished Latin text of the Hemelum monastic chronicle *Preliarius* also says that Warns was the place where the battle eventually took place.⁴² According to the author, there was an encounter '[...] *in campum spaciosum prope villam Warns*'. The three ships with artillery and other war equipment that belonged to this encircling movement were also docked and unloaded somewhere, 'zum steigen und stirmen', which is Schaumburg's story. In this way, the Saxon guns and arquebusses could be brought to the high ground and Schaumburg and Fuchs obtained an excellent starting point for a battle on the southeast side of the Warnzer sand ridge, halfway between the central neighbourhood of Warns and the small height of Laaxum.⁴³ They pointed their guns to the wind and set fire to the village in numerous places to challenge opponents to storm in on them. According to their custom, the *Landsknechte* first knelt down to pray for success and fortune in battle.⁴⁴

This time, the plan worked. One of the two large groups of Frisians – according to the Schaumburg story, about 6,000 men strong – marched in

42 *Preliarius*, Tresoar Leeuwarden, hs. 1383, 26. In the edited translation, by J.G. Ottema, *Proeliarius of strijdboek, bevattende de jongste oorlogen in Friesland* (Leeuwarden 1855) 44, this passage is missing, with the result that there is a gap in the story.

43 Because the battle did take place within the parish boundaries of Warns, we should speak of the battle of Warns from now on. But that would create confusion with an earlier battle there, which was fought in 1494 as part of a feud between the Vetkoper Galama clan and the Schieringer Harinxma's: *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken IV*, 225–226. In order not to make things too complicated for the general public that still mistakenly links the name of Warns with the battle of Staveren of 1345, I think it would be better to use the name of Laaxum used by Worp van Thabor for the battle of 10 June 1498. Warnzer Zuidburen and Laaxum, although originally separated by a swampy low area, are close enough to each other.

44 This is not only told by the biographer of Schaumburg but also by Jacob van Oest, abbot of the abbey of Staveren/Hemelum in the *Preliarius*, p. 26: *In quo loco [Warns] genua flectens cum suis Deoque se committens consummata prece surrexit, suisque bene dispositis in ordine belli bombardis emissis strages silvestrium magna facta est.*



Fig. 30. Professional arquebussiers around 1500. Detail from the painting *David and Abigail*, by Jacob van Oostsanen, 1507–1508. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Art, nr. KMSsp734.

their direction. Although the Frisian chronicles do not give any details about the exact course of events, they do hint that the Wold-Frisians were indeed tempted to go on the attack, albeit prematurely because the Leeuwarders had not yet arrived. Apparently, the captains could not agree with each other about the tactics to be followed. By the way, only the author of the *Proeliarius* knows who those captains were. He appoints the Vetkoper *hoofdeling* Douwe Gales Galama (Dodo Galess) of Akkrum as the one who took the initiative to mobilise with the citizen Jarich Harings of Workum.⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, Douwe Galama was also a veteran of the battle of Sloten more than two years before. This applied as well to the men Peter van Thabor appointed as the *hoofdelingen* from Zevenwouden who died at Warns, namely, Barra Rommertsma of Rottum, Eba Solckes Meynama of Oldeouwer, and Meyna Syuurds of Rotsterhaule.⁴⁶ In view of their principal positions, it is obvious that they acted as commanders of *grietenij* or village units.

They did not act tactically wise then. Jancko Douwama and Worp of Thabor offer a lot of criticism regarding the outrageous behaviour of the

45 Ibidem, 26; compare Ottema, *Proeliarius*, 45. By the way, Douwe Gales was very experienced and hardened in military matters: Gerrits and Mol, 'Macht, geweld en monniken', 63, 72–79.

46 Peter van Thabor, *Historie van Vrieslant*, 134.

Wold-Frisians. There would have been two opinions among them. One group, with the already collected force majeure, wanted to attack the mercenaries directly. The other group, consisting of sensible people ('who had some knowledge'), wanted to await the arrival of the Leeuwarders, who were no more than half a mile away. The first group, qualified as mad by Douwama, however, shouted that they had to hurry because otherwise the *Landsknechte* would escape 'and keep them going all summer long'.⁴⁷ They trotted selflessly to the front, disconnected and 'scattered in the field'. The other group remained standing, with the result that two groups were visibly formed. These could have been the two large groups that Schaumburg saw.

Before the front militiamen hit the lines of the *Landsknechte*, large and small arquebusses were shot. The Wold-Frisians would have fired first,⁴⁸ but they aimed too high according to the Schaumburg report. Only one German soldier, from the county of Fürstenberg, was hit. In contrast, the hail-loaded firearms of the Germans had a great effect. According to almost all chroniclers, the Saxon field artillery alone would have made it to the Wold-Frisians. The front men fled, inspired in part by the realisation that some of their fellow combatants had not followed them. Once they saw there was no way to rectify this, there was no stopping them from fleeing. 'So many a man, so many a path', writes Jancko Douwama. Peter van Thabor calls it a disgrace for all people and countries that they fled without 'hantweringhe', that is without having really taken on the fight from man to man.⁴⁹

Schaumburg's biographer, however, paints a different picture. He writes that the flight only started after the Frisians had fought with their pikes against the foremost men of the *Landsknechte* phalanx. He explains that Schaumburg's success was partly due to his clever move to place halberdiers and broadsword fighters between the pikemen: they struck down the Frisian pikes with their weapons and held them low so that the next line could stab the enemies before they drew their weapons. After two lines were brought down in this way, the front Frisians of the first attack wave would have turned to flee, and, as expected, forced the next rows to move back as well so that everyone would have started running for their lives. However, it is questionable whether this standard tactic – which was also carried out on many other battlefields by elite soldiers who had to mow down enemy pikes with two-handed swords in front of their own lines – was

47 *Jancko Douwama's geschriften*, 97.

48 If this is true, it could only have been a few shots: as early as 1552 the men of Zevenwouden had few *roeren* and arquebusses at their disposal.

49 *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 134.

applied here. Such an encounter would have resulted in many more men being killed and wounded than was the case.

The *Landsknechte* maintained their formation until they saw that the second group of Frisians had also made a run for it. Schaumburg then gave his mercenaries the signal to go hunting themselves, with the words 'wer nu laufen und was guts tun mag, der saum sich nit'.⁵⁰ Because the Germans descended in a southeast direction from the Warns' sand ridge, the fleeing Frisians had no choice but to flee over the sluice to Bakhuizen and Mirns. This of course led to chaos up and along the narrow dyke road. Men took off their armour, threw away their weapons, and ran away in blind panic. According to Sicke Benninge, who mourned the death and imprisonment of many in Langewold and Vredewold, a lot escaped in their bare shirts towards Sloten and Tacoziyl.⁵¹ The chronicle *De Phrisonum gestis* gives as a detail that some tried to escape by swimming over the later diked bay between Roode Schuur and the Mirnzer Cliff.⁵² The result was that many militiamen died by drowning.

As far as the number of dead, wounded, and prisoners is concerned, however, the impression among the Frisian chroniclers is that this was anything but high. Worp van Thabor mentions a total of one hundred Frisians wounded. Peter van Thabor and the anonymous *De Phrisonum gestis* author keep it at 150, excluding the fighters who died by drowning. For the German mercenaries, they counted only one wounded and three dead: all three soldiers were hit by water while chasing the Wold-Frisians. These figures are surprisingly low compared to those for the battle of Sloten. They make it clear that there was no serious confrontation. In that respect, the figure of 5,000 militiamen killed by the *Landsknechte*, given by the Schaumburg biographer, can only be a fantasy figure that was intended to boost the success of the hero of the story.

Thus, the battle of Laaxum ended more than the battle of Sloten in an embarrassing defeat for the Wold-Frisians, with the result that Schaumburg and Fuchs were able to continue their conquest of Albrecht unhindered. This had a domino effect. Thus, in time, the Boorne area and Leeuwarden was also subdued – albeit with some difficulty because the city showed itself rebellious again after the first occupation. Nevertheless,

50 Literally: 'he who runs now and can do something good, should not spare himself': Von Keller, *Geschichten und Taten*, 172. The intention is of course: those who want to get booty grab their chance now.

51 Sicke Benninge, *Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 137.

52 *De Phrisonum gestis*, 147.

the mercenary captains had laid a solid foundation for the establishment of a new lordly authority of their patron over all of Westerlauwers Friesland.⁵³

Militiamen serving the Saxon government

If the above may have given the impression that the Saxon-Schieringer armed forces consisted only of professional soldiers, this is incorrect. We have already reported that Schaumburg and Fuchs marched together with Hessel Martena and Hero Hottinga, about whom we know that, in addition to their own small group of professional soldiers called 'Frisian Knechts', they also brought in militias from the cities and *grietenijen* they dominated. Hessel Martena, for example, would have taken many men from Menaldumadeel, Franeker, and Franekeradeel, while Hottinga undoubtedly commanded a contingent from Hennaarderadeel. Peter van Thabor says clearly that the Saxon captain Wilwold von Schaumburg marched 'with some militiamen following them'.⁵⁴

The villages and *grietenijen* made decisions first and foremost for their own sake and with their own principals and regional militias. This can be seen in the skirmish at Wirdum between the Leeuwarders returning from Laaxum and the able-bodied men from Wirdum and Idaarderadeel who, under the leadership of the *hoofdeling* Aucke Kempes Unia, had taken positions at either side of the dike near the windmill of Wirdum. The latter hesitated about whether or not to resist the city militia of Leeuwarden because he and his colleague Ede Jongema from Rauwerd had made an oath of allegiance to Duke Albrecht. After some bickering about whether or not they had free passage through the country, the groups on the dike were defeated. The Leeuwarders got the upper hand and managed to disperse the militiamen from Wirdum. Twelve wealthy freeholders were beaten to death by the Leeuwarders.⁵⁵ Aucke Kempes was twice overrun but managed to escape. He then recruited forty mercenaries for the occupation of his *stins* in Wirdum to wage 'open war' against Leeuwarden in the following months.

53 This was – for the sake of clarity – accompanied by a great deal of terror from robbing and burning, which brought the permanently occupied territories to a formal acceptance of the Saxon authority.

54 Peter van Thabor, *Historie van Vrieslant*, 138–139.

55 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken IV*, 302–303. Worp speaks of men who owned farmsteads with voting rights.

That the militia defence system still worked for the Schieringer regions is evident from the fact that when the Schieringer *hoofdelingen*, at the first siege of Leeuwarden, were informed that the city contingents of Groningen would come to Leeuwarden, they summoned ‘... the second man from all the parts of Westerlant’.⁵⁶ This group, however, was allowed to return home when it turned out that the men from Groningen did not show up. At the second siege, the day after St. Bernard’s Day (20 August), the Schieringers came again with militiamen from the five northern *grietenijen* of Westergo. Schaumburg did not consider their efforts worthwhile and sought a solution in levying a tax of 4,500 rhine guilders, to be imposed on Oostergo, which was now apparently considered to have the greatest interest in the subjugation of its capital.

After the Saxon authority over Westerlauwers Friesland had been firmly established at the end of 1498 and Albrecht could once again turn his gaze to Groningen, the question was whether he could use the militiamen – now from the entire area between Vlie and Lauwers – for his conquest plans. Just as with the Leeuwarden siege, the answer seems to have been a matter of calculation. Professionals were decisive but expensive. However, their wages could only be raised by imposing heavy taxes on the cities and *grietenijen*. The deployment of able-bodied men might have been ineffective up to that point but they cost the prince relatively little money. With only 300 mercenaries on the payroll to be distributed among the various new and old fortifications and strongholds, there was little to do at first. In the summer of 1499, Albrecht, who in the meantime had appointed his own new, mainly Schieringer *grietmannen* throughout Westergo and Oostergo, had a selection of ‘the fourth man’ with their full equipment mustered by these administrators to see if he could use them for a siege of Groningen. We already reported that when they were gathered at the abandoned nunnery of Fiswerd to the north of the city, they would have been sent home by the duke because they were too poorly armed – it is said that many militiamen only had sticks and forks at their disposal and lacked any form of armour.⁵⁷ Whether that was really the case is hard to say. This mustering, and its negative results, may also have been deliberately organised to make the *grietenijen* aware of the need for new heavy tax burdens. It became clear that instead of fulfilling compulsory military service, a hefty tax had to be paid amounting to a twelfth part of

⁵⁶ Peter van Thabor, *Historie van Vrieslant*, 139.

⁵⁷ About Fiswerd, see J.A. Mol, ‘De Grauwe Bagijnen van Leeuwarden’, *Leeuwarder Historische Reeks* 3 (1992) 61–106, there 75–76.

everyone's income from rents and leases – a tax which, in fact, would be followed by other taxes the following year and for which no permission from the common land was requested.⁵⁸

Rebellion against the dukes: the siege of Franeker, 1500

The new taxes caused almost the entire country to revolt against Albrecht's son Henry, who succeeded his father as hereditary lord to Friesland and, after Albrecht's departure, took over the honours as 'Verweser' (lit. guardian or administrator).⁵⁹ This time, the unrest did not start in Leeuwarden or the Boorne region but in the surroundings of Bolsward, which until then had fully supported the Saxon duke in his ambitions.⁶⁰ The reason was that shortly after Annunciation Day (25 March), Duke Henry had circulated letters of bidding to impose a new tax on each *grietenij*, depending on its size and wealth, with the consignment that it had to be paid within a week. The amounts involved ranged from 50 to 250 rhine guilders per municipality. These had to be apportioned over the rental value of the land. For many villages and towns, this was an enormous burden because they were still behind in paying the taxes of the so-called twentieth and twelfth penny from the previous year, which meant that every landowner still had to pay one-twentieth and one-twelfth part of his annual income. So, the reaction was that the money could not be raised in the short term. However, the young duke, who clearly wanted to appear to be strong, showed no consideration. On 21 April, he had Hessel Martena, an ever-faithful ally and accomplice to Duke Albrecht, and 250 *Landsknechte* move from Franeker to Bolsward in order to exert pressure on the unwilling taxpayers. This *hoofdeling* ordered all villages in the vicinity of Bolsward to pay both their old and new taxes before 25 April (St. Mark's Day) or they would be charged double. When Haring Douwes from Abbega arrived with his village's tax money on, not before, the 25th, Hessel imprisoned him, demanded an extra amount, and threatened to pawn his fortified house in Abbega to get it. He then brutally put his words into action by threatening his prisoner with death in front of his *stins* and demanding that his wife and his weapon-bearing servants deliver

58 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 5.

59 For the following, see in particular *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 7–11. Compare *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 150–153.

60 It is mainly Jancko Douwama who draws attention to this. He writes that the men of Wonseradeel thought they could count on some clemency because they were the ones who had helped to drive out the Groningers: *Jancko Douwama's geschriften*, 106–107.

the house. Subsequently, on 26 April, he set fire to the houses in Schraard of those who had not yet paid their dues. Of course, all this created bad blood on what had previously been Schieringer farmers and city-dwellers. A sign of this is that when one of the *Landsknechte* who occupied the house in Abbega on behalf of Hessel Martena went to the town of IJlst on 27 April to buy a loaf of bread, he was taken by a number of IJlster citizens and drowned in the canal.

The reaction of the peasants and farmers in western Wonseradeel was even more severe. On the evening of that same day, sixty to seventy peasants and farmers from eight villages (Allingawier, Piaam, Idsegahuizen, Makkum, Zurich, Schraard, Pingjum, and Arum), marched armed to Bolsward to raid the mercenaries of the Saxons at night.⁶¹ They were successful because they managed to stab 100 German *Landsknechte* to death. Peter van Thabor does not know what exactly happened to Hessel Martena. However, we can guess that this Schieringer war-horse took the remaining mercenaries to Franeker as soon as possible.⁶² On 29 April, the eight villages held a meeting with delegates from a number of other *grietenijen* in the Cistercian abbey of Bloemkamp (*Floridus Hortus*) near Hartwerd, just northeast of Bolsward, where they chose the *hoofdeling* Syurd Aylva of Schraard as their captain. Together with a number of other Vetkoper-minded *hoofdelingen*, namely, Tjerk Walta, Douwe Hiddema, and Doytse Bonga, he proposed besieging the duke in Franeker or Harlingen, first of all by occupying the moated Augustinian priory of Ludingakerke and the villages Herbajum and Tzum.⁶³ He and Wilcke Ringia, on behalf of Westergo and Oostergo, called upon all the towns, *grietenijen*, and villages from Staveren to Gerkesbrugge to enter into an alliance and help besiege Franeker in order to expel Henry of Saxony and his men who were entrenched there.

This took a lot of effort because it had to be determined who wanted to participate and who chose to stay uninvolved. Jancko Douwama elaborates on this in his *Boeck der Partijen*, written more than twenty years later. He claims to be able to show three more mandates sealed by Aylva and Ringia

61 Extensively recounted by *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 150–151. Strangely enough, the story of this robbery is completely absent in the chronicle of Worp, causing a curious gap in the sequence of events presented by him.

62 Jancko Douwama mistakenly believes that Duke Henry himself was in Bolsward, and that the men from Wonseradeel could easily have caught him if they had not had more of an eye for the plundering of slain *Landsknechte*.

63 The siege began, at least with the occupation of these villages, on 1 May. It is also dated in a letter to Henry's brother Georg of Saxony dated 7 May: Tresoar, Archief bestuur Saksische hertogen, inv. nr. 401.

daughter of Epe Tetes Hettinga whose strongholds had been destroyed by the Saxons in Abbega and Hommerts. As a result, eventually, the Wold-Frisians decided to move to Franeker. Only the men from Stellingwerf refrained from participating because they considered themselves bound by their oath to the duke.

As far as Westergo and Oostergo are concerned, the response was quite general, apart from the towns of Franeker and Harlingen with their direct surroundings. Only Sneek would have hesitated at first because its city *hoofdeling*, Schelte Liauckema, who had succeeded the recently deceased Bocke Harinxma junior as an alderman, had remained Saxon-minded. This also applied to the mayors. However, the common citizens wanted to follow Syurd Aylva and the allied districts. They dismissed the city council on 14 May and chose a new one that decided that for the siege of Franeker the city militia would permanently be represented in the army with one quarter ('verndeel'). The four town quarter groups would relieve each other for Franeker on a weekly rotating basis.⁶⁵

An attempt was made to reconcile the parties by the pastor of Rauwerd and the prior of the Hospitaller convent near Sneek, among others, but with little success. As soon as the Frisians learned that Duke Henry did not mind leaving Friesland, they narrowed the siege ring around Franeker by setting up army camps in four places at short distance from the city: at Miedum (just south), Lankum (west), Dongjum (north), and Oud Sjaerdemagoed (east).⁶⁶ The occupation was organised by *grietenij* and city according to the still prevailing militia principles, taking into account the route and distance to everyone's home base. Thus, Wonseradeel and Bolsward were situated near Doyem and Miedum; Barradeel near Lankum; the Oostergo *grietenijen* Dongeradeel, Dantumadeel, Tietjerksteradeel, Achtkarspelen and Kollumerland in Dongjum; while Menaldumadeel, Baarderadeel, Idaarderadeel and the Zuidertrimdeel of Leeuwarden (Wirdum) were bivouacked near Oud Sjaerdema. Also, a contingent would have been stationed later at Dronrijp ('Rypstera army'). The men of Zevenwouden had to arm themselves at Hallum, apparently to avert and counter threatening dangers from the east. Ferwerderadeel and approximately 300 men were said to have taken up post at the nunnery of Fiswerd near Leeuwarden⁶⁷ to prevent foreign

65 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 10.

66 *Ibidem*, 11–12.

67 This figure, given by Worp, seems too high when it is known that the total potential of this *grietenij* in 1552 was 507 men. Three out of five able-bodied men would then have been outnumbered. Compared to the one out of four of Sneek (one out of four districts each week), this is highly unlikely.

Landsknechte from being brought into the blockhouse fort of Leeuwarden, which was still in Saxon hands. Those of Sneek and Wymbritseradeel were first deployed to take the blockhouse in Sloten together with the men of Gaasterland, which they finally succeeded in doing on 20 May. The militias of Franeker, Franekeradeel, and Noord-Leeuwarderadeel that are missing in this overview probably gave their support to the besieged.

According to Worp van Thabor, the participating cities and *grietenijen* chose a war council in which Westergo was represented by three men, and Oostergo and Zevenwouden by two men each. This council immediately issued taxes in order to take on a number of mercenaries.⁶⁸ At the same time, they sent bids to Groningen requesting permission to borrow a number of guns to breach the defence of Franeker. After some negotiations, Groningen made two guns available to them: their large bus and a smaller one called a *cartouw*. However, this did not happen until after each church in Oostergo and Westergo made a silver chalice available to serve as a pawn.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Groningers and Frisians, represented by the renowned Douwe Gales Galama and Edo Jongema, solemnly agreed to stand by each other with body and soul and to come to each other's aid against all lords and foreign mercenaries.

The battles of Warfumerzijl, Bomsterzijl, and Miedum, 1500

Meanwhile, the rumour of the rebellion had penetrated Saxony over the course of May, where it would have been received with disbelief, fear, and vengefulness. After all, Duke Albrecht saw not only the survival of his newly acquired rule threatened, but also the life of his youngest son. He immediately summoned the emperor and his high-ranking relatives, electors, and other lords to help him relieve Henry. The Schaumburg biographer paints a gripping picture of this, presenting his own hero as the organizer and designer of the counteraction. Whether this is true, I would like to leave here as an open question. In the reports of the Frisian chroniclers, the name

68 This is according to an undated cedula (24 May) that ended up in the archives of the dukes of Saxony. The news that the Saxons could have intercepted it seems to have alarmed them very much because they were afraid that the Frisian insurgents would take on mercenaries from the defeated Great Guard who had fought for the Danish king at Hemmingstedt: Tresoar, Archief bestuur Saksische hertogen, inv.nr. 404.

69 Worp reports that the Groningers sold the chalices after the uprising without giving the Frisians – some of whom were in exile in Kampen – the opportunity to pay for them, which was against the sealed agreement.

of Schaumburg is not mentioned. Nevertheless, in Meissen, a group of a few thousand *Landsknechte* was formed with the men of the *landgrave* of Hesse, among others, and Albrecht's cousin, Johann of Saxony. On 24 June, this group went, with artillery, tools, and forage, to Friesland, possibly led by loyal sub-commanders such as Wilwold von Schaumburg.⁷⁰ The expedition went from Meissen via Salza in Thuringia, through the Land of Brunswick and the diocese of Hildesheim, as well as through the north eastern part of Münsterland to Emderland in the county of Ostfriesland.

