

## **Wars, Bastions, and Towns: The Impact of Fortifications upon the Civic Community in Early Modern Europe**

Local decision-making and siege warfare. The role of towns in organizing defence in a context of increased state control, the case of the Dutch Republic (1570-1675)

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In the theoretical body of work on the process of state building great significance has been attributed to transformations in the military practice of the early modern period. Indeed, any early modern state can be labeled as a 'war machine' since on average more than eighty percent of its budget was spent on defence. A number of changes in tactics and strategy were responsible for a dramatic growth of armies on the eve of the early modern period. The invention of fire weapons decreased the importance of knights and increased the weight of foot soldiers on the battlefield. The new type of architectural defence, with the bastion bulwark as the main characteristic- stimulated the growth of armies as well, since it took many troops to besiege a bastioned town.

Both the payment of these troops and the provision of towns with bastions took a lot of financial efforts. In order to finance this new type of war, rulers needed to burden their subjects. There are three vital elements that interact in the process of state building: changes in taxation, changes in administration and changes in warfare. The result of fierce interstate competition was the supremacy of the national state, since this governing system was the combined result of the before mentioned vital changes. More powerful states overruled the ones that failed to adapt to the new conditions. Another possible word for this new type of polity is the 'fiscal-military state', a term that expresses the importance of both the martial and the fiscal element.

In understanding the emergence of the fiscal-military state, social historians have stressed the importance of the bargaining processes between local and central elites. Jan Glete asserts that if central rulers wished to raise more taxes, they were expected to give something in return, namely protection. Extensive bargaining about the taxes to be raised and the protection to be offered resulted in the development of both taxation and the organization of defence. In addition, administrative bodies were installed and extended. In this view, the state is seen as a provider of protection in

exchange for taxes. This approach allows for a complex bottom-up account of early modern state building.<sup>1</sup>

Glete asserts that the Dutch Republic was one of the first efficient fiscal military states in Western Europe. Its decentralized nature allowed for extensive negotiations between elites of various political levels. At the central level there were the States General, which consisted of deputies of the seven provinces. The members of the States General could make no autonomous decisions. They first needed the approval of their Provincial Estates. The Provincial Estates, in turn, consisted of deputies of towns and the nobility. These basic political units ultimately took all sovereign decisions (i.e. on war, peace and taxation).<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to examine the bottom-up dynamics in the history of Dutch state building, the analysis of local decision-making and the negotiations with central and provincial elites concerning a crucial aspect of the defence, the building, maintaining and financing of fortifications, proves valuable. I will first and foremost pay attention to the initiatives of distinct levels of the Dutch polity and the instalment and extension of administrative bodies. The question will be tackled whether it were the towns, the provinces or the generality (the central level) that assumed the initiative to build and maintain the defence works, and how these political agents pooled resources.

Archival research has been carried out in a frontier town of the Dutch Republic. I have analysed archival records of the town of Gorinchem, which was a crucial part of the defensive system of the South-Holland river delta. Gorinchem has never been besieged but was endangered in the early 1570's and again in 'the year of disaster' (*rampjaar*) 1672. This frontier town was a voting member of the Estates of Holland. I will first explore the actual building programme, which came about in the last three decades of the sixteenth century. Then, I will look into the financial and organisational efforts with regard to the maintaining of the earthworks.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Glete *War and the state in Early Modern Europe. Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as fiscal-military states, 1500-1660*, (London and New York 2002).

<sup>2</sup> 't Hart, *The Making of a Bourgeois State* 78-79.

## Building fortifications in Gorinchem (1572-1600)

In 1572 the rebel captain Marinus Brand arrived with 400 soldiers at the Gorinchem gates. Calvinist and moderate Catholics let them in promptly. Walls of stone dating from the second half of the fourteenth century were still to protect the town at the time. In the course of the wars with Gelre (till 1543) there had been modifications in the fortifications. One gate had been extended with a bastion and an advanced gate (*voorpoort*).<sup>3</sup>

The accounts of the town treasury show that Gorinchem rapidly developed its defensive infrastructure due to the events of June 1572. In the financial year 1571/1572 the hiring of labour and buying of materials was responsible for less than 7 percent, 521 guilders, of the urban expenses. In the subsequent year these costs were pushed up to a full 26 percent, that is 2,457 guilders.<sup>4</sup>

In the first two years of the revolt, the adjustments to the ramparts happened in a chaotic way. In December 1574 the town council promulgated that only the governor, the burgomasters and the council were allowed to instigate defence works.<sup>5</sup> Henceforth, the building of fortifications was regularly a topic at the meetings of the council.

In the short term, the town was protected by the inundation of the agrarian hinterland. This type of defence was first applied in the 1570's. Dikes were partly broken in order to flood the lands. The water table had to ensure that the land could not be crossed on foot or by boat. This was not always feasible. Of course, this type of defence seriously struck the agrarian population. In 1672 - when the technique of inundation was applied on a large scale - peasants of the *land van Arkel* revolted. It took more than ten years to recuperate the lands that were flooded in 1574.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Anna Horsthuis, *Wallen en poorten. Geschiedenis van de Gorkumse vestingwerken* (Gorinchem 1997) 10.

<sup>4</sup> Stadsarchief Gorinchem (SAG) 1415-1416, *Rekeningen van de ontvangsten en uitgaven van de stadsthesauriers 1571/1572 and 1572/1573*. The towns income and expenses were registered in subsequent years that ran from 1 May to 30 April.

<sup>5</sup> SAG 4, *resoluties van de vroedschap 24 December 1574*.

<sup>6</sup> Nationaal archief (NA), Paulus Buys (PB), nr. 16, Rekesten van de schout en gezworenen van de dorpen Arkel, Schelluinen, Hoornaar, Leerbroek, Nieuwkoop, Oosterwijk, Weesp en Weesperkarspel, januari-februari 1582; Hoogheemraadschap Alblasserwaard en Arkel beneden de Zouwe (HAA), nr. 705, *Aen mijnen heeren de Staeten slants van hollant*, 1583; Van Zomeren, *Beschryvinge der stad Gorinchem en landen van Arkel, Benevens de aloude Adelijke Geslachten...* (Gorinchem 1755) 367; J.P.C.M. Van Hoof, 'Met een vijand als bondgenoot. De rol van het water bij de verdediging van het Nederlandse grondgebied tegen een aanval over land', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 102 (1988) 622-651.

In January 1576 a line of fortifications was at the agenda at the assemblies of the Provincial Estates. Delegates were to visit the Holland frontier towns, examining the needs of defence. Soon thereafter, measures were carried out: 478 peasants were recruited for a period of four months at ten *stuivers* a day. This workforce was also used for the fortifications of Gorinchem. In May an agreement was attained as for the division of the costs between the Province of Holland and Gorinchem. All works outside the town, except the sponce (*schans*) at Dalem (see map), were to be financed by the Province of Holland. For that purpose the Estates used the yield of a new temporary tax (*fortificatiepenningen*).<sup>7</sup>

This early arrangement entailed that the town of Gorinchem was to assume an important share in the burden. The magistrates were reluctant to assume their responsibilities. In the years 1577, 1578 and 1579 they repeatedly requested financial and organisational support from the *stadhouder*<sup>8</sup> and the Estates of Holland.<sup>9</sup> The Union of Utrecht (1579) asserted that the burden of the defensive efforts of the participating provinces was to be shared on the level of the generality; this included the expenses on the defensive works. Yet for the most part the urban government initiated the construction of the earthen ramparts. In these crucial years of the war, the Estates' primary concern was the fortifying of the more endangered towns of -for instance- Heusden, Geertruidenberg and Woudrichem (see map).<sup>10</sup> So the noble intentions of the Union of Utrecht were not put into practice right away. If the inhabitants of Gorinchem wished protection, they were to pay for it themselves.