However, the coalition was further extended. In the middle of June, nineteen ships were sent from Holland under the command of Frederik van Egmond van IJsselstein, nicknamed Schele (cross-eyed) Gijs, and his son Floris.⁷¹ After a few days of sailing off the Frisian west coast, they decided to head for Ostfriesland to join the group of Count Edzard and Duke Erik of Brunswick-Calenberg, who had also offered their services to Duke Albrecht.⁷² The latter was married to Albrecht's eldest daughter. All these men were experienced army captains. Together, they had a mercenary army of about 4,000 men, consisting mainly of foot-soldiers but also a few equestrian units, with which they were able to move in Groningerland before Albrecht had arrived there. They marched along the town of Appingedam, which Edzard had conquered shortly before, and headed in the direction of Winsum. That was to bypass the city of Groningen, which, in the meantime, had its troops on standby and, together with a part of the Ommelanden, had decided to prevent them from passing through. The militiamen of the districts Marne and the Halfambt of Hunzingo stood up at Warffumerzijk, a lock in the Delthe, just east of Warffum. Despite the arrival of another 60 armed horsemen from Groningen, they were unable to withstand the force majeure and were defeated in a short fight on 30 June. Their captains, the *hoofdelingen* Jarch ter Borgh (of Warffhuizen) and Iwe tho Ewer (of Zuurdijk), perished. More than 150 men of their group are said to have been captured. The army of Brunswick then stopped in the surroundings of Winsum to await the arrival of Duke Albrecht. In the meantime, the city militia of Groningen, which had stopped there earlier, had regained the security of their own walls. The militias of the Western Ommelanden, i.e., Langewold, Vredewold, Humsterland, and Middag, took positions west of the Hunze

70 Von Keller, *Geschichten und Taten*, 184.

71 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 16.

72 For the following see especially the story in *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 156–159. Erik of Brunswick pledged his support on 29 May: Tresoar, Archief bestuur Saksische hertogen, inv. nr. 408.

and the Reitdiep, between Aduarderzijl and Oostum to hinder the Saxon coalition's crossing. But they, too, had little to contribute and decided to retreat when 200 *Landsknechte* succeeded in crossing the Reitdiep on 6 July.⁷³ Two days later, the contingent arrived from Saxony, led by the old duke himself, which, according to Sicke Benninge and Peter van Thabor, would have brought the entire army to a force of 8,000 or 9,000 men.⁷⁴ However, if we add up the previously given numbers for the Saxons (2,000) and the Brunswick group (4,000), we arrive at a lower number. Even with these numbers, this would have, at that time, made a formidable army especially since it consisted almost exclusively of professionals and had a large amount of firepower. Sicke Benninge speaks in this context of 'a miraculous number of guns and artillery: of arquebusses, *kartouwen*, serpents and half serpents, *kaerbussen* and field artillery'.

The Westerlauwers Frisians had recognised the danger. At Bomsterzijl, at the strategic spot where the main dike road from Noordhorn to Gerkesbrugge crosses the Hoerediep,⁷⁵ they had hastily erected a ramp or stronghold behind the lock they had destroyed and the water course, along the Hoege Venne.⁷⁶ There they had stationed part of their armed forces. This logically included the Zevenwouden contingent, part of the Oostergo militia, and a separate group of 1,000 men who had been especially selected from the Franeker camp. Commanders were the *hoofdeling* Asego van Mantgum, Aucke Kempes Unia of Wirdum (who apparently had now chosen the anti-Saxon side), Wattye Harinxma of Sloten, Botte Sterkenburg of Sibrandahuis, Worp Tjaarda of Rinsumageest, his brother Tete, and Gerbrand Mockema. Their total strength is hard to estimate. The well-known story is that they

73 The date can be found at *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken* V, 22.

74 *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 158; Peter van Thabor, *Historie van Vrieslant*, 155.

75 Since the middle of the sixteenth century, Niezijl counted two locks or discharge sluices: the Bomsterzijl and the 'New' zijl (= lock). The Bomsterzijl, on the west side, is the oldest. The other lock, fed by the Nijezijlsterdiep canal, was only dug in Habsburg times. The Bomsterzijl thus regulated the water discharge from the Hoerediep: G.H. Ligterink, *Tussen Hunze en Lauwers. Kultuur-historische schetsen uit het Groninger Westerkwartier* (Groningen 1968) 64. The Bomsterzijl must therefore have been located west of the Hoerediep.

76 That it was a strategic location is evidenced by the fact that in 1516 the Burgundians built a new stronghold here in order to block the Guelders' troops, which were advancing from Aduard. And in 1580–1581 there was a *schans* (bulwark), occupied by State troops until 1589, when Willem Lodewijk started his counter-offensive against the government troops operating from Groningen city: J.F.J. van den Broek, *Voor God en mijn Koning: het verslag van kolonel Francisco Verdugo over zijn jaren als legerleider en gouverneur namens Filips II in Stad en Lande van Groningen. Drenthe, Friesland, Overijssel en Lingen (1581–1595)* (Assen 2009) 110.

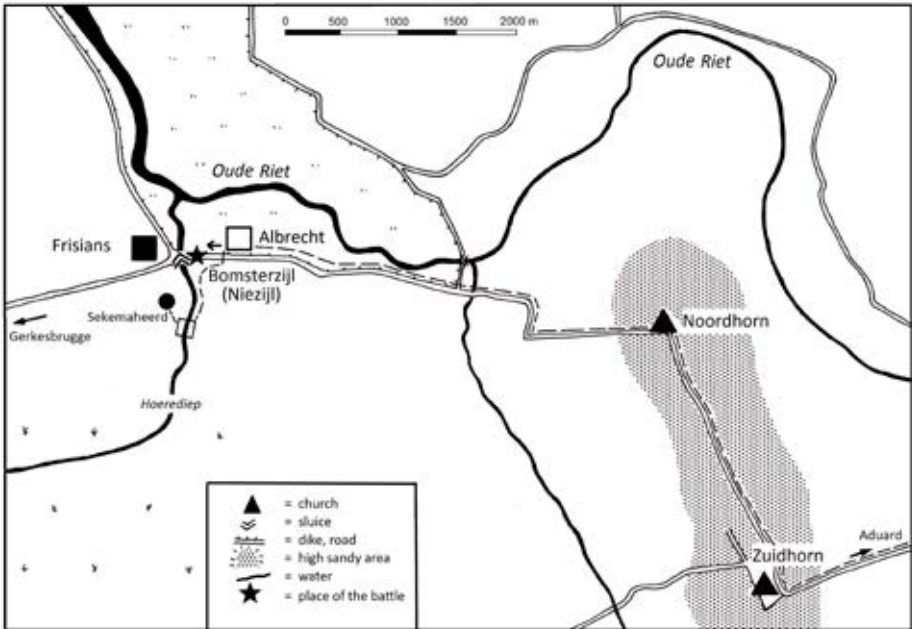
initially counted 5,000 to 8,000, or even 12,000 men.⁷⁷ Among them would have been a large turnover because it was in the middle of the harvest period and several peasants from the Wolden wanted to go home to tend to their hay or corn. Of this large number, only 1,100 to 1,500 would have remained at the beginning of the battle. It seems to me that this is an exaggeration on both sides. Without Stellingwerf's quota, the Zevenwouden militia at Bomsterzijl could hardly have been larger than 1,500, calculated with the same figures we used for the battles at Sloten and Laaxum. If we take the same number for the Oostergo militias, plus the above mentioned 1,000 extra men who were recruited from the siege camp for Franeker, plus perhaps a small group of mercenaries, then 4,000 seems to be the absolute maximum for the Frisians. It is quite possible that in the course of the week they were at Bomsterzijl, men may have disappeared in between, but probably not more than a fraction. Those remaining turned out to be very motivated. After the first group of Saxons crossed the Reitdiep, they sent a group of horsemen to Aduard who beat a number of *Landsknechte* to death and brought back ten prisoners. Seven of them were sent under guard to Franeker, to be hanged between the Frisian entrenchments so that they were clearly visible to the besieged.

The Frisian chronicler Worp van Thabor suggests that Duke Albrecht deliberately waited to start the battle until part of the Frisian army had expired.⁷⁸ It is possible, but it can be argued that Albrecht was in a hurry to relieve his son, and he had a logistical problem. Before he could go any further, the army train with all the firing gear had to be put over the Reitdiep near Winsum, which was only possible when a solid emergency bridge was constructed there.⁷⁹ It is not known how much time it took to build the bridge. According to Sicke Benninge, the duke managed to let his first ensigns pass the Reitdiep on St. Margaret Day (13 July) and march towards the abbey of Aduard. He did not remain there long because the next day he broke out early in the morning as soon as the rest of his army arrived in Aduard. Around noon he would have arrived in front of Bomsterzijl to prepare for the battle.

77 *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 158; compare *Peter van Thabor* who even speaks of 11,000 of 12,000 men at the first gathering.

78 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 23.

79 'Een [...] brugghe [...] soe kostelijck van holt en iser als men sie maecken kunden so groet ende breed ende lanck om in der oerden ende mit dat geschut oever toe koemen' (transl.: A [...] bridge [...] as costly of wood and iron as could be made, and as large and wide and long as could be crossed in orderly formation with the artillery, to the other shore): *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 158.



Map 6. The battle of Bomsterzijl 1500. J.A. Mol.

Schaumburg's biographer does a lot of work on the tactics invented by his hero. He is mistaken in using the name Zijl and also incorrectly refers to 'Gerolzbrück', which can only mean Gerkesbrugge near the Lauwers. From the location description and some details, however, it can be deduced that he had Bomsterzijl in mind and that Schaumburg did take part in the battle as captain. According to the story, he would have reminded the duke of the fiasco of the Great Guard at Hemmingstedt, who had entered Danish service less than half a year before. At a similar lock crossing along a narrow dyke road and embankment, this Guard had attacked its opponents from a marching formation with disastrous consequences. This was reason enough to wait on the assault after the lock had been dammed and to shoot the Frisians out of their entrenchment first.⁸⁰ Apparently, this was the decision made. Schaumburg had the field artillery of *kartouwen* and

⁸⁰ 'Der Hauptman [= Schaumburg] sprach: Dis hat dem künig von Dennemarkt den schaden getan, das er zu gleich gestürmet und gestritten [...] Mein rat wer, das man sich underfenge, sie ab und aus dem vorteil zu schiessen. Diser rat gewan die volg und den vorzug' (transl.: The captain [= Schaumburg] said: This has harmed the king of Denmark, that he attacked and fought at the same time [...]. My advice was therefore, that it would be well to shoot them [the opponents] from their advantageous position. This counsel was preferred and followed): Von Keller, *Geschichten und Taten*, 185–186. Sicke Benninge also reports that the battle was mainly a firefight, that lasted

serpents set up in three different places, with the footmen behind them. The Frisians could not do much in return. Sicke Benninge says they did not have more than two *kaarbussen* and 25 arquebusses. But they did stand on the ramp with pikes stretched out in proper battle order. The salvos, which lasted for five hours, would have had the effect of seeing, from the Saxon side, heads, legs, and arms falling in all directions. When the Frisians eventually put their pikes in the ground and laid down on their bellies to cover themselves, Schaumburg would have ordered the cannoneers or bus-masters to aim lower.

In the meantime, a group of Saxon *Landsknechte* found a half-torn bridge some distance upstream that could be repaired with the help of villagers, after which their section could cross it to approach the Frisians from the side. Sicke Benninge mentions in this context the name *Sekemakret*, better read as *Sekemaheerd*, which can be identified with the farm called Sybolt Sekemaheerd, just southwest of Niezijl.⁸¹ He is called ‘obendis an dem wasser’, which is also true when one follows the Hoerediep upstream. The *Landsknechte* crossed this *diep* a little south of the farm. Jancko Douwama reports that this route was secretly indicated to the Saxon mercenaries by a monk from Aduard.⁸² The Frisians were surprised because, at first, they thought that the soldiers were militiamen of Langewold and Vredewold who came to assist them. Thus, this encirclement would have sealed the defeat of the Frisians. Around six o’clock in the afternoon of 14 July it had happened. According to Worp, about a hundred men were killed: militiamen and mercenaries. Peter van Thabor and Sicke Benninge give figures of 200 and more than 300, whereby it can be noted that a number of men on the run were killed in the ditches or on the cornfields of the Ruige Waard. Duke Albrecht had given the order that no prisoners were to be made among the Frisians, other than among the German *Landsknechte* they had hired.⁸³ The Schaumburg biography mentions the exaggerated number of 2,000 ‘who were captured and put to death’. There was no mention of an early flight at Bomsterzijl. All Frisian chroniclers report that the Frisian army behaved bravely and ‘vromelick’ for five to six hours, and that during this time,

five to six hours; the parties ‘[...] helden lange schuttegeveerde mit malkanderen boven V offte VI uren lanck’.

81 Ligterink, *Tussen Hunze en Lauwers*, 278, localizes this farm, with moats and a gate, at the address Hoofdstraat 104 at Niezijl.

82 Jancko Douwama’s *geschriften*, 111.

83 Jancko Douwama recounts that a certain Renick Poppes of Oldeboorn managed to escape from a row of twenty bound together prisoners who were to be executed. Although he still got a skewer in his leg on his flight, he finally made it off well: *Jancko Douwama’s geschriften*, 112.



Fig. 32. Battle between *Landsknechte* and peasant militiamen in Friesland. Engraving by Hans Burgkmair in: *Der Weisskunig*, p. 312 (fol. 502b).

their army must certainly have been reduced. A loss of 200 to 300 men out of a possible total of 1,500 to 2,000 can be considered significant for that time.

Because of the lost battle at Bomsterzijl, the road to Franeker was open. After an overnight stay in Uitland near the Lauwers, near the Cistercian nunnery of Vrouwenklooster,⁸⁴ the Saxon forces quickly moved on. The news of the defeat had by then already arrived in the various army camps in Franeker, where it incited Syurd Aylva to break from his men without informing his fellow combatants elsewhere in the ring.⁸⁵ The reports

84 *Ibidem*.

85 Peter van Thabor suggests that Syurd had sent messengers but that they had not delivered their message to the others 'through negligence': *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 156.

about the exact places where the besiegers were originally stationed are difficult to interpret. Apart from the five or six army camps mentioned earlier (Dongjum, Lankum, Doyem, Miedum, Oud Sjaerdama, and Dronrijp), there seems to have been two specific entrenchments relatively close to the city. The walls, buildings, and ramparts of Franeker could be fired upon from these entrenchments with the artillery borrowed from Groningen and originating from the blockhouse of Sloten. The occupation of these entrenchments may have been refreshed from the camps. It is obvious to assume that one of them was erected west of the Sjaerdegemaal castle. The engraver Pieter Feddes of Harlingen, who had to depict the situation on a map for Pierius Winsemius' chronicle from 1622, also depicts a kind of stronghold there with four cannons. That might have been Syurd Aylva's entrenchment because, according to Peter van Thabor, the large cannon of Groningen was left there.⁸⁶ If that is true, the other ramp would have been east of the city.

When Syurd Aylva left and the Doyem group also left its camp, only the contingents of Miedum and Dronrijp were still in place in the (eastern?) entrenchment, according to Worp van Thabor. They, too, had wanted to leave but stayed at their post because it was rumoured that Syurd Aylva had gone to get new auxiliary troops from Westergo.⁸⁷ On 16 July, these Miedum and Dronrijp contingents had to deal with both the army of Duke Albrecht, which had arrived from the east, and the *hoofdelingen*, citizens and *Landsknechte* of Franeker, which had broken out to the west. This did not prevent them from resisting strongly in the entrenchment, to such an extent that 111 men were killed. Once they were forced to give way, they fought a battle in the field between Miedum and Tzum. Five hundred more men died, including the *hoofdelingen* Hessel Keimpes Jongema of Goënga, Lieuwe Fons of Jorwerd, Wytze Laes Juckema of Boxum, Hero Rienks of Dronrijp, Siuerd in de Poelen, Keimpe Jackles of Jelsum, and Jarich Wiebes Popma of Terschelling. Apart from the latter two, these were indeed men from the group located to the east and south of Franeker. Peter van Thabor speaks of a total of 400 dead, including forty citizens of Sneek. In either case, the numbers were large, given the fact that they were men from the remaining half of the army, which could not have been more than 2,000 to 3,000 men strong.

The Saxon victory on the battlefields was followed by the usual terror, which belonged to the defeat of an uprising. The churches in particular

86 Ibidem.

87 According to Worp van Thabor, this false rumour came from a saleswoman who wanted the men to stay so they could buy beer and food from her: *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 25.

suffered and many priests were forced to flee with the result that many people died without confession and final anointing. Twelve days after Franeker's debacle, all the freeholding farmers and peasants were summoned, with bare heads and bare feet, to fall at the feet of and swear allegiance to the duke on a number of articles. The fourth article was that they turn over all their arquebusses, other weapons, and armour to the duke and would no longer carry and use this equipment without his permission.

This article is a well-known provision. Numerous princes, after defeating a revolt, tried to ban or severely restrict the possession of weapons among the able-bodied men in order to prevent them from being used against them again. Nevertheless, in Friesland, it was not possible to achieve a general disarmament of the popular militias. This went too far against the tradition of communal self-defence, as well as against the need for the new regime to have auxiliary troops at its disposal with which it could maintain its authority internally. This is shown by the action taken some nine months after the revolt in Oostdongeradeel in 1501, against the stonehouse of Popke Mockema in Ee, which had been occupied by twelve Frisian exiles on the orders of Popcke's brother Gerbrand.⁸⁸ Schelte Tjaarda, who had been appointed *grietman* of Dantumadeel, Kollumerland, and Achtkarspelen, summoned the militias of his *grietenijen* to lay siege to Mockema's house, while the stadtholder, Viscount Hugo von Leisnig,⁸⁹ called upon the captains Taco Heemstra and Tjalling Lieuwes Jellinga, who had already reconciled with the Saxon regime, to participate with their people. As deputy commander, Leisnig himself was also present with a hundred German *Landsknechte* and some field artillery. The capture took more than five days and was also delayed because of the mutual sympathy between the occupiers and the Frisian militiamen: the occupiers did not shoot latter, which was a reason for them to plead in vain for a free retreat of their opponents.

Conclusion

The three battles discussed ended in three resounding victories for the Saxon professionals of Albrecht of Saxony, and thus in as many defeats for the Frisian municipal armies, which, in two of the cases, were superior in number

88 About this action, see *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 40 ff.

89 O. Vries, B.S. Hempenius-van Dijk, P. Nieuwland and P. Baks, *De Heeren van den Raede. Biografieën en groepsportret van de raadsheren van het Hof van Friesland, 1499–1811* (Hilversum 1999) 187–188; see also 181–182 on Schelte Tjaarda.

to the mercenaries. Our analysis of their size has shown that the surplus at Sloten and Laaxum was considerably less than previously estimated on the basis of the chroniclers' figures. With such a small surplus number, other factors such as equipment, organisation, tactics, and command came into play for the popular militias. Their inferior armament certainly played a major role in their defeats. We saw in the battles at Sloten and Laaxum, and actually also at Bomsterzijl, that the core of the Frisian army consisted of Wold-men, who, although highly motivated to fight for the preservation of their autonomy, were the least well-equipped militiamen of the region. The figures for the armour of Gaasterland, Doniawerstal, and Lemsterland from 1552, for example, speak volumes in this respect. If we may project these figures back in time, we can conclude that most of the men were only armed with a pike or a long skewer. Only a minority had, in addition to his stick weapon, a sword for short distance combat; and only a very small number had some form of body protection, such as a cuirass, ring collar, or helmet. This was almost certainly not the case for the professionals. It can be assumed that most of them were fully or partially clad in iron. Only the urban militias may have come a little close to the *Landsknecht* units in this respect. Extremely important in this respect was the equipment with firearms. In this domain, according to all the stories, the German mercenaries had a great advantage in the years 1496–1500. Of course, we do not know the percentage of arquebussiers in their ranks, but it must have been a number of factors higher than that of the popular militias. Even more important was the use of field artillery, which was completely lacking in the Frisian armies in Sloten and Laaxum, and in Bomsterzijl, it was comparatively very low. In both Sloten and Laaxum, the Saxon *Landsknechte* used various pieces of artillery during the battle, which could effectively be aimed at foot-soldiers with hail fire. At Bomsterzijl, the troops of Albrecht of Saxony were even able to bring three batteries into position. This impressed the Frisians in all cases, not simply because of the noise produced by them, but above all because of the dead and wounded caused by the bullets.

Perhaps the most important factor, however, was that the Frisian resistance was not guided professionally enough. It is best to let the Frisian chronicler Worp van Thabor address this. On the occasion of the battle of Laaxum, he notes that the Wold-Frisians did not sufficiently master the art of fighting because they did not know how to get into 'order', i.e., form a battle order. They lacked leadership and discipline: 'for they had no captains, rot masters and *weyflers* [sergeants], who commanded and forced them into array, which is required in armies, but walked like a heap of sheep without a shepherd, and as one began to run, they all ran'. In the case of Laaxum,

they would have been better off waiting for the Leeuwarden city militia, who knew how to fight in battle order. In Bomsterzijl, however, they managed to keep their formation closed for a long time, possibly because they also had a section of Frisian and German *Landsknechte* in their midst.

The Frisian popular militias certainly had commanders: village *hoofdelingen* and prominent freeholders who had been elected judges. But indeed, they did not have a hierarchically structured framework and an organisation of drummers and pipes at their disposal. In addition, it seems that the mixed composition of all the separate district contingents made it difficult to organise a supreme command with sufficient authority. At Sloten and Laaxum, the Wold-Frisians lacked a one-headed command. That was a final factor of importance. The one time a militia of farmers and peasants in the coastal area succeeded in winning against (the same) mercenaries in an open battle was at Hemmingstedt in Dithmarschen, on 17 February 1500, where the militiamen were expertly led by one man, namely, Wolf Isebrant, a Dutchman who had settled in Dithmarschen as a farmer but who had previously gained experience in modern warfare. He must have trained his men beforehand as well because in the battle they showed that they mastered the tactics of operating in a closed phalanx. Also, by setting themselves up near a narrow dyke and a lock, they partly controlled the circumstances. As a result, as we saw with Bomsterzijl, the Saxon mercenaries learned to search for a water crossing elsewhere and approach their opponents by means of a circling movement around the side and rear sides.

6. The deployment of the popular militias in the period 1514–1524

Abstract

Chapter Six examines the contribution of the militias to the fighting parties in the civil war that raged in Friesland between 1514 and 1524, between Habsburg and Guelders. Our survey shows that in the autumn of 1514 they contributed a lot to the initial success of the Guelders' duke. The Frisian mood at that time was anti-Habsburg. Though their armament was still inferior, their motivation was strong, and they were better led than around 1500. Once things came to a stalemate, however, they only had value if they could be deployed behind bulwarks. In the long run, the duke of Guelders could not maintain his position due to a chronic lack of money. The heavy taxation that ensued prompted most districts to opt for the emperor and put their militia potential behind him, which led to a numerical supremacy of the Habsburg forces and the final retreat of Guelders in 1524.

Keywords: civil war, Habsburg, Guelders, siege warfare, tax pressure, change of allegiance

The siege of Groningen and the turning point of November 1514

With the defeat of the Frisian uprising in July 1500, hopes of regaining Frisian freedom had vanished. Westerlauwers Friesland was now part of a princely state and had to contribute to its expansion. According to Duke Albrecht and his sons, a Saxon-Frisian national unity could not limit itself to the area between Vlie and Lauwers. In the end, it had to encompass even the Frisian lands north of the Elbe.¹ The consequence of this ambition was that

¹ About this, see P. Baks, 'Saksische heerschappij in Friesland, 1498–1515: dynastieke doelstellingen en politieke realiteit', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.),

the city of Groningen had to be subdued. However, with its well-developed fortifications and experienced city militia, Groningen was a hard nut to crack. This proved to be the case in the summer of 1500 when Duke Albrecht besieged it in vain for a number of weeks, until he died of an illness in a neighbouring army camp. Duke Georg, who in 1504 took over the Frisian inheritance with accompanying ambitions from his brother, took up the thread again by attacking the city with mercenaries in 1505, partly with the support of the specially hired Count of Ostfriesland, Edzard Cirksena.

However, the latter had a double agenda in the sense that he did not intend to pay homage to Duke Georg for his own small princely state: he even hoped to expand his own power around Appingedam. When Count Edzard got into an argument with his overlord at the beginning of 1506, and not long afterwards entered into his own agreement with Groningen which gave him an almost autonomous position as protector of the city, the prospects for the Saxon became increasingly unfavourable, even though Edzard kept up appearances by presenting himself as Georg's stadtholder for the Ommelanden. All this was reason enough for Georg to double his efforts. In 1512 he complained to the emperor about the unfaithfulness of Count Edzard and succeeded in getting him and the city of Groningen into the *Reichsacht* (ban of the empire). This earned him the help of Oldenburg and Brunswick, which enabled the Saxon troops to gain victories in Ostfriesland in the spring of 1514, then to take possession of Appingedam and also to lay siege to Groningen. Nevertheless, these successes did not lead to a breakthrough because in the late summer of 1514 the well moated and walled city of Groningen joined forces with the duke of Guelders, from whom it received military support starting on All Saints' Day.

In all the war actions of the Saxons against Groningen and the Ommelanden, they preferred the use of professional forces. We know that in the spring of 1514 there was a deployment of the *Zwarte Hoop* (hereafter called the Black Band), a mercenary contingent or regiment of about 5,000 men with more or less the same organisation and composition as the Great Guard. However, Duke Georg did not fail to appeal to the Frisian popular militias as well. Already in January 1514, for example, Frisian *hoofdelingen*

Fryslân, staat and macht 1450–1650 (Leeuwarden 1999) 85–106, there 92. This ambition was based on what Duke Albrecht had been assigned by Emperor Maximilian on the Augsburg Reichstag of 20 July 1498 to govern as 'Gubernator und Potestat'. Dithmarschen was also included among the named lands. Incidentally, the 'Strandfriesen' do not refer to the Nordfriesen, but to the inhabitants of the Elbe and Weser coastal region between Wursten and Dithmarschen: O. Vries, 'Waren die Strandfriesen wirklich Nordfriesen?', *Nordfriesisches Jahrbuch* 49 (2014) 7–27, there 20–12.



Fig. 33. The funeral of Duke Albrecht. Engraving by Hans Burgkmair in: *Der Weiskunig*, p. 314 (fol. 505a).

with *grietenij*-militias would have been located in Aduard near Groningen until fall, and possibly even longer, at their own expense. Peter van Thabor reports that at least the men from Wymbritseradeel had gone there from Sneek on St. Anthony's Day (17 January) to stay there all summer until St. Martin's Day (11 November).² Apart from that, the duke gave the order on 7 April to have the 'second man' from all over Friesland gathered in Kollum in order to prevent possible raids of the troops of Edzard and the city of Groningen. According to Worp, the Frisians did indeed stay in Kollum for a week but were

² Peter Jacobszoon van Thabor, *Historie van Vriesland*, H. Amersfoort and H.W.C.A. Visser (ed.), *Archief voor vaderlandsche, inzonderheid Vriesche geschiedenis, oudheid- en taalkunde* 1,2 (1824–1827) 1–110; 125–264. Reprint, with an introduction by R. Steensma (Leeuwarden 1973) 172.

given leave to go home after a week because Edzard's threat had subsided.³ Nevertheless, the duke continued to seek the support of the Frisians in troops, but even more so in money, with which he could pay the mercenaries of his choice. After long negotiations, the representatives of the diet came to the conclusion that Westergo, Oostergo, and Zevenwouden together would, for two months, send out two ensigns of 500 *Landsknechte* for four gold guilders a month per man from their own region. These were mustered in Leeuwarden, before the chancellery building, and would be under the command of Jancko Oenema of Blija (on behalf of Oostergo and Zevenwouden) and Epo Aylva of Witmarsum (on behalf of Westergo). Those who could not pay their share, had to serve themselves. The stipulation that each of the two captains mentioned had to have a staff of an ensign-bearer, a drummer, and a scribe, shows that the groups were organised to the existing ensigns of professional soldiers. Whether the men really took action, however, is not known. Later in the year, when the duke of Guelders entered the struggle but withdrew some of the soldiers he had sent to Groningen, Duke George had Frisians from Westergo, Oostergo and Zevenwouden come to him, to join them in pursuing the Black Band against Guelders, even as far as Ommen. Just as well he did not reach his goal with that. The gates of Groningen remained closed to him.

A year of war with more than 5,000 mercenaries and additional deployments of militiamen meant a huge drain on the duke's treasury. He could only replenish this by raising heavy taxes, both in Saxony and in Friesland. Worp van Thabor gives a nice overview of this in Friesland: the cumulative charges that Duke Georg had levied on the rental value of the lands were as much as the rental value itself in 1514. Per gold guilder a tax of 28 pennies had to be paid. Monasteries, parish churches, and parish priests also had to contribute and, in addition, grant loans to the duke. *Grietmannen* were ordered to collect all amounts and, as far as the churches were concerned, even a special team was sent out under the leadership of two government faithful clergy with twelve or thirteen soldiers to put pressure on the parish priests. In mid-November, when Duke Georg really could not pay his troops for Groningen anymore, he made an ultimate proposal to his Frisian countries to raise extra money with which the inhabitants could buy off

3 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken van Friesland, boeken IV en V*, J.G. Ottema (ed.) (Leeuwarden 1850/1871) V, 109. Sicke Benninge, who extensively discusses the war actions around Groningen in 1514, reports that at the end of April and beginning of May, Duke Georg himself was (again) besieged in Aduard by a considerable power of Edzard and the city, and that he enjoyed the support of the Frisians from west of the Lauwers: *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher Landen mijtten Zoeven Seelanden ende der stadt Groningen*, F.A.H. van den Homberg, A. Rinzema and E.O. van der Werff (ed.): vol. I (The Hague 2012) 334–335.

their annual land tax in one go. At the end of the month, however, this action was already superseded by the new reality that Guelders had taken control of the southern part of Westerlauwers Friesland.

Duke Charles of Guelders, who in the meantime had been honoured as lord of Groningen and was well informed about the Saxon tax problems in Friesland, had a contingent of 700 *Landsknechte* landed on the Frisian coast at Oudemirdum on 22 November, under the command of Lenard Schwartzenberg and Hendrik de Groiff van Erkelentz. This group of mercenaries from Guelders was accompanied by the original Vetkoper-minded principals, Jancko Douwama of Oldeboorn and Sicke Douwes Galama of Akkrum. They had to make sure that the group did not encounter opposition from the *grietenij* militias. That turned out not to be too difficult. The Guelders' men made themselves popular by proclaiming themselves the champions of Frisian freedom with the cry 'Vrij Vriesck, sonder schattingen en excys' (free Frisian, without taxes and excises).⁴ They first took Sloten, then IJst, and appeared at the gates of Sneek on 24 November. The Saxon-minded *hoofdelingen* Low Donia and Sicke Liauckema and their supporters were then forced to leave the city and surrender it to the Guelders' troops. This lasted for quite a few years because Sneek became the Guelders' administrative centre for Friesland until the spring of 1522. A Saxon counteraction from Wonseradeel to preserve Bolsward was of no benefit because the *grietmannen* and other leaders could only partially rely on the able-bodied men from their districts. Many militiamen ignored the call; as a result, on 26 November, Bolsward was also taken by Guelders. Worp van Thabor states that most the farmers and peasants of Friesland were pro-Guelders because of the heavy taxes that Duke Georg had demanded of them. The regime of the Saxon duke had lost the battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the Frisian people and only managed to survive in and around the cities of Harlingen, Franeker, and Leeuwarden. However, most of the Schierings-minded *hoofdelingen* who had supported the Saxon ruler from the beginning remained loyal to him and moved – if they had their core possessions in the area occupied by the men of Guelders – to the mentioned cities in Northern Westergo.

The objective of the warring parties and the role of the militias

Duke Charles presented himself as the protector of Friesland. He declared on behalf of the French king that his sole aim was to return freedom to

4 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken* V, 129.

the Frisians. A number of prominent leaders from Zevenwouden (Jancko Douwama at the forefront) seem to have really believed in this.⁵ For many of his contemporaries, however, it was clear that the Guelders' duke was striving to make Friesland part of his own state in the long run. After all, he always tried to be honoured as the hereditary lord of Friesland in the areas he controlled. If he could not achieve this directly, it seems at least to have been his intention to use the region as a side stage for military distraction. A side stage on which he could harm his competitor, Charles of Austria (hereinafter Charles V), who took over the Frisian inheritance from the Saxons in May 1515, in the competition for the princely power in the Netherlands. Conversely, the same could have applied to his opponent. For their free navigation on the Zuiderzee, the (North) Holland cities had a great interest in a pacified Friesland and tried, through their States, to exert pressure on the government in Brussels. But the latter also had other considerations to make and was not necessarily prepared to invest a great deal in the conquest of the North. Guelders was an important ally of France and was substantially supported with money from the French king. If it was opportune not to offend the French – or at least to maintain an armed peace with them – this also had consequences for the Habsburg attitude towards the Duke of Guelders. In that case, there was less need for military intervention. Westerlauwers Friesland thus formed a separate corner on the geopolitical chessboard of the Netherlands, on which diplomatic pieces as well as military ones were moved. The course of the battles was partly determined by the tactics that Charles V and his advisors considered desirable with regard to France and Guelders, in which diplomatic hesitation could impede the efficient execution of military operations. Duke Charles of Guelders seized every opportunity that arose to preserve and strengthen his bases in Friesland for as little money as possible. He often had to find ways to fit in because he had few financial reserves at his disposal. From a national Frisian perspective, Worp van Thabor interprets the result of this policy in a rather cynical way: the lords of both sides would have deliberately prolonged the war so that the Frisians would ruin each other and they would be forced to choose one of the two as their sovereign in the end.⁶

5 'Ende ick geloeve, dat Jancke selven in dien tyden anders oeck niet wiste, ofte sy [de Geldersen] waeren gecoemen om den Vriesen vry te maken' (transl.: And I believe that Jancke himself in those times did not know if they [the men from Guelders] had come to free the Frisians), according to *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken*, V 130.

6 *Ibidem*, 136.

The fact that Charles of Guelders, as a relative outsider – after all, his predecessors had never made any serious claims to rule one of the Frisian lands – was able to interfere with Westerlauwers Friesland is yet another sign that this area had become a power vacuum that could only be filled by expansive rulers from elsewhere. Rulers with ample credit, who could afford to run up huge debts to keep their *soldateska* going.⁷ Of course, the mutual division of the Frisian population continued to play a role in this. What is certain, however, is that communal governments – including those of virtually autonomous cities such as Groningen – had little chance of retaining or regaining their independence. It was therefore a matter of choosing or sharing as soon as the regional parties realised that they could no longer come to power themselves. The question for us now is what role the militias played in this lengthy process. To what extent did their contribution on both sides influence the course of the battle and thus its outcome?

From a bird's-eye view, there were two main phases in this struggle: the period until 1522 when Guelders dominated overall, and the years 1522–1524 when Burgundy-Habsburg gradually reduced the territory held by the Guelders' troops and then completely expelled them from Friesland. As far as the first phase is concerned, however, for the years 1516–1517 we must speak of an intermezzo. Burgundy was winning strongly in this period, so much so that in mid-January 1517 it had the chance to bring Guelders the final defeat at Sneek once and for all. At the time, however, the army captains were too reluctant and gave Guelders the chance to regain its position. In all those years, the professional soldiers of the two warring parties played the leading role, although the bishop of Utrecht briefly interfered in the battle, even with mercenaries, to harm Guelders. The success of the soldiers was largely determined by the financial input of the respective princes: how much money could and did they want to spend on the deployment of good quality and reliable mercenaries?

Yet that was not the only factor. The role of able-bodied men seems to have remained important, especially when it came to protecting one's own house and hearth from ruthless mercenaries from the other party, but sometimes also from one's own group. It should also be borne in mind that the more the militiamen took action, the more military skill they

7 The way in which those in power on the European stage thought of Friesland at this time is also evident from an unrealistic plan from 1517 by the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Albrecht of Brandenburg, to bring the region under the authority of his order: J.A. Mol, 'Friesland under the Teutonic Order? A Fantastic Plan from 1517 by Grand Master Albrecht of Brandenburg-Ansbach', in: K. Borchardt, N. Jaspert and H.J. Nicholson (ed.), *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe. Festschrift for Anthony Luttrell* (Aldershot 2007) 243–254.

acquired, and their contribution was increasingly feared or appreciated. The famous Frisian fighter Grutte Pier of Kimswerd, for example, who became a professional warrior in service of Guelders, undoubtedly had his first combat experience in the Wonseradeel militia.⁸ In the following, I will try to trace the performance of the various militias in the chain of events. This requires some benevolence from the reader because the story for this period, unlike for the years 1496–1500, cannot be woven around some decisive battles. The martial business consisted of an almost endless series of raids, short sieges, and small skirmishes at strategic locations. In order to provide an overview of the jumble of events, a chronological order is used as much as possible, with a division into sub-phases.

Expansion of the Guelders' position with the support of Frisian militias, spring 1515

We pick up the thread again at the conquest of South and East Friesland by the Guelders' troops in the winter of 1514. With the use of only 700 mercenaries as a core contingent, as previously mentioned, it is clear that the Guelders' forces could never have been successful if they had not enjoyed the support of the majority of the population at the time of their invasion, that is, by the militias of Zevenwouden and a number of *grietenijen* from Oostergo and the southern part of Westergo. They assisted them but certainly also intervened on their own strength, for example, in early December 1514 when a Holland force with four cogs and three rowing boats landed on the coast of Gaasterland to occupy Sloten. The men from Gaasterland then sounded the alarm, gathered together, and drove the invaders out of the country again, reports Worp van Thabor. A similar occurrence could be observed a few days later on the west coast near Hindeloopen, where armed Frisian peasants destroyed a rowing ship and captured two other ships, loaded with gunpowder and beer.⁹ In this phase, there seems to have been a strong indigenous resistance against the still Saxon rulers, not only in the areas that were traditionally Vetkoper-minded but also in the traditional Schieringer *grietenijen*. Especially among the freeholding peasants and leaseholders,

8 J.J. Kalma, *Grote Pier van Kimswerd* (Leeuwarden 1970) 50–51, does not give a year of birth. Usually, one finds ca. 1480 mentioned. Considering Grutte Pier's (Grutte is the West Frisian spelling) appearance as a somewhat older warrior with preponderance in the years 1515–1520, it can be assumed that he was among the group of his uncle Doytse Bonga at the siege of Franeker as a young man in 1500. He was married at the beginning of 1515 and then had two children.

9 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken V*, 133

there would have been many who were indeed Guelders-minded in their hearts.¹⁰

Meanwhile, after hearing about the successes of Guelders, Duke Georg had broken up his army camp south of Groningen and left for Meissen with his son. He informed the mercenaries of the Black Band that he could not pay them anymore: they had to go to Westerlauwers Friesland to recover their costs from the Frisians who had taken the side of Guelders. On 9 December, they appeared under the guidance of the Saxon chancellor Andries Pflug, as well as Goslick Jongema, Hessel Martena, and other Saxon-minded *hoofdelingen*, for the Cistercian abbey Oldeklooster near Hartwerd, to take the city of Bolsward from there. Because there was no money available for the storming, but also because Murck Syrcks, who, at that time, was already active as a Guelders' *grietman* of Schoterland and Stellingwerf, had gathered the militias of Zevenwouden to fight them at Oldeklooster, they left on 13 December for the nunnery of Monnikebajum, after having plundered all the villages in the vicinity of Oldeklooster. After the remaining Saxon rulers had given a sealed promise to the men of the Black Band that they would receive their overdue pay within three months, the mercenaries moved to the Frisian-Groningen border near the Cistercian abbey of Gerkesklooster. When they were besieged there again by 1200 Guelders' *Landsknechte* and the Schwartzenberg-led militias of Wymbritseradeel, Wonseradeel, and Zevenwouden, they marched to the South, via the Oversticht, to make their winter quarters in the southern part of Holland. Their captains would have been in contact there with the Burgundian-Habsburg army commander Floris van Egmond van IJsselstein.¹¹

That was not the end of fighting. While Duke Georg, through agents, was negotiating with the Habsburgs to take over his reign in Friesland, the Saxon loyal Frisians tried to hold their own as best they could against Guelders and the Guelders'-minded Frisians, who now seemed to be winning and were able to conquer many small strongholds in the outskirts of Harlingen, Franeker, and Leeuwarden. This led to border battles over and over again and to the loss of each other's territory, causing as much destruction as possible, for example, on 29 January when the church and church neighbourhood of Kimsward were destroyed and burned by mercenaries and militiamen from Franeker. This would have prompted the already mentioned Kimsward freeholder Pier Gerlofs Donia, nicknamed *Grutte Pier*, to gather a group of

¹⁰ Ibidem, 135.

¹¹ According to *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 46, Floris van Egmond would have given them advice on how to 'ruin the poor Frisians'.



Fig. 34. The so-called sword of Grutte Pier. Collection Fries Museum Leeuwarden, nr. D 00185C.

thirty to forty able-bodied men from his village and the equally affected neighbouring villages of Arum and Witmarsum in order to harm the Saxon, later Burgundian-Frisian interests. In the course of time, the group grew into a permanent force of 600 men, who, under Piers' leadership, specialised in amphibious warfare against Holland, which was the second battle goal that Guelders developed during this time. After they got their hands on the coastal towns of Staveren, Workum, and Hindeloopen, they had so-called double *seinschepen* built there to control the Zuiderzee and the access to the islands.

The militiamen were always actively involved in the skirmishes not so much at sea as on land. In the winter of 1514/1515, the men of Westergo guarded their churches day and night for fear of robbery. For example, on New Year's Day of 1515, Jorwerd was chosen as a target by Saxon-minded Leeuwarders. Twenty-five able-bodied men defended themselves so strongly using the church as their base that the attackers retreated. Meanwhile, in all the surrounding villages the bells were rung to convene other militias. On 22 January a reprise took place, but now in Weidum, Jellum, and Beers, just south of Leeuwarden. Alarmed by the ringing of the bells, this time the people from Baarderadeel and Rauwerderhem arrived just in time to stop the Leeuwarden ships and crews. According to Worp van Thabor, they took the city militiamen as prisoners but beat to death the twenty foreign mercenaries who had also been deployed in the raid. This was an already existing practice, which had now also been adopted by the Guelders' Frisians, including Grutte Pier. They killed the other side's *Landsknechte* without pardon when they fell into their hands.



Map 7. Guelders' territory in Friesland in the spring of 1515. J. Feikens, Fryske Akademy.

Six days later, the Leeuwarders gained the upper hand again. At Barrahuis, 400 Vetkoper-militiamen from Rauwerderhem, Utingeradeel, and Idaarderadeel led by Jancko Douwama, Sick Douwes Galama, and Juw Juwsma prepared to engage in battle,¹² but they quickly returned to take refuge at the stronghold of Uniahuis near Wirdum. The Leeuwarden forces of 1,500 men, including a large number of mercenaries, seemed too strong for them. And, indeed, the Leeuwarders saw an opportunity to cross the canal, set fire to the main house with the main hall, and enter the stonehouse's basement. No less than 54 of the militiamen lost their lives in this fight. Nevertheless, the remaining men fiercely defended themselves until Murck Syrcks and his contingent of Wold-Frisians came to relieve them.

At the same time, the parties in the northeast of Friesland were also at odds with each other. Dokkum fell into the hands of Guelders, thanks to the choice of its citizens and the efforts of 600 Guelders' *Landsknechte*

12 Juw Juwsma was *hoofdelling* at Wirdum, south of Leeuwarden.

under Hendrik van Lochem, assisted by the militias of Dongeradeel and Dantumadeel under Tjaard Mockema. The next stronghold taken by them was by Tjaardahuis at Rinsumageest. The Saxon-minded fighters could do little else there than incur charges in the direction of Oudega Smallingerland, among others, where Leeuwarden mercenaries set 35 houses on fire. When the *grietenij* militia sounded the bells, they chased the invaders away and beat twelve of them to death. However, the militia was not under the leadership of the *grietman* because he had remained loyal to the Saxon regime.

Things went back and forth like this continually, for example, on 23 April, when 105 mercenaries from Leeuwarden together with a number of Dokkum exiles carried out a quick raid on Dokkum, which at that time had not yet been reinforced with a wall or moat.¹³ They managed to get inside and kill four men, including the *hoofdeling* Take Buma from Damwoude. The reaction was the same as with the other hit and run actions. Everywhere in Dongeradeel and Dantumadeel the bells were ringing, bringing the able-bodied men to their feet. Then the *Landsknechte* tried to sail back west to Leeuwarden with their ships via the Ee, where they were awaited by a section of militiamen at the bridge at Bannerhuis under Lichtaard, opposite from Klaarkamp Abbey. When the mercenaries saw this, they jumped ashore with their guns assuming they could get the upper hand. Indeed, according to Worp, they positioned eight arquebusses and forty *roeren*, which the Dantumadeel and Dongeradeel militiamen, who had no or very few *roeren*, could not cope with. The result was two dead and five wounded on the side of the Guelders'-minded militiamen, and three among the *Landsknechte*. The incident thus immediately shows that the militiamen were less well equipped than the professionals, but nevertheless did not shy away from entering into battle with them.

The return of the Black Band and the transfer of Saxon Friesland to Charles V

In the meantime, the men of Zevenwouden, Gaasterland, and Wonseradeel occupied the abbeys of Ludingakerke and Lidlum to the south and north of Franeker on 4 April, after defining the strategy on a diet in Bolsward. They did this in order to prevent the monasteries from being used as bases of attack by their opponents. The same thing happened a little later with the Premonstratensian abbey of Mariëngaarde near Hallum, which was

13 For the following, see *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 141.

taken from Dokkum by the Guelders'-minded Tjaard Mockema. Precisely around that time (23 April is mentioned as the date), however, the Black Band re-entered the country from Drenthe plundering and robbing under the leadership of Captains Jacob Warnamer and Casper van Olms, with the same strength as the 5,000 men who had previously comprised the group. They had started to collect overdue pay. For the rest, they proceeded as they always did when they did not have a fighting job. Like a swarm of locusts, they consumed everything in their path, always looking for food and loot. As soon as they had grazed one area, they moved on to the next. Their number was so large that neither the Saxon nor the Guelders' troops dared to attack them. Although Schwartzenberg had pulled out with an ensign of 'Overlanders' (German *Landsknechte*) and many Frisian militiamen to redirect them from Stellingwerf near Diever, on their approach they were forced to move to Groningen.¹⁴ On 26 April, the Black Band arrived in Dokkum, where the citizens and the Guelders' men had already fled. When the group then headed for Rauwerd and threatened the heart of Friesland, the Guelders' commander Erkelentz, who had not yet seen his colleague Schwartzenberg return, went to Sneek with one of his three ensigns from Bolsward, which was still unreinforced, followed by the two others who did not want to be left behind. There, behind the city moats, they could safely let the Black Band pass along. Rumour had it that the Guelders' mercenaries and the men of the Band, who knew each other of course, had come to an agreement.¹⁵ Whether this was the case is hard to say. The city militia of Sneek seems to have tried to resist the Black Band at the Cistercian nunnery of Nijeklooster north of Sneek, but had to give way quickly to the force majeure. The Guard then took up residence in Bolsward, which had been left defenceless for three weeks.