And so they did. In 1579 two designs as for the defensive infrastructure of Gorinchem were drawn. The prominent engineer Adriaen Anthonisz. presented a plan to the *vroedschap* while the Gorinchem bailiff (*schout*) Jacob Kemp propounded another. In the end, the *vroedschap* chose the former. Nevertheless, Kemp was much engaged in the actual execution of the defensive works of his hometown.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt* January 1576; February 1576 and May 1576. Frans Westra, *Nederlandse ingenieurs en de fortificatiepenningen in het eerste tijdperk in de Tachtigjarige Oorlog, 1573-1604* (Alphen aan de Rijn 1992) 32.

<sup>8</sup> Before the Revolt the *stadhouder* had been a representative of the sovereign in the respective provinces. After the declaration of sovereignty of 1590 the Estates became sovereign and appointed the *stadhouder* themselves, a state of affairs that was already *de facto* the case after the outbreak of the Revolt.

<sup>9</sup> SAG 4, *resoluties van de vroedschap* July 1577; May 1578; August 1579.

<sup>10</sup> *Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt*

<sup>11</sup> W.F. Emck, *Kroniek van Gorinchem, Geschiedkundige en andere aantekeningen in chronologische volgorde 1230-1927* (Gorinchem 1929) 48-52; Anna Horsthuis, *Wallen en poorten* 12.

In 1580 the town government implemented the so-called rampart-money (*walgeld*). All burghers (*poorters*) were to pay this new local tax weekly according to their personal wealth. After initial reluctance to pay the new tax, the collecting proved quite successful. After a year, the town magistrate settled that the inhabitants of the surrounding lands - the *Land van Arkel* - were to be burdened with the rampart-money as well. The rates were fixed in 1585 at twelve to fifteen guilders per village weekly. The magistrate turned down the countrymen's offer to work on the ramparts instead. Apparently, there was no lack of cheap labour at the time.<sup>12</sup>

There are no archival records that allow for the uncovering of the total yield of the rampart-money. The revenue was probably spent straight away on labour wages.<sup>13</sup> Most probably, it was not sufficient: in April 1585 the council decided to draw on the local custom duties as well.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, the buttressing of the town was only realised when a new, more auspicious agreement with the Provincial Estates came about. Although the variant of the Italian bastion system that was developed in the Netherlands was relatively inexpensive - using earth instead of expensive stone - the defence works were still too costly for a single town to bear. For instance, Paul Holthuis has estimated the approximate costs of the fortification of the town of Deventer at a sum between 225,000 and 290,000 guilders. In spite of a generous contribution of the central government at The Hague - who paid more than half of the sum - 11.5 to 19 percent of all urban expenses were spent on fortifications in the decades between 1596 and 1621.<sup>15</sup>

The figures mentioned in the subsequent agreements between Gorinchem and the Province of Holland give a rough indication of the amount of money that was needed for the buttressing of the town. In 1585 it was settled that the Province was to grant 10,000 guilders for the construction of the first part of the ramparts.<sup>16</sup> In 1586 another contract was agreed upon. Holland was to fund two thirds of the costs if it did not exceed 12,000 guilders.<sup>17</sup> The expenses on the works that were carried out between 1587 and 1593 were estimated at 156,000 guilders whereof the Provincial government

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<sup>12</sup> SAG 5, *resoluties van de vroedschap 24 March 1585; 2 April 1585*.

<sup>13</sup> It is safe to suppose so, as nothing of the yield is recorded in the town accounts, the tax was only raised in summer, and there was one official who was responsible for both the collecting and the spending of the rampart-money.

<sup>14</sup> SAG 5, *resoluties van de vroedschap 11 April 1585*.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Holthuis, *Frontierstad bij het scheiden van de markt. Deventer: militair, demografisch, economisch; 1578-1648* (Deventer 1993) 84-86.