At the beginning of May, there suddenly seemed to be a suitable solution to get rid of the Band. Some agents of the French king in Sneek came forward to contract the Black Band ensigns for a campaign in Italy. A certain Hieronymus Suees, who also represented the Saxon duke, chartered 36 ships in Hoorn and Enkhuizen to pick up the mercenaries in Harlingen. He also had money with him to pay overdue wages. Grutte Pier and his privateers, however, threw a spanner in the works. Logically, they thought it was an invasion and managed to board the fleet on 14 May. They took 28 of the 36 boats with 400 men and a lot of artillery on board, but without confiscating the wage money. Savage were the men of the Black Band when the news

14 *Petrus van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 46.

15 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 143.

got out. They chose two new commanders because, in their opinion, the old ones did not have their affairs well organised. They then took out their anger on the surrounding area. They set fire to the houses in Bolsward and fifteen villages of Wonseradeel and Wymbritseradeel, and also destroyed many churches. The Guelders' troops are said to have fired at them from Sneek, but both parties '[...] didn't want to bite one another', according to the chronicler.¹⁶

When the mercenaries from Guelders did not want to burn their hands on the Black Band, it was completely impossible for the popular militias to do anything about this. The fighters of the Black Band were heavily armed, very brutal, and simply too many in number, and so they had to let them move unhindered through Friesland. If we follow their route, they marched from Bolsward through Hennaarderadeel to northern Westergo, camped for some time at the end of May at Berlikum, Anjum, and Beetgum, then followed the coastal path to the west via Harlingen to Workum, after which they continued south to Hindeloopen and Molkwerum at the beginning of June. Everywhere along their way, houses and farmsteads went up in flames.

However, this was not the end to the misery they inflicted. In May, Duke Georg of Saxony had reached an agreement with the future Roman King Charles V as to the amount of money and the conditions on which he was willing to hand over the rule over Friesland to him. In order to make the transfer as smooth as possible, on 7 June the governors of the young sovereign confirmed a truce with the duke of Guelders, first for a period of four months. Floris van Egmond was the first stadtholder who, on behalf of Charles V, was allowed to shape the new regime. He arrived in Harlingen on 23 June. However, he still had to negotiate with the Frisian nobles, towns and other subjects who had remained loyal to the Saxons up to that time, about the conditions under which they were prepared to recognise Charles V as their new ruler. Negotiation also meant exerting pressure in this case. With whom could this be done better than with the still unpaid men of the Black Band? The stadtholder had them go back to Berlikum, located on former Saxon territory, to live off the land, promising to give them their overdue wages. This worked. On 29 June, the agreement was concluded on terms relatively advantageous for Burgundy, with 60 noblemen taking the oath of allegiance to the new monarch.

Subsequently, the Black Band was paid 60,000 gold guilders in money and cloth, which Duke Georg still owed them, after which the entire 'army' (for that is how one may refer to a combat force of 5,000 men at this time) left

16 Ibidem, 146.



Fig. 35. *Landsknechte* and Swiss pikemen with each other in battle. Engraving by Hans Holbein Jr. ca. 1520. Albertina Vienna, Wikimedia Commons.

Friesland on 2 July to enter the service of the French king, together with 600 Guelders' mercenaries who also went to France via the land of Guelders. The irony of fate is that Duke Charles of Guelders, who participated as captain general in the Italian expedition of King Francis I, was assigned to accompany them on the first part of the journey.¹⁷ They would eventually participate without him successfully in the battle of Marignano on 13 or 14 September, where Francis I surprisingly managed to defeat the Swiss mercenary troops of Frederick of Aragon, duke of Milan.

After this, things quieted down for a while because the truce between Burgundy-Habsburg and Guelders was extended by three years. This was partly in view of the peace that was observed with France. Worp and Peter van Thabor, however, mention there were still enough skirmishes that show that the Guelders' troops did not always stay quiet in Friesland. Indeed, Duke Charles seems not to have wanted to keep the peace in the Frisian countryside.¹⁸ Because he was not strong enough to besiege the Burgundian-Frisian cities, to which Dokkum now belonged again, he tried to subdue the surrounding country by exercising terror.¹⁹ In addition to the raids he had

¹⁷ J.E.A.L. Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg 1492–1528* (Arnhem 1960) 237.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 239.

¹⁹ After the passage of the Black Band, Dokkum was occupied by Count Edzard, who acted in the service of Habsburg.

undertaken in that context, led by Gabbe Scheltema at Het Bildt, among others, was the rise of the so-called Arumer *Zwarte Hoop* (Arumer Black Band). This was a group of some fifteen impoverished tenants and freeholders from the villages of Arum, Witmarsum, and Kimsward, whose houses had been destroyed and burned and who robbed the area around Franeker and Harlingen and on Het Bildt.²⁰ Elsewhere in Ferwerd, impoverished peasants also took up weapons to make a living at someone else's expense.

This gave the governments of both parties reason to keep the militiamen of their own territory well rested and vigilant. On the diet of the Guelders'-sided Frisians, held in Sneek on 11 September 1515, which was attended by the *grietmannen* and two or three authorised principals from each part, the land defence was again explicitly arranged. It was determined that when the bells rang, all men between twenty and 60 years of age would come up with their armour to place themselves under those appointed with the necessary authority.²¹ Robbers had to be prosecuted by the commoners of the land 'with the ringing of the bells', their actions avenged. In this context, on the diet, the *grietmannen* were commanded to announce immediately on their return home to the inhabitants of their districts that they had to have their appropriate (to their status) equipment in order. On the Habsburg side, the arrangement would not have been much different.

The Burgundian-Habsburg campaigns of 1516 and early 1517

Now that Charles V had made his first investment in Friesland, the question was when and how his reign was going to take steps to bring all of Friesland under his authority. It was clear that his authority would not only remain with a consolidation of power around Harlingen, Franeker, and Leeuwarden. Floris van Egmond did his utmost at the end of 1515 to urge the central government in Brussels to release funds for this project, especially by pointing out the file violations by Duke Charles and everything that showed signs of his intrusion. However, it took some time before the Brussels' councillors of Charles V were willing to change course. It was not

20 The number of fifteen comes from *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 47. *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 162 reports that the group would have grown to 100, but that seems exaggerated to me. The Arumer *Zwarte Hoop* is wrongly often identified with the group of Grutte Pier: Kalma, *Grote Pier*, 70–71. After all, long before the actual Black Band appeared in Friesland for the second time – after which the Arumer Black Band was named – they had dedicated themselves to the battle at sea.

21 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 163.

until February 1516, when it became clear that the Black Band had returned to the Rhineland from Italy and France and was likely to threaten Grave and Brabant, that they decided to make more resources available for the Northern fight against Duke Charles of Guelders.

Leaving aside the minor violence,²² it should first be noted that Floris van Egmond had a contingent of 1,500 mercenaries in Harlingen deposited at the beginning of May 1516 under the general leadership of Lubbert Turck. Led by Frisian captains, these mercenaries went to Bolsward and Wommels to urge the inhabitants to take an oath of allegiance to Charles V, now crowned king of Spain. However, they had little success in doing so. Schwartzenberg, for his part, had gathered 700 mercenaries in Oldeklooster plus the militias of Gaasterland and Wymbritseradeel to storm Bolsward. As a result, the Guelders' strength would have exceeded 2,000 men. When the Habsburg soldiers in Bolsward heard that the militia of Zevenwouden would also go against them in the field, they quickly left Bolsward again. They also considered the town difficult to defend because, at that time, it was still not fortified with moats and ramparts. The action shows once again how in an unequal ratio of professional soldiers (1,500:700) the contribution of the militias could still be decisive. The Guelders' party reconquered Hottingahuis in Wommels on 25 May and laid an occupation there as well as in the abbey of Oldeklooster, after which the militiamen could all go home again.

Shortly after that, a fierce battle took place in Oostergo. On the last day of May, a group of 200 Habsburg *Landsknechte* carried out a raid from Leeuwarden on Rinsumageest, marching along Ferwerd. They were not able to conquer Tjaardahuis in Rinsumageest and set the village on fire. Through the smoke, however, the Guelders'-Frisian *grietmannen*, Poppe Obbema van Heemstra and Syds Roorda of Genum, were alarmed and stopped at Klaarkamp monastery with a group of militiamen. They gathered as many men as possible and then went to Genum and Hogebeintum to wait for the Burgundians. When the latter moved through Genum at sunrise the next day, Heemstra's and Roorda's militia attacked. Although outnumbered by the mercenaries, the militiamen got the upper hand 'and beat as many as 70 strong *Landsknechte* to death', according to Worp van Thabor.²³ Poppe Heemstra was also killed in the fight. The event teaches

22 A painful event for the Burgundians was that on 22 February the men of Grutte Pier caught a ship on the Zuiderzee carrying the wives of Hessel Martena and Juv Bottinga and transported them in captivity to Sneek.

23 Worp van Thabor, *Kronijken V*, 179.

us again that the members of the Frisian people's militias did not shy away from confrontations.

Notwithstanding the arrival of Burgundian-Habsburg reinforcements, the Guelders' commanders were thus full of good courage. They were definitely already planning to take the initiative and take possession of the whole of Friesland by conquering the four central cities. Erkelentz, who had returned from Guelders with a new assignment in March, had organised diets in Sneek and Kollum that same month where it was decided that the common lands – including Groningen – would levy taxes in order to take on 1,000 soldiers with which the Burgundians could be driven out of the country. The first act was to take Dokkum.²⁴ As far as the war plan for the western cities was concerned, Tjerk Walta had insisted on storming Harlingen with the blockhouse first. With hindsight this does not seem to have been a crazy idea because the Habsburg supply lines would have been cut and the cities of Franeker and Leeuwarden would have become isolated.²⁵ Walta wanted to lead the attack himself with the militia of Wonseradeel, Wymbritseradeel, and Hennaarderadeel. But Jancko Douwama and Hendrik van Erkelentz were against it. They opted for a siege of Leeuwarden and Franeker. The militiamen of Zevenwouden, Stellingwerf, Gaasterland, and Wymbritseradeel were gathered for this purpose on 3 June in Oldeklooster. From there they went together with the mercenaries of Schwartzenberg to the nunnery of Monnikebajum to camp. Jancko Oenema and the militia of Dongeradeel, Ferwerderadeel, and Dantumadeel first conquered Herjuwsmahuis in Ferwerd and then made a camp with Erkelentz near Stiens, to build a bulwark a few days later near Leeuwarden near the gallows just southwest of the city. There, the militias of Rauwerderhem and Utingeradeel also came forward. From these encampments they continued to bombard the cities until the Assumption of Mary (15 August). The question arises as to whether this two-city approach with relatively few professional soldiers and artillery was a wise strategy militarily, given the failure of the siege of Franeker at the time of the revolt sixteen years earlier. Perhaps the Guelders'-sided Frisians relied too much on the power of their numbers.

The Burgundians had already gathered an enormous and powerful 'army' of mercenaries in Holland, and arrived with them in Harlingen on 14 August. This was an army of no less than 9,000 men, including 700 Swiss

24 Exactly when remains unclear; neither Peter nor Worp van Thabor make mention of it in their chronicles. Compare Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg*, 243.

25 *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 48–49.



Fig. 36. Floris van Egmond, Count of Buren. Portrait by Jan Gossaert 1519. Mauritshuis The Hague.

foot soldiers and a large number of Walloons and Spaniards, all together over 150 ships and led by some seventy prominent noblemen. Apart from Floris van Egmond, the count of Nassau, the lord of Wassenaar, and Felix, count of Huilckenstein, are mentioned as army commanders. Peter van Thabor reports that Erkelentz himself had seen the ships sailing, looking at the dike near Workum. As soon as the Guelders' commanders and their Frisian allies heard the news of the invasion, they broke off the siege in order to retreat to Bolsward and Sneek as quickly as possible and put their defences in order there.

The Burgundian-Habsburg army set up tents at the convent of Oegeklooster but hesitated to storm Bolsward, which now had moats and ramparts provided by the Guelders' troops. The story goes that Floris van Egmond did not want to run the risk of having one of his high guests getting accidentally killed by 'naked crooks'. Worp reports that at least a number of Spanish and Walloon mercenaries were beaten to death by militiamen in the neighbourhood when they were caught robbing and burning. Apparently, they had

not counted on such opposition from simple peasants.²⁶ It was therefore decided to lay siege to Sneek. But the Burgundians had little success with this also. The occupation of Sneek was at that time well equipped with artillery. Things went better in the east. Floris van Egmond sent seven ensigns to take Dokkum, which went off without a hitch because the ensigns from Guelders, as well as the militiamen, had already given up in view of their small number and the lack of ramparts and moats. The Burgundians built a block house there, which was occupied by Tjaard Burmania. From there, they swarmed further across northern Oostergo, conquered *en passant* Tjaardahuis in Rinsumageest, occupied Kollum, and forced the inhabitants of the entire region to swear allegiance to King Charles.

In the meantime, a situation in Irnsum further fuelled the mutual hatred and enmity. While Dokkum was being tackled by others, Floris van Egmond and Felix van Huilckenstein went to Irnsum to attack the stronghold of Epo Douma, who was there together with his brother-in-law Abbe Heringa. For some time, there were negotiations about surrender. The *hoofdelingen* with their retainers would have liked to capitulate but the militiamen refused to follow them. Thus, both sides continued to fight until the parties entered renegotiations.²⁷ Because one of his closest collaborators had been killed in the battle, Count Felix had big guns brought in, after which the occupying forces offered to surrender in order to preserve their lives. However, the count did not accept such an offer. When after some time the besieged decided to throw in the towel and counted on mercy, they were sadly disappointed. In revenge, Count Felix had ten men hanged and sixteen beheaded. The two *hoofdelingen* were initially spared, with the idea that they could be exchanged for the wives of Hessel Martena, Juw Bottinga, and Epo Aylva, who were imprisoned in Sneek. But the Guelders' commanders in Sneek did not want to cooperate in this deal. The consequence was that Epo Douma and Abbe Heringa were transported to Harlingen where they were publicly beheaded on 13 September. These executions, especially those of the militiamen, would have inspired Grutte Pier even more than before not to let a single non-Frisian live if he fell into his hands.²⁸

For the rest, relatively little occurred from a military perspective, despite the numerical superiority of the Burgundians. It may well be that Floris

26 'Want dit volck dye conde van dit lant nyet en hadden' (transl.: Because these people had no knowledge of this land): *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 183.

27 *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 200–201.

28 *Ibidem*, 205.

van Egmond did not go to extremes in view of the arbitration that took place within the framework of the peace of Noyon on 13 August, concluded between King Francis I and King Charles V, regarding the Frisian question that had been before the Parliament of Paris since mid-September and which would drag on deep into 1517.²⁹ But that is getting ahead of the story. Just like the army captains of Duke Charles of Guelders attempted to surprise their opponent (think of Maarten van Rossum's successful raid on Nieuwpoort near Schoonhoven on 10 August 1516), Floris van Egmond could try to make the most of his military presence in Friesland. Because of their large numbers, his troops were now in control outside Bolsward, Sneek, and Sloten, where the Guelders' men had to wait behind ramparts and moats until the storm was over. Of course, the rural inhabitants in particular were victims of looting, arson, and so on. Floris van Egmond had his men roam around in Gaasterland, among other places, before finally arriving in IJlst in mid-October with 3,000 men in ships from Staveren and Workum. At that moment, according to Worp van Thabor, he received a letter, which made him decide to gather all his men and go back to Workum and Staveren. The chronicler believes that this was deliberately arranged to ruin Friesland: if the stadtholder had stayed longer in IJlst, according to Worp, he would have been able to cut off the food supply to Sneek and the town would have been subdued in no time.³⁰ However, he chose to go through Doniawerstal and Lemsterland and also to force the entire countryside by means of terror to take the oath of allegiance to the king. Furthermore, he placed an occupation force in the monasteries of Oldeklooster and Nijeklooster, east and north of Bolsward and Sneek.

At the turn of the year, however, there seemed to be a breakthrough. The Guelders' mercenaries who occupied Bolsward had received no wages for a long time and suffered from a lack of everything. Jancko Douwama made an effort to raise money for them, but he had not very much success with that. The mercenaries then began negotiations with Floris van Egmond, with the result that they received their pay in return for surrendering the city with all the artillery in it. The amount of the salary amounted to 6,000 Emden guilders. That may seem like a lot, but it was little when one considers that

29 On the peace of Noyon and the subsequent negotiations between Guelders and Burgundy, see Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg*, 245–255.

30 Floris van Egmond was of course in direct contact with Councilor Willem de Croy, alias Chièvres, who during these years determined the politics of Charles V in the Netherlands. However, a direct connection with the aforementioned negotiations in France (Cambrai) cannot be indicated for the time in which Egmond was in IJlst. Nothing is known about the course of the discussions that took place: Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg*, 248.

the guns left behind, which had previously been brought by Grutte Pier to Bolsward from the ships he had captured, were worth more.³¹

Thus, one of the two most important strongholds of the Duke of Guelders in Friesland was lost to the Burgundians. It was only a matter of time before Sneek, too, would fall, one can assume, especially when it began to freeze on 11 January 1517 and the moats around the city could no longer stop the attackers. Egmond again pulled together as many troops as possible, under the leadership of the army commanders Count Felix, Lubbert Turck, as well as Count Edzard of Ostfriesland. Of course, the main Burgundian Frisian leaders, Hessel Martena, Tjalling and Juw Bottinga, Gerrold Herema, and Douwe Burmania, joined the party, as well as Roelof van Ewsum from the Ommelanden, who through his marriage to Luts Harinxma had acquired a share in the old power position of the Harinxma family at Sneek.³² Unlike in the summer of 1516, Sneek was, strangely enough, not (or hardly) occupied by foreign soldiers. The city council had sent them home because it did not trust them after the Bolsward debacle. In fact, the city was only defended by the people of Grutte Pier, the Arumer Black Band, and the many exiles from all over Friesland who did not want to bow under Burgundy. Grutte Pier in particular is said to have put up a strong defence by having his men attack one siege group after another with arquebuses and other firearms. It seems that the citizens of Sneek themselves were in favour of a reconciliation with the king, on the condition that their city would receive from him the same privileges as Franeker and Leeuwarden. It is understandable that Grutte Pier and his people fiercely resisted this, as did the exiles and the pro-Guelders rulers. Because of what happened at Irnsum, they did not believe they could count on the mercy of the Burgundians.³³

However, while the Burgundians bombarded the city from four places, had storm constructed, let sledges prepare with hay, and had even more artillery brought in from Leeuwarden, the freeze suddenly began to thaw. As a result, the besiegers began to break up in a hurry and go in various directions. Only two ensigns remained in Nijklooster. Count Felix left for

31 'Want dat schut was beter dan alt ghelt, daer sie van de Borghoense onfinghen' (transl.: Because that artillery was better than all the money they received from the Burgundians): *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 214.

32 He shared that power with Sicke Liauckema, a son of Luts Harinxma from her first marriage to Schelte Liauckema.

33 Peter van Thabor is able to report that the Burgundians had indeed been willing, according to what Roelof van Ewsum had told him personally afterwards, to offer a deal to those who had done most evil ('hadden meest quaet ghedaen' (had done most evil)) and even to give them money in hand: *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 217.

Kuinre. He disassembled from there on 10 February to go to Vollenhove and then went with his troops into the land of Guelders. And Floris van Egmond travelled with Count Edzard to the king in Brabant at the end of January. The enormous Habsburg war effort, with an invasion of 9,000 men, had thus only resulted in the Frisian countryside being forced to recognise the royal authority, whatever that was worth. The Guelders' party, thanks to Grutte Pier and his men, had managed to preserve their key position in Sneek in the nick of time.

Guelders' predominance again with the Black Band's support, 1517

In spite of everything that had happened in Friesland, attempts at rapprochement at a central level were still being made by both parties during these months. On 7 March in Cambrai, they even reached the point where a truce was agreed upon. This would start on 25 March and end on 6 May. As soon as Grutte Pier had heard this, he and his amphibious force, including citizens from Sneek and exiles from Workum and Staveren, sailed out before the 25th to attack the small port of Hindeloopen from the sea.³⁴ This location was well fortified by the Burgundian occupation of 300 men under the command of a certain Captain Tegnagel. Nevertheless, the rapid attack proved to be a success by storm. Grutte Pier and his men are said to have killed 107 *Landsknechte*, including a bastard of the count of Cleves and a nobleman named Buckhorst. Seventy-seven men were captured by them. Some drowned while the rest managed to save themselves on ships.

It is possible that Grutte Pier took these actions on his own initiative, but Duke Charles certainly would have been happy with them. He himself was busy gathering troops to recapture Dokkum. He was also able to do so because a considerable part of the Black Band that had fought at Marignano had returned to the Low Countries and was now camping near Kessel at the river Maas in March 1517. Duke Charles agreed to give them each a Hoorns guilder as hand money and provide them with pole-arms, guns, and gunpowder if they wanted to go to Friesland as soon as the armistice was over.³⁵ They would not receive real pay but could live on 'free looting', he mirrored for them. According to Worp van Thabor, the group was as strong

34 For that matter, he and his privateers had already carried out fire raids on the coast of Holland, including at Naarden, Waterland and Huisduinen, where they had caught the sheriff of Huisduinen: *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 218.

35 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 200.

as 8,000 men, together with some ensigns of Guelders' mercenaries. Peter van Thabor speaks of 6,000 or 7,000 men. Two ensigns, led by Erkelentz, Jancko Douwama, and Sicke Douwes Galama, crossed Sneek where they arrived on 11 May. The large group followed the usual route through Drenthe directly to the north. On 18 May, the forces gathered for Dokkum and the first storming began, which was not very successful and caused many deaths. However, the closing of the Dokkumer Diep (canal) and shelling with the large cannons brought in from Groningen forced the Burgundian occupation to surrender on 2 June. Of course, the Guelders' men now laid their own garrison in Dokkum, under the command of Johan Goltstein, with Jancko Oenema and Amcko Jarla as Frisian sub-commanders.³⁶

The large pack, the core of which really consisted of mercenaries of the Black Band, then travelled back over Groningen and through Drenthe to end up in Kuinre. There the men were awaited by their earlier enemy Grutte Pier with his ships and other sailing equipment chartered in Frisian and Overijssel harbour villages. The whole army boarded on 24 June in the morning and sailed to the west to go ashore somewhere between Enkhuizen and Medemblik. What the underlying purpose of this crossing to Holland was, and by whom the battle plan was determined, is not clear from the chronicles. Presumably, from the outset, the Guelders' army commanders planned to take the group on their own to carry out a march through the whole of Holland in order to destabilise the country and make the Burgundians more indulgent at the negotiating table. Once underway, it is not clear by whom they were led. According to Worp van Thabor, the first attack on Medemblik was conceived by Grutte Pier.³⁷ He would have had a great hatred for the inhabitants because many of them had bought cattle and household goods, which had been stolen by soldiers from the province of Friesland, for very little money, without giving the Frisians the opportunity to buy back their animals and possessions. Whether this story is true is difficult to determine. Peter van Thabor gives a slightly different account. He says that after the disembarkation, the commanders of the vanguard and those of the main force first held deliberations on their own, after which they agreed to a joint storming of Medemblik. The town had to pay a heavy price for this. Just like Hindeloopen, it was readily conquered,

36 Amcke Jarla was *hoofdeling* at Bergum and a brother of Jancko Douwama's stepfather Popke Jarla.

37 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 203: 'Ende Groete Pyer met syn Vriesen waren dye princepael, dyet aen brant staeken' (transl.: And Grutte Pier and his Frisians were the principal ones who set fire to it). Compare, however *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 225–226.

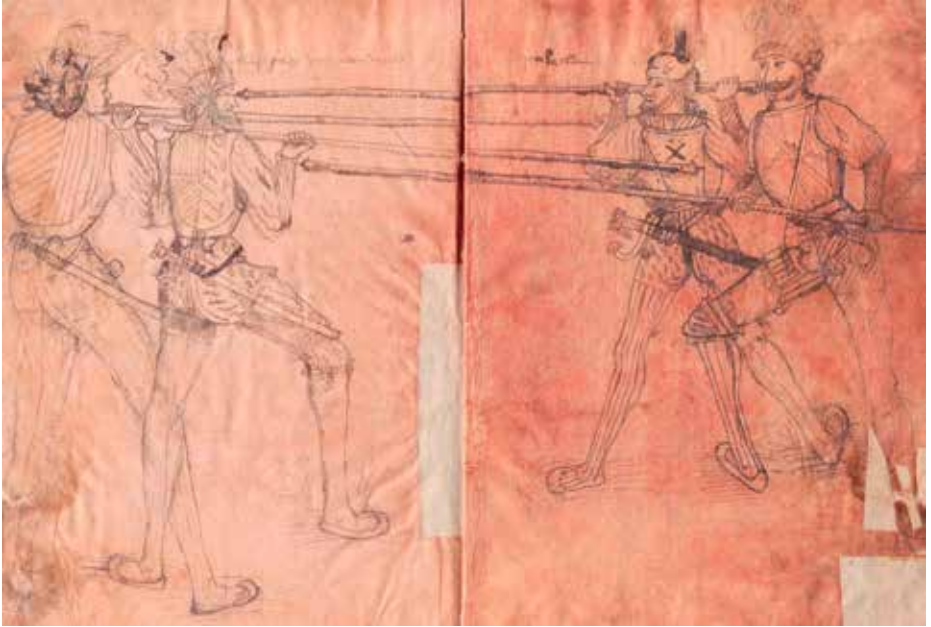


Fig. 37. Four *Landsknechte* with pikes, dressed in livery. Drawing by Paul Dolnstein ca. 1500. (ca. 1491–1513), Landesarchiv Thüringen Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, Reg. 5 (Bau- und Artillerieangelegenheiten) fol. 460 Nr. 6, Bl. 6v–7r.

killing a large part of the occupying forces. Afterwards, the group (Worp van Thabor specifies Grutte Pier, while Peter van Thabor mentions the men of Guelders in general) plundered and set fire to the town. All houses as well as the church and two lay-sister convents fell prey to the flames. Once the fire had flared up everywhere, Grutte Pier and his Frisians sailed back to Friesland with their share of the loot. There are no known sources that indicate that members of Frisian militias marched with the Black Band.

For the Black Band, Medemblik was only the beginning of a new raid, but it was one of the worst. The men first laid waste to the village of Abbekerk. Then they moved on to Alkmaar, stole everything possible, and set fire to the city on 25 June. They remained nearby for a couple of days to burn down the entire area. Of course, this led to great panic among the Burgundian authorities in Holland, who called upon all the vassals and also summoned the ‘fourth man’ from the cities as well as the rural militias to gather in Haarlem on 27 June and placed them under the command of Floris van Egmond. At the same time, Egmond sent an order to his sub-commanders stationed in Friesland to sail to Holland as soon as possible in order to resist the Black Band. Thus, almost all the professional Burgundian soldiers left the Frisian cities. Only a small occupation remained in Franeker. Bolsward

was given up, so it could become Guelders again. The town was immediately occupied by Tjerk Walta and his men, who restored the strongholds and made the town defensible again.

The Black Band left Alkmaar on 1 July to march south, leaving a trail of destruction behind it. In Kennemerland, the men faced opposition from Haarlem, but managed to destroy Spaarndam, and then headed in the direction of Amsterdam. Via Amstelveen and Abcoude, they passed Utrecht and crossed the Lek at Vianen to besiege and take Asperen on the Linge a little further on. There they caused horrible destruction after storming and conquering the town on 9 July. Floris van Egmond and his hastily gathered Burgundian troops responded in kind to the duke of Guelders, who was the instigator of the destruction in Asperen, by plundering the Veluwe and even threatening Arnhem, although Egmond's men were not equipped for a siege. Asperen fell and remained in the hands of Guelders for the time being.

Status quo, 1517–1521, and crumbling popular support for Guelders

For the Burgundians, this was an extraordinarily provocative plunder organised by the duke of Guelders. Despite that, it did not lead to an active resumption of the war in Friesland. Margaret of Austria, who was put in charge of the governorship of the Netherlands by her nephew Charles V, who left for Spain on 1 July, continued to seek rapprochement with Guelders. On 17 September, she concluded an armistice with Duke Charles for six months in which the latter returned Asperen to Burgundy and further promised to encourage 'his' Frisians to agree to the renunciation of their country to Charles V, for an amount of 100,000 gold shields, albeit with the proviso that if the Frisians could not be persuaded, the part of the agreement that affected them would lapse and the status quo in Friesland would be maintained. This soon turned out to be the case because the Guelders-Frisian states did not wish to accept the king of Spain as their sovereign lord under any circumstances. On 21 November 1517, they appointed Duke Charles of Guelders as protector of their freedom.³⁸ They also informed King Francis I of France of this on 17 December. This situation did not change the existing stalemate in Friesland. A period of peace even began because on 17 March 1518 the truce was extended for a year.

38 [...] *ducem et protectorem libertatisque eorundem defensore*: Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg*, 263.

At this time, however, cracks arose in the relationship between the representatives of the Guelders' authority in Sneek and the indigenous elite within the Frisian areas controlled by Guelders. The names of the Guelders-sided Frisian leaders have already frequently been mentioned: Jancko Douwama, Amcko Jarla, Sicke Douwes Galama, Jancko Oenema, and Juw Juwsma. One important bone of contention for them was that the duke demanded more than just being a protector. He pursued the same kind of inheritance as the Saxon duke had enjoyed and demanded of the prelates, *hoofdelingen*, cities, and *grietenijen* that they would also allow him the same taxes. A proposal to this end was put forward by the ducal authorities on various diets in Sneek, including Maarten van Rossum, who was appointed stadtholder in 1518. But just as many times it met with objections of principle from the Frisian leaders.³⁹ Another bone of contention was that none of those Frisians were entrusted with the command of any of the central Guelders' strongholds such as Dokkum and Sloten. The differences of opinion eventually ran so high that it was not possible to get the new tribute agreement between the states and the duke signed.

Jancko Douwama and his circle believed they could identify Chancellor Hubert van Rossum as the evil genius behind the duke's ever-increasing ambitions for princely lordship in Friesland. They sent their confidant master Gale Gaukes (Gallienus Galko), pastor of Oldeboorn, to Guelders to raise the problems with the duke.⁴⁰ When he did not bring back a positive message about the command of Dokkum and Sloten, Jancko Douwama, Jancko Oenema, and Juw Juwsma, in the presence of the stadtholder, the chancellor, and other councils in Sneek, revoked their oath to the duke in 1520.⁴¹ They left Sneek to go to Groningen where, after a while, they were no longer welcome there or anywhere else in Guelders' territories. After long wanderings along the IJsselsteden, Utrecht, and Münster, they entered into conversation with Burgundy and decided to reconcile themselves with Charles V, who had now been crowned emperor. On New Year's Day 1521 they took the oath of allegiance to him.

39 M. Kist, 'Centraal gezag en Friese vrijheid: Jancko Douwama's strijd voor de Friese autonomie', in: J. Frieswijk, A.H. Huussen Jr., Y.B. Kuiper and J.A. Mol (ed.), *Fryslân, staat en macht 1450–1650* (Hilversum 1999) 107–125, there 114–117.

40 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 223–224; 226–227. In his writings Jancko Douwama is remarkably vague about this period. Master Gale only appears in his story when Jancko c.s. is already in exile: M. Kist and H. Wind, *Een man van eer. Bloemlezing uit Jancko Douwama's geschriften* (Hilversum 2003) 104–106.

41 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 224. *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 251, dates the change of allegiance of Douwama c.s. to the year 1520. He also mentions Johan Roorda as one of the malcontents.

The departure of Douwama and his followers must have been an enormous setback for Duke Charles, not only because they each had a large support base in different parts of the province of Friesland covered by Guelders, but also because they were experienced army leaders. The same goes for Grutte Pier, whose life came to an end in 1520. As a champion of the Frisian freedom, it appears that he, like Jancko Douwama, was not keen on the duke's ambitions to establish his power in Friesland as an overlord, although that did not prevent him, at the end of 1519, from carrying out another maritime raid for the duke, this time against Emmerich at the Rhine. Worp van Thabor writes that in the end he kept quiet in the conflict mentioned above. Strangely enough, he did not perish in a fight but died 'in peace' within Sneek, on 18 October 1520.⁴²

The status quo did not change much after the end of the truce in May 1519. At first, the preparations for the emperor's election of June 1519 played a role in this. Charles V was the main candidate, but the French king also put himself in the running, with Duke Charles as one of his supporters. As long as the choice was not made, it was difficult for the two pretenders to the throne to take up arms against each other again. For the next period, the ever scarce, cash-strapped duke of Guelders could not deploy additional troops in Friesland because he had to concentrate them on actions in the Oversticht.

Stadtholder Schenck van Toutenburg and the invasion of the Bishop's Band

The day of 24 March 1521 may be considered a turning point. On this day, Willem van Roggendorf was replaced as Burgundian stadtholder by Georg Schenck van Toutenburg. This fighter had previously been in the service of the Utrecht bishops Frederik van Baden and Philip of Burgundy, among others such as bailiff (*drost*) of Vollenhove.⁴³ His transition from Utrecht to Habsburg service was a promotion within the larger Burgundian-Habsburg

42 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 231, mentions 28 October, but Peter van Thabor, who gives more detailed information about Grutte Pier, talks about the night of St Luke (= 18 October). See also Kalma, *Grote Pier*, 133.

43 C.A. van Kalveen, *Het bestuur van bisschop en Staten in het Nedersticht, Oversticht en Drenthe, 1483–1520* (Utrecht 1974) 71–73; Jantien G. Dopper, 'Die werelt loept thans seer aventuerlick'. *Het optreden van stadhouder Georg Schenck van Tautenburg in de gewesten Friesland, Overijssel en Groningen en Ommelanden (1521–1540)*. Doctoraalscriptie middeleeuwse geschiedenis Universiteit Leiden 2007, 9.

circuit, bearing in mind that the prince bishopric of Utrecht had already been under strong Burgundian influence since the second half of the fifteenth century. Schenck van Toutenburg was a hard worker, albeit of low nobility, but gifted with great administrative talents. After his training period, he, together with his predecessor Willem van Roggendorf, and certainly also with the advice of Floris van Egmond, seems to have designed a plan to destabilise conditions in Guelders' Friesland.

Instead of taking on mercenaries themselves, Schenck and Van Egmond played the ball over Utrecht this time. Bishop Philip of Burgundy, who, as lord of the Oversticht in 1521, had come into conflict with Charles of Guelders because the city of Zwolle had invoked his support in connection with a dispute about tolls on the Zwartewater (after which they threatened Hasselt together),⁴⁴ had two groups of *Landsknechte* gather in Holland at the beginning of October. He sent one group from Hoorn across the Zuiderzee to Kuinre.⁴⁵ Their direct commander was a certain Claes Wolderstorff. But behind Wolderstorff, none other than the former Burgundian stadtholder in Friesland, Willem van Roggendorf, who had apparently been recruited via Brussels to lead the operation in the right direction, appeared. The first action of his mercenaries suggested that the bishop would use them to fight the Guelders' forces in Northwest Overijssel, and also cut off their connections with Friesland. Worp van Thabor, however, saw this in a very different way: '... that the Burgundians wanted to have soldiers in Friesland who would do much harm and harm to the Frisians who were loyal to the Guelders' party, so that they would voluntarily go under the Imperial Majesty'.⁴⁶ The leading idea was that in the event of an episcopal invasion, Guelders would have no reason to send another troop of mercenaries into the Burgundian territory of Holland, just as they had done in 1517. The strongest indication of the Burgundian initiative in this respect is that Stadtholder Schenck ordered the Burgundian-Frisian captain, Douwe Burmania, to select 400 men from his own professional troops to join the bishop's mercenary forces, the so-called *Bisschopshoop* (Bishop's Band), while at the same time

44 J. Benders, *Hasselt, 1521: een Overstichts stadje in de greep van Hertog Karel van Gelre*, Doctoraalscriptie Geschiedenis en Mediaevistiek Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 1992, 75–80.

45 J. Sterk, *Philips van Bourgondië (1464–1524). Bisschop van Utrecht als protagonist van de Renaissance. Zijn leven en maecenaat* (Zutphen 1980) 65–66. The bishop himself sailed with the other contingent to Kampen, from where his troops went into the Veluwe to plunder.

46 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 242–245. The chronicler also mentions here (244) in so many words that the *Landsknechte* were sent by the 'hof (court) van Burgondien [...]'. The well-considered character of this manoeuvre has hardly been noted in literature. Struick, *Gelre en Habsburg*, 281–282, even omits the whole episode.

Burmania called on the inhabitants of Lemsterland with messengers to come and make a treaty with him in Kuinre.

In response, the Guelders' stadtholder in Friesland, Christopher van Meurs, immediately had the militias of Doniawerstal and Schoterland mobilised and moved to Lemmer in order to repel the enemy, to prevent them pressing the local population to pay tribute to them and recognise the king. The militiamen obeyed the order and indeed came to Lemmer in the field. However, their opponents turned out to be too strong. The men of Doniawerstal and Schoterland had to give way, albeit without much loss of life. However, one of their captains, Frederick Roorda, *grietman* of Schoterland and Stellingwerf, was captured. This left the road open for the mercenaries to move into Friesland. They set Lemmer and part of the village of Oosterzee on fire and forced the population of Lemsterland to compose and pay taxes for a term of eleven weeks – the same term that the Guelders' administration in Overijssel had given to peasants over which they had gained control. Willem van Roggendorf then left the army to go via Holland to the Burgundian court in Brabant. The mercenaries of the bishop continued their raid under their own captain and went in circles through Stellingwerf, Schoterland, and Doniawerstal to Achtkarspelen and Kollumerland to burn everything, temporarily setting up their camp at the Premonstratensian nunnery of Buweklooster.

Van Meurs moved to Klaarkamp west of Dokkum with a number of professional troops plus a group of Frisian militiamen. However, he could do little more than prevent the bishop's forces from burning Westdongeradeel and Ferwerderadeel, though things did not come to a battle. After some time, Van Meurs retreated to Sneek, while the men of the Bishop's Band stayed in the Bergumer monastery for a few weeks. Around Christmas, they moved south along Leeuwarden to Arum and then to the surroundings of Bolsward, again to inflict as much damage as possible on the remaining Frisians: only those who swore allegiance to the emperor were spared for six weeks. Of course, in various regions militiamen came up against them. For example, in Tirns, some of them entrenched themselves in the church and on the tower. With bells ringing, they alerted the men from other villages and they successfully drove out the robbers.⁴⁷ In spite of this counteraction, the Bishop's Band managed to terrorise and subjugate many parts of the population between Leeuwarden, Sneek, and Bolsward to the Burgundian authority. When, in mid-January 1522, the mercenaries thought they had carried out their

47 See the comprehensive, compassionate report of *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 275–279.



Fig. 38. Duke Charles of Guelders, 1519. Facsimile of a woodcut by an anonymous master. Topografisch Historische Atlas Gelders Archief Arnhem.

mission properly, they travelled via Kollumerland, Vredewold, and Drenthe in an arch back to Kuinre to be paid their salary promised by Roggendorf.⁴⁸ Of course, Roggendorf was absent there, so no money was available and the Bishop's Band was forced to continue its looting and extortion practices in Northwest Overijssel, Drenthe, and Groningerland.

The reaction of the Guelders' authorities in Sneek was, predictably, that they also brought troops to the field. This happened initially in Achtkarspelen, by the drost of Dokkum, Johan Goltstein. Stadtholder Schenck van Toutenburg quickly arrived from Leeuwarden with some men and got into a skirmish, wounding his arm. Still, he was successful because the drost could barely escape in the direction of Sloten. Perhaps Schenck became overconfident and had a contingent sent to Workum to deal with the frozen

48 *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 435; *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 246–247.

ships from Guelders. He was accompanied by a 'fourth man'-selection of the city militias of Leeuwarden and Franeker. Christopher van Meurs then took up arms against him and had the bells rung in Wonseradeel, Gaasterland, Sneek, and Bolsward. The result was that large numbers of able-bodied men turned up under the leadership of their aldermen and *grietmannen*.⁴⁹ When Van Meurs went to Workum with these farmers and peasants plus a contingent of mercenaries, Toutenburg and his impressed Burgundians quickly returned to their bases in Harlingen and Franeker.

Meanwhile, Van Meurs also had another area to cover. On 27 March he had to lay siege to Steenwijk for his lord, where there were still men from the Bishop's Band who not only raided the area around Steenwijk but also Stellingwerf. As a result, he called on not only an enormous number of mercenaries but also the Frisian militias of Stellingwerf, Schoterland, and Doniawerstal to help him. The Guelders' army, including these popular militias from southern Friesland, even went so far as to storm the city, but they were forcibly beaten back.

Burgundy gets the winning hand, 1522

These successive actions gradually changed the mood of the population of Central Westergo in April. The citizens of Sneek had become dissatisfied with the repression by the Guelders' authorities, who now often turned against their own people. They chose a new, anti-Guelders council, after which Count Christopher van Meurs and Chancellor Hubert van Rossum were forced to secretly leave the city at the beginning of May. The former burgomaster and alderman, Sicke Liauckema,⁵⁰ who had been in exile in Saxon and Burgundian circles since the end of 1514, was thus given the opportunity on 27 May to hold his entry as a new alderman. An attempt by Guelders in mid-August to surprise the city with a classic stratagem of war (they sent men in women's clothes with an army group hidden behind them to the North gate) was thwarted by the citizens with some luck.

At the same time, governor-general Margaret of Austria and her army commanders set up new military projects for the North on the part of

49 '[...] The whole country was summoned at the stroke of a bell, namely Wonseradeel, Gaasterland, Sneek and Bolsward, each with the fourth part of the city; and also the Wold-people showed up': *Peter van Thabor, Historie van Vrieslant*, 283.

50 He was a son of Schelte Liauckema and Luts Harinxma, who, some years after the death of her husband (1503), married Roelof van Ewsum in 1507. Van Ewsum had also joined the Burgundian side.

Habsburg. Schenck van Toutenburg was allowed to take on 1,500 mercenaries, with whom he first went to Hasselt at the beginning of May to occupy an annoying Guelders' stronghold together with troops from the bishop. He then proceeded to besiege Genemuiden, which was occupied by Guelders' men. The latter, however, failed.⁵¹ Schenck himself was wounded while his Frisian vice-commander, Tjalling Bottinga, was captured. After this setback, Schenck was ordered at the beginning of June to sail immediately to Enkhuizen where he, together with the former Guelders-sided Frisians, Jancko Douwama, Jancko Oenema, and Juw Juwsma, embarked again for a landing on the Frisian coast. They were given 1,000 mercenaries for this purpose. The underlying goal was certainly to liberate Westerlauwers Friesland further from the grip of Guelders. However, the action was also initially intended to put an end to the Guelders-Frisian privateering that was operated from the coastal towns of Makkum and Workum under the successor of Grutte Pier, Wierd van Bolsward. He had just raided Texel and Wieringen at the end of May with twenty ships in which his men had extorted an amount of more than 10,000 philip guilders from the population to buy looted good and arson wares. The Burgundian expedition, which was seemingly only half-heartedly led by the stadtholder (he and Jancko Douwama were anything but friends) was successful. Partly with the help of a pro-Habsburg burgomaster, Schenck and Douwama were able to conquer the city of Staveren on 12 June and further strengthen it.⁵²

In this way, the territory of Guelders in Friesland became smaller and smaller and Duke Charles and his men could count on less and less sympathy from the population within the Frisian districts under their authority. Numerically, the balance was now clearly in favour of the Burgundians. In addition, the fact that the latter party systematically managed to free up more money for warfare was also taken into account. Thus, after the transition from Sneek and the capture of Staveren, it seemed only a matter of time before the whole of Friesland came under Habsburg. The fact that the Guelders' rulers did not immediately abandon their Frisian territory has to do with the fact that they were still firmly rooted in Groningen and the small towns they still occupied in Friesland:

51 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 261; *Sicke Benninge, Croniken der Vrescher landen*, 442–443; *Sterk, Philips van Bourgondië*, 71–72.

52 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 266. *Struick, Gelre en Habsburg*, 284–285, erroneously dates the capture of Staveren on 10 June 1523 – a year later – which means that his chronology of events in Friesland in this crucial period is not correct. However, this author is able to report that Guelders had to give up Staveren partly because of a lack of money: few mercenaries were available anymore to defend the town.

Dokkum, Bolsward, Workum, and Sloten, with their earthen ramparts and wide moats, which they had used since 1514, allowed them defend themselves for a long time against a considerable force majeure. After all, conquering such fortifications took a lot of time and energy, even from a large professional army, and there was often not enough money available for such engagement. The Burgundians, too, therefore, continued for a long time to loot and burn the countryside in order to minimise support for Guelders. In October 1522, for example, a group of Burgundian mercenaries led by Tjaard Burmania plundered through eastern Tietjerksteradeel, in the area around Bergum. According to Peter and Worp van Thabor, the group was supported by a contingent of militiamen. They were given the task of guarding the base camp at the Klaarkamp monastery north of Rinsumageest.

The expulsion of the Guelders' forces in 1523 and 1524

War activities only resumed in the spring and early summer of 1523. First the blockhouse of Workum was conquered by a new Burgundian invasion force of 900 men, led by Stadtholder Georg Schenck van Toutenburg and Jan van Wassenaar. Their mercenary group was reinforced with another 1,500 *Landsknechte* and headed for Dokkum in July. After a futile attempt to quickly enter Dokkum, these men moved south, past Bergum and through Smallerland to Haskerland and Schoterland. There they set fire to a number of villages whose population did not dare swear allegiance to the emperor for fear that Guelders would take revenge on them as soon as the Burgundians were gone again. When a Guelders' army was gathered against them from Groningen, they tried to battle it. Since the Groninger-Guelders contingent eventually shrank back from really entering the field, Wassenaar and Toutenburg could do little other than put pressure on the Westerkwartier by means of terror, in the same way as they had done with Zevenwouden before. This approach seems to have been successful because many delegates of *grietenijen*, from Achtkarspelen and Kollumerland, among others, came to them in Noordhorn to take the oath of allegiance to the emperor.