<sup>16</sup> SAG 5, *resoluties van de vroedschap 4 March 1585*.

<sup>17</sup> SAG 46, *resoluties van de vroedschap (kladden) 19 July 1586*.

at The Hague was to pay one third, being 104,000 guilders.<sup>18</sup> There are no agreements available for the works that were carried out up to 1600. The total cost of the buttressing of Gorinchem can be roughly estimated at a sum between 200,000 and 250,000 guilders.

Arrangements were accomplished for the subsequent phases of the infrastructural undertaking. Gorinchem lobbied intensely in order to achieve favourable deals.<sup>19</sup> The before-mentioned subsidy of 10,000 guilders was in fact negotiated in 1584 but it was only in March 1585 that Gorinchem reconciled on the sum.<sup>20</sup> The delegate of the town in the Estates of Holland lobbied intensely for financial support. On his request members of the Gorinchem council were repeatedly delegated to The Hague to assist in exerting pressure.<sup>21</sup> In 1594 the delegates were only to agree with new taxes on the condition that the Province was to finance the remaining parts of the fortifications.<sup>22</sup> Recurrently, Gorinchem brought in the *stadhouder* to facilitate auspicious contracts.<sup>23</sup> The actual implementation of the attained agreements required bargaining as well. In March and April 1590 the town threatened to use the revenue of the provincial excises if the promised funds were not sent without delay.<sup>24</sup>

So in the first decades of the war, the urban government initiated to a great extent the defence works and lobbied successfully in order to obtain financial and organisational support from the Province. Despite this generous sustenance the urban community was burdened substantially in order to erect the earthen ramparts and the bulwarks. The financial backing by the Province that we know of totalled 126,000 guilders. If the division of the burden of two thirds against one third concerned all the contracts, Gorinchem contributed between 1585 and 1593 about 63,000 guilders. Most likely, the amount of capital invested in the fortifications was larger, since

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<sup>18</sup> SAG 3.999, *Overeenkomst tussen het stadsbestuur en het landsbestuur betreffende het betalen van den aanleg en het onderhoud van de fortificatiën van Gorinchem (1593)*.

<sup>19</sup> *Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt 16 March 1596, 13 May 1597; SAG 5, resoluties van de vroedschap 29 May 1597; 2 January 1598; 1 February 1599; 16 February 1599.*

<sup>20</sup> *Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt 8 and 11 July 1584; SAG 5, resoluties van de vroedschap 4 March 1585.*

<sup>21</sup> For example SAG 5, *resoluties van de vroedschap June 1586.*

<sup>22</sup> *Staten van Holland (SvH) 1364.3, Lastbrief van de afgevaardigden van de Staten van Holland van Gorinchem (1594).*

<sup>23</sup> SAG 5, *resoluties van de vroedschap May 1597*. This was for instance the case in September 1599, when the Gorinchem burgomaster Pieter Jansz. Van Heusden wrote a letter to the *stadhouder* Maurits supplicating support for the nearby Fort of Nassau. Maurits wrote a letter to the States General requesting that they would supply subsidies; *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal van 1576-1609, X?: 1589-1599* N. Japikse and H.H.P. Rijperman eds. (The Hague 1922) 71 (14 September 1599) 643-644.

<sup>24</sup> SAG 5, *resoluties van de vroedschap March and April 1590.*

Gorinchem disbursed a lot of money between 1572 and 1584. What is more, the burden continued to increase up to the year 1600.

The accounts of the town treasury allow for the assessment of the relative weight of this sum on the urban expenditure. These show that the annual income of the town never surpassed 20,000 guilders in the 1580's and 1590's. The specified sums that were spent on 'labour' and on 'materials' may indicate the weight of the expenditure on the buttressing of the town. As mentioned above, in the book year 1572/1573 26 percent of the urban budget was spent on the buying of materials and the hiring of labour. Table 1 shows that the relative weight of this cost did not decrease in the following years.