From there, the Burgundians could then seriously tackle Dokkum in mid-August. Tjaard Burmania, who was stationed with a group of militiamen at the abbey of Mariëngaarde, about seven kilometres north of Leeuwarden, was summoned to approach Dokkum from the west side. In the end, a siege force of 3,000 mercenaries and a large number of militiamen was

formed.⁵³ The cornered Guelders' army, under Goltstein's command, wanted to send out bids to get help, but now it turned out that the able-bodied men in the neighbouring districts had become hostile. They moved 'so fast and diligently with the bells, that they [the Guelders' soldiers] could not get through anywhere'. The people of Kollumerland, Achtkarspelen, and the Dongeradelen therefore seem to have chosen the Burgundian side *en masse* at this time. They wanted to get rid of Guelders and the Guelders-minded Frisians because of the damage and troubles they had caused to the countryside from Dokkum.

The importance of this reversal of fortunes was also proved in the future. When the famous Guelders' general, Maarten van Rossum, tried from Groningen, with a corps of 300 footmen and 100 horsemen, to relieve his colleague Goltstein in Dokkum, he encountered great resistance from the *grietenij* militia in Kollumerland. As the chronicler Worp van Thabor tells it, the farmers and peasants gathered together and '... pursued the Guelders' soldiers [so] fiercely that there have been deaths and injuries on both sides'. Also at Dokkum itself, militiamen came into action, probably from Northern Westergo and Western Oostergo, because they were gathered in Leeuwarden to appear before Dokkum with wagons and horses '[...] and prepare them for a storm'. The latter meant that they also had to participate in the planned storming of the city. In the end, it turned out to be unnecessary because Goltstein decided, at the insistence of the Dokkum people, to surrender the city on 27 August in exchange for a free retreat, perhaps also because he had no confidence in the outcome given the force majeure of his opponent.

At the same time, Bolsward, too, was put under pressure, albeit with less display of power, but so threatening that it came to a discussion in which the majority of the citizens decided to accept the emperor as their lord. The former Bolsward alderman, Goslick Jongema, took over authority on behalf of Charles V. Those who did not wish to be under the emperor were given a free retreat towards Sloten. The result was that the entire Burgundian-Frisian power went to Sloten to siege that stronghold as well. This also happened with the deployment of militiamen, in addition to the mercenary contingent still operating in the service of Wassenaar and Toutenburg. The latter, incidentally, was paid for by the Frisians themselves with the permission of the diet. The documents speak of 1,500 men. As far as the deployment of militiamen is concerned, the chroniclers mention 'the third man from all over Westergo'.⁵⁴ Numerically, the combination would have resulted in an

53 *Worp van Thabor, Kronijken V*, 317–319.

54 *Ibidem*, 326.

even larger army than what had been collected for Dokkum in August. The siege did not have to be pushed to the extreme here either. When it turned out that there could be no question of relief (the Guelders' forces in Steenwijk did not know how to do much more than raid Stellingwerf, against which Douwe Hoytes had to act 'with the [now Burgundian] Wold-men' and a company of *Landsknechte*), negotiations between the besieged occupants of Sloten and the besiegers came about. The result was the same as that of the sieges of Dokkum and Bolsward. The Guelders' troops plus their Frisian party members, including the *hoofdelingen* Sierk Donia and Rien and Kempo Jongema, were allowed to go wherever they wanted except to Lemmer or Steenwijk. On 8 November, the changing of the guard took place. On the same day, Guelders also gave up the blockhouse in Lemmer. And so, according to Worp van Thabor, the Guelders' men were '... entirely extirpated and exterminated from Friesland' after nine years less fourteen days since they had set foot on the Frisian shore.

That was not yet the end of it. In May 1524, the Guelders' commanders saw an opportunity to raid Stellingwerf. Because the Habsburg authorities had already discarded most of her mercenaries, Schenck van Toutenburg had to appeal to the popular militias again. He did not hesitate to call all of Friesland to come to Leeuwarden and from there to go to Stellingwerf. When the Guelders' men heard about this, they quickly withdrew again, so that the mobilisation did not have to continue. Stadtholder Schenck van Toutenburg is said to have thanked the Frisians for their faithful and united response to his call '...and let them go home again'.

Conclusion

The chronicler Worp van Thabor concludes the fifth and last book of his histories with the remark that, in 1524, the emperor had finally succeeded in bringing Friesland from Staveren to Gerkesbrugge to obedience and tranquillity, thanks to the '... considerable help and assistance of the Frisians themselves'. He was, indeed, a keen observer because, as a procurator and later as prior of the Windesheim priory of Thabor near Tirns, he witnessed the civil war from close quarters. If we read 'Frisian militias' to mean Frisians, can we agree with his verdict and indeed attribute a meaningful role to the Frisian civic armies at the end but perhaps also in the preceding period?

In any case, the opening paragraphs of our survey have shown that the contribution of the Frisian militias was decisive for the establishment of the power of Guelders in Friesland. Without the massive support of the

grietenij contingents of Zevenwouden, Eastern Oostergo, and Southern Westergo – which reflected the anti-Saxon mood of the population – the duke of Guelders, with his core power of only 700 mercenaries, would never have been able to bring three-quarters of the region under his authority. The *grietenij* militias were nearly constantly in action until 1524. This applies to both parties, although it can be noted that they had a more important numerical input on the Guelders' side than on the Saxon, later Burgundian-Habsburg, side.

As far as the armament of the popular militias was concerned, they were and remained inferior to the professional mercenaries, who were equipped with ever more effective small firearms at this time. We saw this very clearly in the raid of April 1515 in which a company of just over a hundred Saxon *Landsknechte* was able to bring eight arquebuses and forty roeren into position when disembarking at Bannerhuis. Apart from the standard armament of pikes and swords plus cuirass protection for members of the lesser nobility and the richest freeholders, the militia units had little to offer. In terms of motivation, however, they turned out to have been strong. Reports about desertion or premature escape hardly appear in the chronicles. Their skill in handling weapons logically grew the more frequently they were involved in action. It is therefore not surprising that professional fighters quickly emerged from their midst, such as Grutte Pier and his privateers or the men of the Arumer Black Band. It can be assumed that also among the professional Frisian troops were soldiers who had their first combat experience as militiamen in a village contingent.

Unlike in the time before 1500, the militia units seem to have been relatively professionally led. It is not always clear from the reports whether their captains, a number of whom we know by name, had always been *grietmannen* or aldermen and, therefore, by virtue of their managerial and legal function, had been in charge of the men. The data, for example, on the performance of the *grietman* of Stellingwerf, Murck Syrcks, in December 1514, former *grietman* of Oostdongeradeel, Tjaard Mockema, in January 1515, and the *grietman* of Schoterland, Frederick Roorda, in the autumn of 1522 do suggest they were in charge. The same goes for what we know about Jancko Douwama, who seems to have been *grietman* of Stellingwerf for a while until his turnaround of 1520.⁵⁵ It goes without saying that there were commanders' positions at various levels: from village, *grietenij* and city, or overarching a few *grietenijen* and cities together. For the men who

55 Jerem van Duijl, Sjoerd Galema and Henk Bloemhoff, *Rentmeestersrekeningen van Stellingwerf-Oosteinde en Stellingwerf-Westeinde (1524–1531)* (Oldeberkoop 2017) 13.

commanded a combination of units, we see the same names, among others, on the Guelders' Frisian side: Murck Syrcks (son of Syrck Murcks who in 1496 was one of the leaders of the Wold-Frisians in the battle of Sloten), Jancko Douwama, Jancko Oenema, Juw Juwsma, Amcko Jarla, and Sicke Douwes Galama. They were all experienced enough. Jancko Oenema, for example, had been recruited in the summer of 1514 as captain of an ensign of professional *Landsknechte* which, on behalf of Oostergo and Zevenwouden, had to support the duke of Saxony in the siege of Groningen.

This does not alter the fact that once things came to a stalemate, the role of the militiamen diminished. They showed themselves as having military importance only when they could be called up in large numbers in combination with a unit of professional soldiers. With large numbers – counted together with a mobilisation of the second, third, or fourth man – one can think of a group of a few hundred to a thousand men in cases where four or five *grietenijen* acted together. The main role in the actual fighting thus remained reserved for the mercenary companies, who were deployed against each other by the war leaders of Guelders and Habsburg. In this period, the actual fighting took place mainly in and around the cities, blockhouses, and stonehouses, which were fortified by ramparts and moats. This was because, unlike in the years 1496–1500, between 1514 and 1524, there were hardly any confrontations in the open field. The mercenary commanders focused mainly on carrying out plundering raids. If several units from both sides went through the country at the same time, they tended to avoid each other, especially if the size of the army groups per party exceeded 1,000–1,500 men. The militia contingents, whose primary concern was to protect their own villages, had little to contribute in such circumstances. They could only try to attack individual *Landsknechte* who ventured outside the protection of the large band. For the rest, they were deployable with their stick and stabbing weapons on and behind strongholds and bulwarks.

The longer the stalemate lasted, the more difficult it became for the duke of Guelders to maintain his position of power in Friesland. Because of his poorer financial situation, he was less able than Habsburg to keep mercenaries in service for a long time. While his stadtholder and administration had done the best they could to maintain the relationship with the population under their authority, they were looking for a way out in the violent exercise of tax pressure. In doing so, they achieved the opposite and gradually lost the credit they had built up with the vast majority of the Frisian population in the autumn of 1514. This strategy not only weakened the tax morale of their new subjects but also had military consequences. In 1522 and 1523, several districts transferred their loyalty to the emperor and put their militia

potential behind him. Whether or not this caused the balance to tip – as Worp van Thabor more or less suggests – I dare not say. But it was undeniably a factor of great importance because it led to a numerical supremacy at the sieges of the last Guelders' strongholds, namely, Dokkum, Bolsward and Sloten in 1523: a supremacy so great that the Guelders' forces did not dare to engage in battle and voluntarily gave up their positions in exchange for an unhindered retreat.

7. Conclusions

'At arms!' This cry has been raised often, in many countries, and at many times. We know it perhaps best in French as, 'Aux armes, citoyens!' from the *Marseillaise*, fervently calling on all citizens to fight for the fatherland. 'Levée and masse' or national conscription seems to be a modern phenomenon, born in the days after the storming of the Bastille. However, the general popular resistance is much older. It is universal in origin in that in a variety of states throughout the world all able-bodied men from the age of sixteen or eighteen to sixty have been obliged to take up arms to defend their house, hearth, village, town, region, or country against invaders. In other words, people who could handle weapons but for whom fighting was not their profession have stepped up to fight, whether or not under the guidance of professionals. In the early Middle Ages, in the face of the threat of violence, every free man throughout Europe had to stand up for his rights with his own hands, either individually when necessary, but also together with his neighbours, family, and political community. Anyone who was not able to do so, and therefore, had to be protected by somebody else, lost his honour and status as an independent individual as a matter of course. This applied to city dwellers as well as to farmers and peasants. That is why we see free men as conscripts in raids, sieges, and battles in many regions from the People's Movements until the fourteenth century. They followed their princes and fought alongside the prince's vassals and hired professional warriors.

Because the conflicts between the ever-expanding princely states in the late Middle Ages led to a strong professionalisation of military business, the interest of many military historians for this period is almost exclusively in the operations of the professional soldiers. The downside of this is that the popular militias have, up to now, been poorly studied. As far as one can follow these militias in the sources, their involvement in the story often falls secondary to the actions of the feudal service aristocracy or the mercenary units replacing them. If any attention is paid to their involvement, it concerns the actions of formations from large cities. Little is known about the contribution of rural units and those of small towns.

This book aims to change that. Its focus is on the popular defence in Westerlauwers Friesland between 1480 and 1560, a period in which much fighting took place intermittently in the Northern Netherlands. The central question was how the efforts of the Frisian people's armies evolved during this transitional period from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. To a certain extent, the Frisian case seems special because the country between Vlie and Lauwers was ruled and defended by its inhabitants under the leadership of elected judges for a long time until, in the middle of the period under study, their independence came to an end. An important question arising in this context is why the self-defence of the Frisians eventually failed in their efforts to preserve their 'freedom'. Was it exclusively a matter of military inferiority, of not being able to cope with the mercenary armies deployed by their opponents? Or, if able-bodied men were deployed on both sides, did their numbers on one side or the other influence the outcome? The latter certainly played a role in the years 1514–1524 after the departure of the Saxons who had come to power earlier, when Habsburg and Guelders fought each other for the inheritance. To what extent did the contribution of the popular militias help to determine the course of the battle?

Because only narrative sources are available for the period up to 1500, and these discuss the commitment but not the structure of the popular armies, an approach has been chosen to first study the situation in the Habsburg period between 1524 and 1560, for which, fortunately, some important archival sources have been preserved with many details about the men and their weapons. In addition to judicial accounts for the years 1524–1530, which refer to regular musterings and also to the actions of municipal units, there are also the so-called muster cedulae or rolls from 1552. These are a series of records, preserved for six towns and fourteen *grietenijen* (rural districts), in which, for each village or district, all the men and their equipment are recorded. They were made as part of a general inspection carried out by order of the Habsburg authorities in February of the same year in various parts of the Netherlands. On the basis of these lists, supplemented by a similar but separate register of Ameland from 1558, we were able to determine in detail the composition, strength, armament, and organisation of the urban and rural militias. Of course, our findings first and foremost concern the situation around the middle of the sixteenth century. With the knowledge thus obtained about 1552, we then jumped back in time about 80 years, to about 1480, in order to further dissect the developments described in chronicles for the periods 1480–1500 and 1514–1525. This approach resulted in an unusual chronological order of the book in two parts. After the introductory chapters, the first part covers the years 1525–1560, while the second part

is devoted to the period 1480–1525. The starting point for the continuation of the line back in time has been that the city and district militias of 1552 seem to have had about the same strength and composition as those of about 1500. Differences were large only with respect to firearms: both the professional armed forces and the militias were equipped with much more firing equipment around 1550 than they were half a century earlier.

The introductory sketch in Chapter Two about the country and its inhabitants made it clear why the popular armies in Friesland had a broad composition. The *hoofdelingen* or noble principals in the *grietenij* (district) units traditionally had the same role in it as the wealthy freehold farmers, leaseholders, and other country people. They fought side by side on foot, with the various weapons usually available to infantrymen. As far as the urban militias are concerned, this also applied to the rich citizens on the one hand and to the poor artisans and other low-income citizens on the other. Noblemen and patricians were often better equipped than the other men. They had to be. The laws and ordinances prescribed armament according to ability and economic status. Those with considerable status, we can suspect, were generally entrusted with the command of the various units, both at the level of the *grietenij* and the city as well as at the level of the village and the town quarter.

The fact that all Frisian men despite their economic status had to stand together in one contingent per urban or rural municipality was partly related to the physical-geographical structure of the region. Elsewhere, it was often the case that members of the higher classes specialised in fighting on horseback. The latter was impossible in the marshy coastal landscape of Friesland, intersected by ditches and canals. With cavalry there was not much to be done militarily. However, the fact that rich and poor fought side by side within the Frisian city and *grietenij* militias also had to do with the relatively egalitarian structure of Frisian society. Feudalism was lacking in the Frisian lands, serf relationships were no longer found after about 1000, and, after 1250, there was also no question of comital overlordship. The nobility or gentry and the group of rich freeholding farmers had to carry the communal administration together. Aristocrats at the level of high nobility in Holland, Utrecht, and Guelders were not present in Friesland. The differences in power between the main group of nobles who qualified as low nobility or gentry and those of the wealthy freeholding farmers seem to have been small throughout the Middle Ages. However, this did not prevent the Frisian *hoofdelingen* from trying to distinguish themselves from the freeholders in every possible way.

In Chapter Three, we looked at how popular defence was organised in the Habsburg era. We first established that not only the administrators in

Leeuwarden but also the central government in Brussels (using mercenary armies on a large scale for its almost permanent warfare against France and Guelders), still attached great value to the military service of the male population after the incorporation of Friesland into the Habsburg state system in 1524. The reason behind this was that the permanent military garrison could be kept small and affordable with a people's army behind them. In case of real action, the professional army had to be brought up to strength quickly. But even then, in view of the costs, the administrators hoped to get support and additional service from the city and municipal militias. This was put into practice in Friesland between 1524 and 1560. The new regional government appreciated the existing tradition of popular defence and continued it. It tried to improve the quality of the militias by regularly inspecting them and organising them according to the model of the existing mercenary armies in ensigns (companies) with a professional framework. We also noted that, between 1524 and 1544, successive stadtholders repeatedly brought the militias into the field for security services and in actions against unemployed mercenaries and religious revolutionaries. Thus, it was not surprising that at the end of 1551, when a dangerous Franco-Saxon coalition had formed against Habsburg, the idea was put forward in Brussels that urban and rural militias could also be deployed in Friesland in the event of landings on the coast, invasions over land, or manifestations of domestic rebellion. Margaretha of Parma, the governor-general, then issued urgent orders to the subordinate governors in Friesland, Holland, Coastal Flanders, parts of Guelders, and possibly in other regions, to muster the able-bodied men everywhere and to ensure their armour was in order.

From the analysis of the Frisian muster-rolls and the available texts on musterings elsewhere, it appeared that the defence applied to all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, with the understanding that only one man per household had to serve. For both the city and the countryside, 20 to 30 percent of men could not participate in the defence due to poverty and illness. Another important finding in this context was that in the event of actual action, the defence tasks were put in the hands of a selection of men. Literally, this selection concerned 'the third man', which meant that in the face of imminent danger, one in three men was supposed to be deployed. In practice, however, a smaller unit was involved, which, incidentally, had to be designated in advance. For some districts, it could be made clear that this group of 'muster-men' consisted mainly of young adults. Extrapolation of the figures handed down for the six cities and fourteen districts for the whole of Friesland brought the total number of deployable men to about 2,400 for the countryside, excluding the islands,

and 1,400 for the cities. That adds up to 3,800 men for the whole province, out of an estimated population of 75,000 to 80,000. This first figure of 2,400 corresponds very well with the statement of the obligatory quota for the Frisian countryside in 1528, in which the *grietenijen* together had to gather 2,346 conscripts in five ensigns of 400 to 500 men. In 1552, however, the militias were not (yet) organised into ensign companies. Possibly this still had to be provided for. The fact that the men were mustered per district and parish gives the impression that, in principle, they were also brought in per district and parish. However, this is less obvious in the case of a call from the third man only, because the units per district or large village together rarely exceeded thirty men. For this reason, the command per city and *grietenij* would have instead been arranged on an ad hoc basis, depending on the number of selected combatants.

The equipment of the Frisian able-bodied men in 1552 discussed in Chapter Four appears to have been relatively simple. The majority had both a stick and a striking weapon at their disposal, in most cases a pike and a sword. The wealthier men, who we find especially in the clay regions of the countryside, often had a halberd, in addition to their sword. Some of them were even equipped with a so-called broadsword. The men from the cities were better equipped with firearms than those from the villages. Over one-fifth of the citizens showed up with a handgun, compared to roughly one-tenth of the men from the *grietenijen*. We can also observe that the men of the districts in the poor sandy and peaty areas were generally less well armed than those from the clay areas. However, it can immediately be noted that a solution was found for this in a number of poor districts: at the taxpayer's expense, one or more complete set of armour was purchased for each village, which could be given to physically strong but less well-equipped mustered men. In this way, the selection of men could be sent out in a relatively well-equipped manner, with about one third of 'the third man' in armour.

The comparison of the Frisian equipment with that of the men of Alkmaar, for which arms inspection data has also been provided, shows that they also differed little from each other with regard to the number of helmet and armour wearers and the quality of their armour. As far as the sixteenth century is concerned, the population of Alkmaar has been labelled 'egalitarian' from a social and economic point of view. If that judgement is correct, it should – on the basis of the military equipment of their men – also apply to the Frisian cities. Judging from some data from the total census preserved for Holland, the able-bodied men in some Holland towns and villages seem to have had more firearms at their disposal than those in Friesland. They were thus just a little more up to date given that, in the course of the sixteenth

century, the possession of handguns expanded rapidly everywhere and many shooting guilds had switched from hand or foot-bows to firearms under the encouragement of city councils. In this context, it was not a coincidence that in the muster list of Ameland, which is six years younger than the Frisian *cedulas* of 1552, we found a much higher percentage (of about 29 percent) of men armed with arquebuses and so-called *roeren*.

Armed with this knowledge, we attempted in Chapters Five and Six to find out the actual deployment of people's militias in the two periods in which power was often at stake in Friesland and to determine their importance. The first period covers the years until 1500, which ended with the final establishment of the Saxon authority after the defeat of the Frisian uprising. In the 1480s and 1490s, armed forces in Friesland were partly formed on a local and regional basis, and partly on a faction or party basis: Schieringers versus Vetkopers. The pattern of the fighting was that the *hoofdelingen* (chieftains) of their town or villages always formed, for each action, a small core force of a few permanent men of arms and a few dozen mercenaries, who were complemented by an auxiliary force of a few hundred able-bodied men from the places and districts over which they could directly or indirectly exercise authority as judge, administrator, or informal leader. Unfortunately, the data on the composition of these mini-legions are so fragmentary that no conclusions can be drawn about the military importance of the armed peasants and citizens included in them.

This is different in the case of the mobilisation of men for three specific battles in which mercenaries of Albrecht of Saxony, supported by Schieringer *hoofdelingen* with their own small units, took along on a group of gathered Frisians who, in all cases, fought for the preservation of political autonomy. The first was the battle of Sloten on 13 January 1496. The second is known as the battle of Laaxum on 10 June 1498. The third took place at Bomsterzijl, in the Groninger Westerkwartier, on 14 July 1500. The first two confrontations involved a battle between some 800 to 1,000 very experienced German mercenaries on the one hand, and a relatively large selection of able-bodied men from the sand and peat districts on the other. The battle at Bomsterzijl was of a different order. There was a large group of Frisians of about 3,500 men from the east and south of the province who faced an impressive army of about 6,000 *Landsknechte*, some of them from Meissen, who were personally led by Duke Albrecht. Other Frisians gathered in front of the city of Franeker where they besieged Albrecht's son Henry, against whose authority they rebelled.

All three battles ended in victories for the German professionals and thus in as many defeats for the Frisian 'amateurs'. All chroniclers make it seem as if the Frisians had always been by far the majority in these confrontations.

However, our analysis, based in part on the figures of 1552 and 1528, showed that the Frisian numbers at Sloten and Laaxum were considerably smaller than previously assumed. Instead of a ten-, six-, or four-fold predominance, one can only speak of a majority where the ratio was one-and-a-half to one. With such a small numerical superiority, other factors such as equipment, organisation, tactics, and command came into play for the popular militias. Their relatively inferior armament certainly played tricks on the Frisians. We saw in the battles at Sloten and Laaxum, and actually also at Bomsterzijl, that the core of the Frisian army consisted of *Wold-men* (literally: men from the woods) who – although highly motivated – were actually the poorest and therefore least well-equipped men of the region. Most of them would only have been armed with a pike or a long skewer. Only a minority had, in addition to a pole weapon, a sword at their disposal for the fight at short distance. And only a very small number of them had some form of metal body protection. This has been very different with the professionals, who probably all wore a cuirass or breast plate and a storm hat. Only the urban militias could have come close to the mercenary forces in this respect. Extremely important was the equipment with firearms. In this area, according to all the stories, the German *Landsknechte* had a great advantage in the years 1496–1500. The percentage of arquebuses in their ranks was many times higher than that of the popular militias. Even more important was the use of field artillery, which was totally absent for the Frisian armies in Sloten and Laaxum. In both battles, however, the German *Landsknechte* deployed a few pieces of artillery with which deadly hail fire could be brought down on the Frisian foot-soldiers. At Bomsterzijl, the Frisians did have a few ‘field snakes’ in their entrenchment, but their fire did not match that of the three batteries that Duke Albrecht had managed to bring into position.

A second important factor explaining the losses is that especially the Frisian rural militias were not well led and commanded in the fighting. The *Wold-Frisians* did not know how to hold their formation. They lacked group discipline because they had no non-commissioned officers to force them into the ranks. According to one chronicler, they walked like a flock of sheep without a shepherd: ‘if one of them walked, they all trotted’. At Laaxum, according to the same author, they would have been better off waiting for the Leeuwarden city militia because they knew how to operate in battle order. At Bomsterzijl, however, they managed to keep their formation closed for hours, possibly because they also had professional soldiers in their midst and they themselves had acquired more skill in fighting in the meantime.

In all this we must finally consider – as a third decisive factor – that the opponents of the Frisian militiamen were among the most experienced and

hardened soldiers of Western Europe. Many a *Landsknecht* from the formations of Albrecht of Saxony had already fought under one of his captains in the 1480s in Flanders and Brabant, and in the beginning of the 1490s in Holland to defeat rebellions successfully.

Finally, Chapter Six discusses the period 1514–1524 in which Habsburg and Guelders fought each other for power in Friesland and each rallied a part of the population to their side. In this civil war, the Frisian popular armies were often in action. A chronological review of the events showed, first of all, that the input of the regional militias was decisive for the establishment of Guelders' power in Friesland. In the autumn of 1514, Duke Charles of Guelders managed to bring three quarters of the province under his authority, even though he had no more than two ensigns of *Landsknechte* at his disposal (ca. 1,000 men). This would have been impossible without the massive support of the rural militias from Southern Westergo, Zevenwouden, and Eastern Oostergo: the poorer regions of Friesland that had suffered most under the great tax burden of the duke of Saxony. On both sides, such militias had been in action all over Friesland since the onset of this burden. For the Guelders' party, who had little income and was therefore reluctant to employ mercenaries on a large scale, the militias were numerically more important than they were for the Burgundian-Habsburg party.

In terms of armament and equipment, the militias always remained lesser equipped than the *Landsknechte*, who, as mentioned above, were better equipped with arquebuses and other handguns. The majority of the Frisian militia units had to make do with the standard combination of pike and sword (*degen*). Only the richest burghers and freeholding farmers were protected by a breast plate, steel collar, and bascinet. However, their motivation was strong, especially if they really had to fight for the protection of their home, hearth, and family. They did not desert or run away from a fight, which is confirmed by the fact that the chronicles hardly mention any such occurrences. In addition, the more they fought in the field, the more skilled they became in the art of warfare. This is shown by the fact that, over the course of time, several professional warriors emerged from their midst, such as Grutte Pier and the men of the Arumer Black Band.

At the time of the civil war, the units of Frisian able-bodied men seem to have been led by skilled commanders. It is true that the chronicle reports do not always give a definite answer as to whether these commanders were always *grietman* or alderman. For the Frisian commanders on the Guelders's side, we see the same names appear over and over again of Murck Syrcks, Jancko Douwama, Jancko Oenema, Juw Juwsma, Amcko Jarla, and Sicke Douwes Galama. Some of them, such as Jancko Douwama and Sicke

Galama, were definitely *grietmannen*. But for all of them it is true that they had already acquired the necessary experience as army captains before 1515. Jancko Oenema, for example, had been asked by Duke Georg of Saxony in the summer of 1514 to command one of the two companies or ensigns of *Landsknechte* to assist him at the siege of Groningen.

Once the fronts had formed in the course of 1515, and neither party was able to gain any lasting advantage, the importance of the popular militias diminished. Confrontations in the field rarely occurred any longer. As of 1516, the fighting took place mainly in or around the cities, stonehouses, and block houses, which were now rapidly fortified with earthen ramparts and wide moats. Apart from the sieges, the mercenary units focused mainly on carrying out plunder raids. In this way, when more than one band from both sides crossed the country at the same time, they tended to avoid each other, especially when the size of the army groups per party exceeded 1,000–1,500 men. In such situations, the city and rural militias had little to contribute. They could only try to attack mercenaries who ventured outside the army troop for individual looting. On the strongholds and behind the ramparts they could, of course, earn their merits with their stabbing and hewing weapons.

The longer the stalemate lasted, the more difficult it became for the financially weak duchy of Guelders to maintain its position of power in Friesland. Because Duke Charles wanted to spend as little money as possible on mercenaries for Friesland, he sought a solution in the violent levying of taxes within the Frisian territories under his rule and the opportunistic burning and looting of the Frisian regions outside of it. In doing so, however, he lost the battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the population as a whole. This led to the fact that, first, many considerable Frisian supporters such as Jancko Douwama, Jancko Oenema, and Murck Syrcks changed sides in 1520 and 1521, and second, in 1522 and 1523, that one district after another changed over to the emperor and deployed its militia at his side as well. The chronicler Worp van Thabor suggests that the latter changed the balance of power. It is difficult to say whether this was the case, but it certainly was a factor of importance because it led to a numerical supremacy of the Habsburgs during the sieges of the last Guelders' strongholds of Dokkum, Bolsward, and Sloten in 1523. In the long run, this force majeure was so great that the Guelders' mercenaries refrained from defending themselves and abandoned their positions in order to be able to retreat unharmed.

It remains to briefly point out how the development of the Frisian popular armies fits into the larger framework of military evolution in early modern Europe. I am explicitly not speaking of a revolution here. The well-known

concept of the Military Revolution, as published in 1967 by Michael Roberts and later adapted and expanded by Geoffrey Parker and David Parrot,¹ is with its broad chronological scope too far-reaching for our purpose. In a relatively recent essay, Christopher Storrs rightly emphasised that this model has given an enormous stimulus to the study of war and society.² He immediately added, however, that in its simplicity it now seems too limited, and then stressed that we would do well to learn more in detail about the early modern armies before building new elaborate models. After all, despite the great advances in military history in recent decades, so much remains unknown. I would like to add my voice to that, as far as the study of the urban and rural militias is concerned. This has received less attention than it deserves, perhaps due to the overemphasis of the Military Revolution model on the importance of standing armies and the professionalisation of the business of war.³

Our research has shown that the modernisation of warfare in the years 1480–1560 in Friesland and its neighbouring regions by no means led to the discarding of amateur, able-bodied troops. Even after 1560, the authorities on the national and regional level continued to value their contribution. Anyone who reads the literature about the next phase of intensive warfare in the Northern Netherlands, that is about the first phase of the Revolt against Spain and the ensuing civil war between roughly 1572 and 1585, will see through his eyes groups of armed citizens and peasants in action everywhere, mobilised by all warring parties.⁴ The fact that after 1585 they gradually faded into the background with the creation of a well-financed and systematically trained professional army does not alter the fact that their military contribution was not without significance in the beginning. Think of the successful repulse of the Spanish siege of Alkmaar in 1573 or of the Calvinist seizures of power in Utrecht (1577) and Leeuwarden (1580) with the accompanying demolition of citadels, which could never

1 Michael Roberts, 'The Military Revolution 1560–1660', in: Michael Roberts (ed.), *Essays in Swedish History* (London 1967) 195–225; Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution and the Rise of the West* (second edition, Cambridge 1996); David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 2012).

2 Christopher Storrs, 'War and the Military Revolution', in: C. Scott Dixon and Beat Kümin (ed.), *Interpreting Early Modern Europe* (London 2019) 244–267, there 262.

3 Maarten Prak, 'Citizens, Soldiers and Civic Militias in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Past and Present* 228 (August 2015) 93–123, there 95–96.

4 See, for example, Griet Vermeesch, *Oorlog, steden en staatsvorming. De grenssteden Gorinchem en Doesburg tijdens de geboorte-eeuw van de Republiek (1570–1680)* (Amsterdam 2006) 48–50, 65–67, 73–75.

have been executed without the cooperation of urban militias.⁵ Even then, rulers, no matter which side they were on, tried to increase their employability by regular inspections, reorganisations, the provision of weapons and the granting of privileges. Not to put them in the place of professional units, but to increase the strength of the country's and city's defences altogether.

If I look at it correctly, then their meaning lies in four different elements. Firstly, there was the aspect of the additional defence and guarding of fortifications. This became increasingly important after 1500 in the urbanising landscape of Northwestern Europe. We saw it in the strategic importance of small Frisian towns at the time of the Habsburg-Guelders civil war. In the evolution of warfare thereafter – with an increasing role for infantry firearms and artillery – the development of bulwarks and urban ramparts with bastions became even more important. These had to be manned. Due to their growing size, this could never be left to professional garrisons alone, at least until 1600, since these were expensive and had to be kept as small as possible. Secondly, as long as the military business consisted largely of contract labour, there was always a chance of wilful behaviour and excesses on the part of mercenaries – especially when underpaid. In order to manage this, a counterforce was needed for control. Here too, civic militias could and should play a role, both inside and outside the gates. A third element was that, despite their relatively weak military capability, urban militias in particular were able to fight in sieges. In various situations, attacks on fortified towns could only be repulsed by professional soldiers with the stubborn support of the city militia. It was an effort that naturally also led to deaths and casualties in their ranks, which then could be considered a sacrifice for the good cause.

This brings us to the last and perhaps most important function of popular armament, namely that through the broad representation of able-bodied men in society it bound the 'hearts and minds' of the population as a whole to the protection of the community. You could call it a linking and motivating function. A function without which no battle against a heavily armed aggressor can be sustained. The fact that shortly after the Russian invasion of his country on 24 February 2022, the President of Ukraine urged all able-bodied men between eighteen and sixty to contribute to the country's defence demonstrates that this principle is still valid today.

5 Harry de Raad, 'Tussen trouw en ontrouw. Politieke en bestuurlijke ontwikkelingen tot 1573', in: Diederik Aten e.a. (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Alkmaar* (Zwolle 2007) 50–63, there 61–62; J.J. Woltjer, *Friesland in Hervormingstijd* (Leiden 1962) 306–307.

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Index

- Abbe Heringa 188
Abbege 153, 154, 156
Abbekerk 193
Abcoude 194
Achtkarspelen 44, 45, 49, 68, 76, 82, 83, 106,
108, 142, 144, 156, 165, 198, 199, 202, 203
Adelbold, bishop of Utrecht 41
Ado Jongema 134, 135
Adriaan Michiels 85
Aduard 159, 160, 162, 171, 172
Aduarderzijl 159
Aegum 92
Aengwirden 28, 44, 76, 139
Aeth Aut's widow 29
Akkrum 142, 173
Akmarijp 142
Albrecht of Bavaria, duke 52
Albrecht of Brandenburg 175
Albrecht of Saxony, duke 22, 26, 59, 60, 125,
127, 131, 136, 142, 143, 150, 151, 153, 157, 160, 162,
164-166, 169-171, 214, 215
Algra, Nico 39
Alkmaar 13, 30, 79, 80, 91, 93, 97, 120-123, 126,
193, 194, 213, 217
Allingawier 154
Amcko Jarla 192, 195, 206, 216
Ameland 28-30, 100, 102, 103, 105, 214
Amstelveen 194
Amsterdam 93, 194
Anabaptists 73, 74, 93, 94
Andries Jacobs 88
Andries Pflug 177
Anjum 182
Antwerp 77
Appingedam 73, 158, 170
Aragon, *see* Frederick
Aremberg, *see* Jean
Arkel 119
Arnhem 73
Arum 154, 178, 184
Arumer Black Band 184, 190, 205, 216
Asego van Mantgum 159
Asperen 194
Aucke Kempes Unia 151, 159
Augsburg 170
Austrachia 32
Aylva, *see* Epo, Syurd
Aytta, *see* Viglius
- Baarderadeel 25, 28, 43, 68, 70, 71, 76, 156, 178
Baden, *see* Frederik
Bakhuizen 145, 150
Bakkeveen 69
Baks, Paul 136
- Balk 139, 141
Balthasar van Esens 73
Bannerhuis 180, 205
Barneveld, *see* Lubbert
Barra Rommertsma 139, 148
Barradeel 25, 76, 82, 83, 85, 88, 95, 100,
107-109, 156
Barrahuis 46, 179
Bastille 209
Bavaria, *see* Albrecht 52
Beers 178
Beetgum 182
Bennert Donia 133
Benninge, *see* Sicke
Berg 136
Bergum 202
Bergum, Augustinian priory 46, 198
Berlikum 182
Bernhart Metsch 143
Bildt, Het 72, 82, 83, 102, 107, 111, 125, 184
Bishop's Band 197-199
Black Band 22, 170, 172, 177, 180-185, 191-194
Blija 172
Bloemhof, *see* Wittewierum
Bloemkamp alias Oldeklooster, Cistercian
abbey 46, 73-75, 154, 177, 185, 186, 189
Bocke Harinxma 156
Boer, Tjitte de 43
Boetsma, *see* Sijrck
Bolsward 34-36, 58, 59, 67, 74, 83, 87, 88,
104, 108, 115, 117, 119, 120, 153, 154, 156, 173,
180-182, 185, 189, 190, 193, 198, 200, 202-204,
207, 217
Bolsward Uytburen 87, 159-161, 163, 166, 167,
214, 215
Bonga, *see* Doytse
Boorne 32, 62, 130, 150, 153
Bornego 50
Botnia, *see* Syds
Botte Sterkenburg 159
Bottinga, *see* Juw, Tjalling
Boudewijn van Loo 82
Brabant 22, 27, 37, 59, 77, 136, 191, 198, 216
Brandenburg, *see* Albrecht
Braunschweig 15
Bremen 13, 31
Breyl, *see* Winand
Brock, Tom, family 43
Broek in Waterland 124
Brouwers, *see* Ype
Bruges 15, 21
Bruges, Vrije of 79
Brünner, E.C.G. 80
Brunon family 48

- Brunswick 158, 170
 Brunswick, *see* Erik
 Brussels 66, 67, 70, 78, 80, 82, 83, 87, 90, 94,
 105, 174, 184, 212
 Buckhorst 191
 Buma, *see* Take
 Buren (Ameland) 102
 Buren 187
 Burgundian 25, 27, 43
 Burgundy 14, 20, 21, 25, 62, 175, 177, 178,
 182-186, 188, 190, 192, 194, 202-204, 216
 Burgundy, *see* Philip
 Burmania, *see* Tjaard
 Buweklooster, Premonstratensian
 nunnery 198

 Cambrai 189, 191
 Camminga 130
 Camminga, *see* Frans, Peter
 Camstra 130
 Carolingian 47, 49
 Charlemagne 50, 51, 60
 Charles of Guelders, duke 20, 62, 72, 173-
 175, 183-185, 189, 191, 194, 196, 199, 201, 216, 217
 Charles the Bold 20, 37, 59, 130, 136
 Charles V 23, 26, 30, 45, 62, 63, 70, 72, 73, 78,
 174, 180, 182, 184, 185, 188, 189, 194, 196, 203
 Charlois 80
 Chièvres 189
 Christian III, king of Denmark 77
 Christopher van Meurs 198, 200
 Cirksena, family 43
 Cirksena, *see* Edzard
 Claes Johannes 69
 Claes Wolderstorff 197
 Cleves 78, 136, 191
 Cleves, *see* William
 Coevorden 15, 70, 72, 73
 Cologne 15
 Cologne, *see* Oliver
 Cornelius Kempius 102
 Courtrai 16
 Croy, *see* Willem

 Damietta 56
 Damwoude 180
 Dantumadeel 28, 68, 70, 76, 135, 156, 165, 180, 186
 Dekema, *see* Juw
 Delthe 73, 77, 157, 158, 161
 Denmark, king 68
 Depreter, Michel 11
 Diederik van Sonoy 94
 Diever 181
 Dilaecker Bolsward 87
 Dirck IJsbrant's son 86
 Dirck Sijmons 121
 Dithmarschen 167, 170
 Dokkum 34, 35, 49, 68, 135, 143, 180, 181, 183,
 186, 188, 192, 195, 198, 199, 202-204, 207, 217

 Dokkum, Premonstratensian abbey 37
 Dokkumer Diep 192
 Dongeradelen 156, 180, 186
 Dongjum 156, 164
 Donia War 59
 Donia, *see* Bennert, Low, Pier, Sierk
 Doniawerstal 28, 50, 67, 69, 76, 83, 87, 89, 100,
 106, 109, 111, 139, 166, 198, 200
 Douma, *see* Edzart, Epo, Ulcke
 Douwama, *see* Jancko
 Douwe Burmania 190, 197, 178
 Douwe Gales Galama 148, 157
 Douwe Hiddema 154
 Douwe Hottinga 87
 Douwe Hoytes 204
 Douwe Sjaerda 117
 Doyem 156, 164
 Doytse Bonga 154, 176
 Drenthe 43, 56, 66, 70, 81, 98, 181, 192, 199
 Dronrijp 156, 164
 Dyck Bolsward 87

 Eba Solckes Meynama 148
 Edo Jongema 133, 151, 157
 Edzard Cirksena, count of Ostfriesland 61, 62,
 158, 170-172, 183, 190, 191
 Edzart Douma 155
 Ee (river) 180
 Ee 165
 Eekhoff, Wopke 117
 Eelsma, *see* Rippert
 Eems 48
 Egmond, *see* Floris, Frederik, Maximiliaan
 Elbe 170
 Elizabeth, queen of England 24
 Emderland 158
 England 17, 23, 24
 Enkhuizen 181, 192
 Epe Tetes Hettinga 135, 156
 Epo Aylva 172, 188
 Epo Douma 188
 Erik of Brunswick, duke 158, 159
 Erkelentz, *see* Hendrik
 Esens, *see* Balthasar
 Europe 17, 24, 36, 46, 135, 217
 Everhard van Reyd 125
 Evert op de Haescampen 109
 Eyb, *see* Ludwig
 Eysingahuis 134

 Farmsum 129
 Felix van Huilckenstein, count 187, 188, 190
 Ferwerd 87, 110, 185
 Ferwerderadeel 43, 72, 75, 81, 83, 87, 91, 95,
 100, 102, 109, 110, 112, 156, 186, 198
 Finkum 86, 91, 95
 Firdgum 85
 Fiswerd, Franciscan nunnery, 126, 152, 156
 Flanders 16, 22, 37, 59, 78, 79, 136, 212, 216

- Floris V, count of Holland 48
 Floris van Egmond van IJsselstein 20, 62, 70,
 72, 177, 182, 184, 185, 187-191, 193, 194, 197
 Follega 155
 Fons, *see* Lieuwe
 Foreest, *see* Nanning
 France 23, 72, 77, 78, 80, 174, 185, 189, 212
 France, king 16, 181, 183, 196
 Francis I, king of France 77, 183, 189, 194
 Franeker 50, 59, 74, 104, 115, 117, 120, 161,
 153-157, 159, 160, 163-165, 173, 176, 177, 180,
 184, 186, 190, 193, 200
 Franekeradeel 25, 76, 151, 157
 Frankfurt 15
 Franks 47
 Frans Campstra 85, 86
 Frederick of Aragon, duke of Milan 183
 Frederick Roorda 198, 205
 Frederik van Baden, bishop 196
 Frederik van Egmond van IJsselstein 158
 Freiburg 60
 Frerijck Riuerts 86
 Friesland 13, 24, 25, 28, 30-32, 34-37, 39, 42, 45,
 48, 51, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 70-72, 74, 77-79, 82,
 85, 90, 94, 98, 99, 101, 113, 117, 118, 121, 123-126,
 131, 143, 152, 156, 165, 171, 173-177, 179, 182, 184,
 186, 189-191, 193, 194, 196, 197, 201, 204-206,
 210, 212-214, 217
 Froissart 58
 Fryslân, *see* Friesland
 Fuchs, *see* Neithard
 Fürstenberg 149

 Gaasterland 33, 50, 62, 76, 82, 83, 92, 106, 111,
 134, 135, 139, 141, 144, 157, 166, 176, 180, 185,
 186, 189, 200
 Gabbe Scheltema 184
 Galama, family 131, 134, 147
 Galama, *see* Douwe, Gale, Sicke
 Gale Galama 134, 148
 Gale Gaukes 195
 Geertruidenberg 93, 123
 Genemuiden 68, 201
 Genum 87, 185
 Georg of Saxony, duke 61-63, 79, 154, 170, 172,
 173, 177, 182, 217
 Georg Schenck van Toutenburg 62, 65, 66,
 68-74, 77, 196, 197, 199, 201-204
 Gerbrand Mockema 159, 165
 Gerkesbrugge 154, 159, 161, 204
 Gerkesklooster, Cistercian abbey
 Germany 14, 19, 23, 60, 78, 100, 118, 123, 149,
 150, 166
 Gerrits, Matthijs 11
 Gerrold Herema 71, 190
 Ghent 15, 21, 78
 Giessen 15
 Giethoorn 57
 Goënga 164

 Goltstein, *see* Johan
 Gorkum 72
 Goslick Jongema 69, 137, 139, 177, 203
 Goslinga, *see* Sypt
 Gosses, Isaac 38-40
 Göttingen 15
 Grandson 136
 Grave 20, 185
 Great Guard 77, 112, 136, 139, 142, 143, 157, 161,
 170
 Groestra, *see* Jeppe
 Grombach, *see* Hans
 Groningen 14, 27, 59, 61, 62, 66, 70, 72, 73, 81,
 125, 130, 131, 136, 137, 139, 143, 152, 153, 157,
 170-172, 175, 177, 181, 186, 192, 195, 203, 206,
 217
 Groningerland 158, 199
 Grote Dijkstraak 87
 Grutte Pier 100, 176-178, 181, 184, 185, 190-193,
 196, 201, 205, 216
 Guelders 13, 14, 22, 25, 27, 43, 62, 65, 66, 68,
 69, 73, 77-79, 111, 130, 159, 169, 173-176, 178,
 181-187, 191, 194, 195, 199, 200-207, 210-212,
 216, 217
 Guelders, duke 20, 68, 70, 72, 79, 172, 190, 194,
 206
 Guelders, Overkwartier 79
 Guelders, *see* Charles, William
 Guinegate 21

 Haarlem 193, 194
 Habsburg 13, 77, 28, 29, 45, 62, 63, 65, 66,
 68, 70, 73, 78-80, 98, 124, 169, 175, 177, 178,
 183-186, 191, 201, 204, 296, 210-212, 216, 217
 Haescampen, *see* Evert
 Hague, The 70
 Hainault 51, 57, 58
 Halfambt Hunzingo 158
 Hallum 156, 180
 Hans von Grombach 143
 Harderwijk 70
 Haring Douwes 153
 Haring Sythiema 112
 Harinxma, family 130, 131, 147, 190
 Harinxma, *see* Bocke, Luts, Pieter, Wattye
 Harlingen 36, 37, 74, 82, 83, 85, 87, 100, 104,
 108, 114, 143, 156, 164, 173, 177, 181, 182, 184,
 186, 188
 Harlinger Uitburen 85
 Harras, *see* Wilhelm
 Hartwerd 154, 177
 Haskerland 28, 76, 139, 202
 Hasselt 30, 68, 70, 120, 121, 197
 Hattem 72
 Haye Ripperda 129
 Haytebaen Bolsward 87
 Hazerswoude 124
 Heemstra, *see* Poppe, Taco
 Heidenschap 83, 108

- Hemelum 145, 147
 Hemelum, Benedictine monastery 27, 128, 130, 134, 147
 Hemelumer Oldeferd 25, 76, 82, 83, 89, 94, 106, 108, 109, 111, 131, 134, 139
 Hemmingstedt 157, 161, 167
 Hendrik de Groiff van Erkelentz 173, 181, 196, 187, 192
 Hendrik van Lochem 180
 Hennaarderadeel 25, 28, 43, 71, 76, 83, 88, 92, 95, 98, 107, 108, 151, 182, 186
 Henry II, king of France 78
 Henry of Saxony, duke 60, 61, 153, 154, 156, 157, 214
 Henry VIII, king of England 23, 24
 Herbajum 154
 Herema, *see* Gerrold
 Heringa, *see* Abbe
 Hermana, family 95
 Hermana, *see* Hessel, Vincent, Wybrant
 Hero Hottinga 144, 147, 151
 Hero Rienks 164
 Hertenstein, *see* Ludwig
 Heslingahuis 133
 Hessel Hermana 95
 Hessel Jongema 133, 164
 Hessel Martena 144, 151, 153, 154, 185, 188, 190
 Hettinga, *see* Epo
 Hiddema, *see* Douwe
 Hieronymus Suees 181
 Hildesheim, diocese 158
 Hindelooen 36, 176, 178, 182, 191, 192
 Hoeg Venne 159
 Hoerediep 159
 Hogebeintum 185
 Holland 22, 30, 31, 48, 51, 58, 59, 70, 74, 79, 80, 92, 93, 99, 103, 111, 118-120, 123, 124, 126, 136, 174, 176-178, 187, 191-193, 197, 211-213
 Holland, *see* Floris V, Jan van Beieren, William II, William IV, William VI
 Holle Piers 92
 Hollum 100
 Holy Land 53
 Holy Roman Empire 61, 62
 Hommerts 156
 Hontye Bottes 142
 Hoorn 93, 181, 197
 Hoppenbrouwers, Peter 11
 Hottinga, *see* Douwe, Hero
 Hottingahuis 185
 Hubert van Rossum 195, 200
 Hugo von Leisnig, viscount 165
 Huisduinen 191
 Humsterland 158
 Hungary, *see* Mary, queen
 Hunze 159
 Hunzingo 158
 Hunzingo-Oosterambt 54
 Iceland 19
 Idaard 91
 Idaarderadeel 46, 75, 81-83, 89-92, 94, 96, 100, 109, 110, 151, 156, 179
 Idsegahuizen 154
 Idts op Tjerkgaast 142
 Ige Gales Galama 134
 IJlst 134, 154, 173, 189
 IJsbrent ter Stadt 87
 IJsselsteden 195
 IJsselstein 20, 119
 Irnsum 188, 190
 Irnsum 190
 Italy 181, 183, 185
 Iwe tho Ewer 158
 Jacob van Oest, abbot 27, 127, 147
 Jan ter Stadt 87
 Jan van Beieren, count of Holland 52
 Jan van Leiden 74
 Jan van Wassenaar 202, 203
 Jancko Douwama 27, 62, 138, 142, 148, 149, 153, 154, 162, 173, 174, 179, 186, 189, 192, 195, 196, 201, 205, 206, 216, 217
 Jancko Oenema 172, 186, 192, 195, 201, 206, 216, 217
 Jarch ter Borgh 158
 Jarich Harings 148
 Jarich Wiebes Popma 164
 Jean de Ligne, count of AreMBERG 81, 88
 Jelkama, *see* Wybe
 Jellinga, *see* Tjalling
 Jellum 178
 Jelsum 164
 Jeppe Groestra 87
 Jerusalem 73
 Jever, *see* Mary
 Johan Goltstein 192, 199, 203
 Johan Roorda 195
 Johann of Saxony 158
 Jongema, *see* Ado, Ede, Goslick, Hessel, Kempo, Rienk, Tjaard
 Jorwerd 164, 178
 Joure 155
 Jouster Scharren 155
 Juckema, *see* Wytze
 Jülich 136
 Jurjen, *see* Schuur
 Justine, *see* Smithuis
 Juw Bottinga 71, 135, 185, 188, 190
 Juw Dekema 135
 Juw Juwina 58, 137
 Juw Juwsma 58, 179, 195, 201, 206, 216
 Juwina, *see* Goslick, Juw
 Juwsma, *see* Juw
 Kampen 157, 197
 Kaptein, Herman 122
 Karsten Piers 86

- Keimpe Jackles 164
 Kempius, *see* Cornelius 102
 Kempo Jongema 204
 Kempo Martena 67
 Kennemerland 194
 Kennemers 21
 Kessel 191
 Keymppe Tjepckes Oenema 142
 Kimsward 177, 184
 Klaarkamp, Cistercian abbey 68, 180, 185, 198, 202
 Kolk 145
 Köller, André 39
 Kollum 83, 104, 171, 186, 188
 Kollumerland 49, 76, 82, 83, 104, 106, 108, 156, 165, 199, 202, 203
 Koudum 134
 Kuinre 57, 58, 66, 191, 192, 197, 198
 Kwiatkowski, Krzysztof 11
- Laaxum 145, 147, 155, 160, 166, 214, 215
 Langewold 142, 144, 150, 158, 162
 Langweer 139, 155
 Lankum 156, 164
 Lauwers 13, 30-32, 36, 41, 47-49, 52, 56, 58, 60-62, 113, 143, 152, 161, 169, 210
 Leenaert Bouwens 94
 Leeuwarden 34, 35, 59, 66, 67, 74, 81, 83, 90, 94, 95, 104, 109, 114, 115, 117, 120, 125, 126, 130, 133, 137, 139, 143-145, 148-153, 156, 157, 167, 172, 173, 177-180, 184-186, 190, 198-200, 202, 204, 212, 215, 217
 Leeuwarderadeel 28, 29, 43, 46, 66, 68, 70, 75, 76, 81-83, 86, 88, 89, 91, 92, 95, 96, 102, 109, 111, 142, 145, 157
 Leiden 103
 Leiden, *see* Jan
 Leisnig, *see* Hugo
 Lek 194
 Lemmer 50, 62, 67, 68, 198, 204
 Lemsterland 45, 67, 76, 81, 83, 86, 89, 92, 106, 109, 111, 139, 166, 189, 198
 Lenard Schwartzenberg 173, 177, 181, 185
 Lengen, Hajo van 38
 Liauckema, *see* Schelte, Sicke
 Lichtaard 180
 Lidlum, Premonstratensian abbey 180
 Lieuwe Fons 164
 Ligne, *see* Jean
 Linde 13, 30, 31, 60
 Linge 194
 Lochem, *see* Hendrik
 London 24
 Loo, *s see* ee Boudewijn
 Low Countries 15, 59, 123, 126, 136, 190, 191
 Low Donia 173
 Lubbert Turck 185, 190
 Lubbert van Barneveld 138
 Ludingakerke, Augustinian priory 37, 154, 180
- Ludwig Eyb zum Hertenstein 26
 Luts Harinxma 190, 200
- Maarten van Rossum 70, 77, 189, 195, 203
 Maas 191
 Maastricht 118
 Magnus 51
 Mainz 77
 Makkum 154, 201
 Marcus Egidii Vilsecher 85
 Margaret of Austria 67, 70, 85, 194, 200
 Margaretha of Parma 212
 Mariëngaarde, Premonstratensian abbey 41, 180, 202
 Marignano 183, 191
 Marne district 158
 Martena, family 130
 Martena, *see* Kempo
 Mary of Hungary, queen 78, 79, 82
 Mary of Jever 73
 Mary Tudor, queen 23
 Maurice of Saxony 78, 79
 Maximiliaan van Egmond 77, 78, 81
 Maximilian of Austria 21, 22, 101, 130, 136, 170
 Medemblik 143, 192, 193
 Meer, Peter van der 11
 Meindert van Ham 73
 Meissen 60, 158, 177, 214
 Menaldumadeel 25, 76, 151, 156
 Mendlesham Suffolk 110
 Menno Simons 93
 Mennonites 94
 Merckstraet Bolsward 87
 Metsch, *see* Bernhart
 Meurs, *see* Christopher
 Meyna Syuurds 148
 Meynama, *see* Ebe
 Middag 158
 Middelsee 32, 34
 Miedum 156, 164
 Milan, *see* Frederick
 Minnertsga 85, 90, 95
 Mirns 150
 Mirnzer Cliff 150
 Mockema, *see* Popke
 Molkwerum 134, 182
 Monnikebajum, Premonstratensian nunnery 177, 186
 Mormerland 54
 Münster 73, 195
 Münsterland 43, 158
 Murck Syrcks 177, 179, 205, 206, 216, 217
 Murten 136
- Naarden 119, 191
 Nancy 136
 Nanning van Foreest 97
 Nassau, count 187

- Neithard Fuchs 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 146, 150, 151
 Nes Ameland 100, 102
 Netherlands 23, 78, 80, 174, 189, 194, 210, 217
 Nieuwpoort 189
 Niezijl 159, 162
 Nijdam, Han 53
 Nijeklooster, Cistercian nunnery 181, 189, 190
 Nijezijlsterdiep 159
 Nijmegen 20
 Noomen, Paul 40, 45
 Noorderkwartier 94, 159
 Noordhorn 202
 Noordwolde 134
 Noordzij, Aart 11
 Nordfriesen 170
 North Sea 19, 23, 31
 Norway 19
 Nyehuys Finkum 86
- Obbe Igis 155
 Obbema, *see* Poppe
 Oegeklooster, Franciscan nunnery 187
 Oenema, *see* Jancko, Keymppe, Ulcke
 Offe Riemersma 135
 Oldeboorn 162, 173, 195
 Oldeklooster, *see* Bloemkamp
 Oldenburg, count 170
 Oldtstens, *see* Tako, Tijaardt
 Oliver of Cologne 52, 56
 Ommelanden 43, 60-62, 73, 158, 170, 190
 Ommen 172
 Oostbroeksterland 49
 Oostdongeradeel 28, 68, 73, 203, 205
 Oosterend 32, 33, 42, 43, 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 59, 68, 75, 76, 83, 95, 125, 129-132, 137, 143, 152, 154-157, 172, 176, 185, 205, 206, 216
 Oosterzee 67, 139, 198
 Oosterzeeïngerland 50, 57
 Ooststellingwerf 28, 69, 70, 73
 Oostum 159
 Opstalboom 54
 Opsterland 42, 45, 54, 76, 144
 Orange, *see* William
 Ostfriesland 43, 60, 62, 73, 158, 190
 Ostfriesland, *see* Edzard
 Oud Sjaerdema 156
 Oud Sjaerdema 164
 Ouddijk 145
 Oudega 180
 Oudemirdum 139
 Oudewater 123
 Overijssel 20, 30, 68, 70, 72, 81, 120, 192, 197-199
 Overkwartier Guelders 100, 124
 Oversticht 50, 72, 143, 177, 196, 197
- Paulus van Rixtel 27, 127
 Peter van Camminga 29
- Peter van Thabor 26, 127, 139, 144, 145, 148-151, 159, 162, 164, 171, 183, 186, 192, 196, 202
 Pflug, *see* Andries
 Philip of Burgundy, bishop 196, 197
 Philip the Fair 22
 Philip the Good 21, 59
 Philip, king of Spain 45
 Piaam 154
 Pier Donia, *see* Grutte Pier
 Pier Gerlofs Donia 177
 Pierius Winsemius 164
 Pieter Feddes 164
 Pieter Harinxma 133
 Pingjum 154
 Poelen, *see* Siuerd
 Poelstra Finkum 86, 95
 Polsloot 145
 Popke Mockema 165
 Popma, *see* Jarich
 Poppe Obbema van Heemstra 185
 Poppingawier 133
 Postma, Obe 34, 43, 100
 Potsloot 147
 Prussia 58
- Ransdorp 93, 124
 Rauwerd 156, 181
 Rauwerderhem 28, 75, 94, 113, 115, 133, 178, 179, 186
 Ravensberg 136
 Red Cliff 145
 Reitdiep 159, 160
 Renick Poppes 162
 Reyd, *see* Everhard
 Rhenen 70
 Rhineland 37, 185
 Riemersma, *see* Offe
 Rienk Jongema 204
 Ringia, *see* Wilcke
 Rinsumageest 134, 159, 180, 185, 188, 202
 Ripperda, *see* Haye
 Rippert Eelsma 29
 Roberts, Michael 217
 Rochard, Michelle 11
 Roelof van Ewsum 190, 200
 Roeloff ter Stadt 87
 Roggendorf, *see* Willem
 Rolde 56
 Rome 51
 Rommertsma, *see* Barra
 Roode Schuur 150
 Roorda, *see* Frederick, Johan, Syds
 Rossum, *see* Hubert, Maarten
 Rotsterhaule 148
 Rottenburg 60
 Rotterdam 80, 92, 93, 119
- Parker, Geoffrey 217
 Parma, *see* Margaretha
 Parrot, David 217

- Rottum 139
 Ruige Waard 162
 Rüstingen 54
- Salza 158
 Saracens 53, 57
 Saxon 26, 42, 43, 50, 55, 60, 61, 79, 145, 147, 149, 151, 152, 157, 159, 162, 167, 170, 173, 176-178, 180, 181, 205, 212, 214
 Saxons 14, 25, 154-156, 159, 160, 182
 Saxony 60, 77, 157, 159, 172, 206
 Saxony, *see* Maurice
 Schaad 154
 Scharl 145
 Schaumburg, *see* Wilwold
 Schele Gijs 158
 Schellingwoude 93, 124
 Schelte Liauckema 156, 190, 200
 Schelte Tjaarda 165
 Scheltema, *see* Gabbe
 Schenck, *see* Georg, Willem
 Schierhuis 46
 Schieringers 25, 52, 60, 58-60, 128, 130, 131, 133, 134, 136, 142, 14 147, 151, 152, 154, 173, 176, 214
 Schmidt, Heinrich 38
 Schoonhoven 189
 Schoterland 28, 42, 45, 50, 57, 66, 68, 76, 139, 177, 198, 200, 202, 205
 Schraard 154
 Schuur, Jurjen 39
 Schwartzenberg, *see* Lenard
 Scotland 23
 Sekemaheerd 162
 Sexbierum 29, 88
 Sibada 95
 Sibrandahuis 159
 Sicke Benninge 27, 128, 139, 142, 144, 150, 158, 160, 162
 Sicke Douwes Galama 173, 179, 192, 195, 206, 216, 217
 Sicke Liauckema 173, 190, 200
 Sierk Donia 204
 Sijrck van Boetsma 113
 Siuerd in de Poelen 164
 Sjaerda, family 130
 Sjaerda, *see* Douwe
 Sjaerdemahuis Franeker 164
 Slentz, *see* Thomas
 Sloten 62, 67, 83, 87, 100, 134, 137-139, 141, 142, 144, 148, 150, 155, 157, 159, 160, 166, 167, 173, 176, 189, 195, 199, 202, 203, 206, 207, 214, 215, 217
 Smallerland 28, 76, 144, 180, 202
 Smithuis, Justine 11
 Sneek 25, 28, 34-36, 59, 62, 82, 83, 87, 100, 104, 108, 115, 120, 123, 131, 133, 134, 137-139, 141, 156, 157, 164, 171, 173, 175, 181, 183, 185-192, 195, 196, 198, 199-201
 Sneek, Hospitaller monastery 37, 156
 Sneker Vijfga (district) 133
 Snikzwaag 142
 Sonoy, *see* Diederik
 Spaarndam 194
 Spain 185, 194, 217
 Spain, king 194
 Spaniards 23, 97, 187
 Stabel, Peter 21
 Stadt, *see* Jan, IJbrant, Roeloff
 Staveren 33-35, 51, 57, 58, 62, 67, 83, 87, 88, 100, 104, 123, 144, 145, 178, 189, 191, 201, 204
 Staveren, Benedictine abbey 27, 37, 128, 130, 134, 147
 Steenwijk 66, 68-70, 200, 204
 Stellingwerf 42, 45, 50, 57, 76, 98, 139, 142, 144, 156, 160, 177, 186, 198, 200, 204, 205
 Sterkenburg, *see* Botte
 Sticht Utrecht 70, 72
 Stiens 66, 96, 186
 Storrs, Christopher 217
 Strandfriesen 170
 Suees, *see* Hieronymus
 Surhuizum 68, 108
 Sweden 19
 Swichum 88
 Swiss Confederation 52
 Swiss 19, 100, 118, 135, 136, 183
 Swyns 95
 Syds Botnia 135
 Syds Roorda 185
 Syds Tjaarda 67, 68
 Sypt Goslinga 112
 Syrck Murcks 139, 206
 Sythiema, *see* Haring
 Syurd Aylva 154, 156, 163, 164
- Taco Heemstra 165
 Tacozijl 150
 Take Buma 180
 Tako to Oldtstens 109
 Tekema 95
 Tegnagel 191
 Terhorne 144
 Terkaple 142
 Terschelling 164
 Tete Tjaarda 159
 Teutonic Order 37, 175
 Texel 201
 Thabor, Augustinian priory 25, 204
 Thabor, *see* Peter, Worp
 Thomas Slentz 143
 Thuringia 158
 Tiel 72
 Tietjerksteradeel 44, 45, 75, 156, 202
 Tijaardt to Oldtstens 109
 Tirns 204
 Tjaard Burmania 72, 188, 202
 Tjaard Jongema 120
 Tjaard Mockema 180, 181, 205

- Tjaarda, *see* Schelte, Syds, Tete, Worp
Tjaardahuis 180, 185, 188
Tjalling Bottinga 71, 190, 201
Tjalling Lieuwes Jellinga 165
Tjerk Walta 135, 137, 142, 143, 154, 186, 194
Tjerkgaast 139, 141
Tjummarum 100
Toutenburg, *see* Georg, Willem
Turck, *see* Lubbert
Turkey 58
Tzaecke Sickes 88
Tzum 74, 154, 164
- Uitland 163
Ukraine 217
Ulcke Sickes Douma 141
Ulcke Tjepckes Oenema 142
Unia, *see* Aucke
Uniahuis 179
Utingeradeel 75, 139, 179, 186
Utrecht 20, 41, 68, 70, 119, 194-196, 211, 217
Utrecht, bishop 20, 22, 41, 43, 50, 57, 70, 130, 136, 175, 196, 197
- Veluwe 70, 194, 197
Venlo 78
Vetkopers 52, 58-60, 62, 128, 130, 131, 133, 135, 136, 144, 154, 214
Vianen 194
Viglius van Aytta 45, 46
Vilsecher, *see* Marcus
Vilvoorde 27
Vincent Hermana 95
Vlie 30-32, 35, 36, 41, 49, 52, 56, 58, 60, 62, 131, 143, 152, 169, 210
Vollenhove 20, 57, 191, 196
Vredewold 142, 144, 150, 158, 162, 199
Vries, Oebele 11
Vrouwenklooster, Cistercian nunnery 163
- Waas, Land of 79
Walloons 187
Walta, *see* Tjerk
Ward, James 118
Warffum 158
Warffumerzijl 158
Warffhuizen 158
Warns 51, 92, 134, 142, 145, 147, 150
Wartena 92
Wassenaar, lord 187
Wassenaar, *see* Jan
Waterland 93, 120, 124, 126, 191
Wattyte Harinxma 159
Weidum 178
Weser 60, 170
Westdongeradeel 68, 76, 198, 203
Westergo 25, 32, 33, 42, 43, 46, 48, 49, 51, 52, 60, 62, 71, 74-76, 83, 125, 129-131, 137, 139, 143, 152, 154-157, 264, 172, 173, 176, 178, 200, 203, 205, 216
- Westerkwartier Groningen 45, 142, 144, 202, 214
Westerlauwers, *see* Friesland
West-Frisians 21
Westrachia 32
Weststellingwerf 28, 66, 68, 69
Wielpolder 145
Wierd van Bolsward 201
Wieringen 201
Wilcke Ringia 154
Wilhelm van Harras 143
Willem de Croy 189
Willem Lodewijk, stadtholder 159
Willem Schenck van Toutenburg 66
William II of Holland, Roman king 48
William IV, count of Holland 51, 57
William of Cleves, duke 77
William of Orange 94
William VI, count of Holland 52, 58
Wilwold von Schaumburg 26, 60, 136, 143-147, 149-152, 158, 161
Winand van Breyll 78
Windesheim 25, 204
Winsemius, *see* Pierius
Winsum (Gr.) 151, 158-160
Wirdum 29, 151, 159, 179
Witmarsum 172, 178, 184
Wittewierum, Premonstratensian abbey 41, 57
Wolden, Wold-men 28, 33, 106, 108, 111, 126, 138, 139, 141, 144-150, 156, 160, 167, 179, 200, 204, 206, 215
Wolderstorff, *see* Claes
Wolf Isebrant 167
Wommels 95, 185
Wonseradeel 25, 28, 46, 67, 76, 82, 83, 106, 108, 135, 153, 154, 156, 173, 176, 177, 180, 182, 186, 200
Workum 36, 82, 83, 87, 100, 104, 108, 114, 148, 178, 182, 187, 189, 191, 199, 200-202
Worp Tjaarda 159
Worp van Thabor 26, 127, 133, 138, 141, 143, 144, 148, 157, 160, 164, 166, 172, 174, 176, 178, 180, 183, 185, 186, 189, 191-193, 196, 197, 202-204, 207, 217
Woudsend 139
Wroclaw 15
Wursten 170
Wybe Jarichs Jelkama 133
Wybrant Hermana 95
Wyckel 141
Wymbritseradeel 25, 76, 82, 83, 131, 135, 157, 171, 177, 182, 185, 186
Wytze Laes Juckema 164
- Ydzert Janckis 139
- Zevenwouden 33, 42, 50, 76, 83, 131, 137-139, 141, 142, 144, 149, 155-157, 159, 160, 172, 174, 176, 177, 180, 185, 186, 202, 205, 206, 216
Zuidergo 32, 33, 50

- Zuiderwoude 124
Zuiderzee 33, 58, 72, 142, 145, 174, 178, 185, 197
Zuidwesthoek, *see* Flanders
Zunderdorp 124
Zurich 154
- Zutphen 15, 79
Zuurdijk 158
Zwartewater 197
Zwartsluis 70
Zwolle 197

In the late Middle Ages and early modern times, able-bodied men between sixteen and sixty years of age were called upon all over Europe to participate in raids, sieges and battles, for the defense of home and hearth. Because these men are regarded as amateurs, military historiography has paid little attention to their efforts. This book aims to change that by studying the mobilization, organization and weaponry of popular levies for a time when war was frequently waged between states in the making. Central to the book is the composition and development of the rural and urban militias in Friesland, dissected in a comparative Northwest European perspective, along with an examination of why the self-defense of the Frisians ultimately failed in their efforts to preserve their political autonomy. The main source is an extensive series of muster lists from 1552 that have survived for six cities and fourteen rural districts.

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