Returning to the central problem of this paper, the archival research allows me to draw some careful conclusions. Initially the town of Gorinchem instigated the fortifications. Important decisions with regard to the execution of the plans were settled at the local level. The population was burdened with new taxes, which were initiated by the local government. The magistrate agreed upon a considerable share in the costs of the fortifications. Yet the generality bore approximately two thirds of the total costs of buttressing the town. Whereas the town instigated the works, the Estates of Holland soon assumed the initiative of adjusting and maintaining the defensive architecture, as will be shown in the next section.

### **Maintaining fortifications in Gorinchem (1600-1670)**

Once the fortifications were built, they continued to require organisational and financial efforts. Because of the high water table, the earthen ramparts, the bulwarks and the breakwaters had to be lifted up with additional earth and hurdles incessantly. In order to protect the town and to strengthen the earthen walls, the latter were covered with thorns, which had to be trimmed frequently. On a regular basis, the town ditch had to be deepened.

Unfortunately we do not have at our disposal the resolutions of the town council of Gorinchem or the full accounts of its local treasury, so it is somewhat tricky to uncover the local initiatives. It is possible to resort to the archival records on the Provincial level. However, we are to be cautious not to overestimate the initiatives from that level and assume that the local agents were passive with regard to the maintenance of the defence works.

Bearing these heuristical considerations in mind, there are, yet, good grounds for attributing relatively much significance to the initiatives of the provincial agents. In the first quarter of the seventeenth century members of the Deputy Council of the Estates of Holland were delegated to the frontier towns for identifying their defensive needs, inspecting the state of the fortifications and arranging service agreements on a regular basis. Recurrently, local agents asked for a delegation from the Estates for carrying out these assignments. In all probability, these local negotiators hoped for subsidies for the execution of the works.<sup>25</sup>

It turns out that the hope for financial backing was not in vain. Between 1625 and 1653 the Estates of Holland provided a total sum of 101,064 guilders for various maintenance works at the town of Gorinchem. One third of the subsidies were granted for the construction and reparation of the breakwaters. Another third was funded for general maintenance works. The remaining part was disbursed for works on the gates, the bulwarks, the walls and the ditch.<sup>26</sup>

The above-mentioned financial efforts indicate that an organisational effort was needed from the Provincial level with regard to the preservation of the fortifications of Holland. In 1628 an official body of provincial inspectors was established as part of the Deputy Council in order to carry out the tasks of the previous *ad-hoc* commissions. The head inspector was to undertake a 'pre-inspection' journey yearly and give an account of the state of the fortifications of Holland to the Deputy Council. This account was to provide instructions to the commissioners who set out a journey to the respective frontier towns twice a year. They had to carry out the before-mentioned assignments.<sup>27</sup>

By the middle of the century, the weight of the responsibilities of the inspection turned out to be too heavy for a single body to bear. In that year, the frontier towns were divided into two clusters: the Great and the Little Fortifications. The former included the towns of the Southern borderline of Holland, amongst which the town of Gorinchem. The latter stretched out along the Eastern borderline from Muiden to

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<sup>25</sup> *Indices Resolutions States of Holland*. The sending of a commission to the town of Gorinchem happened on the following dates: 17 March 1600; 6 December 1600, 21 March 1601; 18 June 1604; 1 July 1604; 5 April 1605; 19 October 1606; 27 October 1606; 30 March 1607; 11 April 1607; 30 May 1612; 17 March 1618; 9 April 1618; 20 August 1620.

<sup>26</sup> SAG 4000, *Subsidies of the Province to the fortifications of Gorinchem (1625-1653)*.

<sup>27</sup> L.J. van Klooster, *Archieven van de contrarolleurs, later contrarolleurs-generaal van 's-Lands fortificatiën in dienst van de provincie Holland en West-Friesland 1613/28-1795* (Den Haag 1958).



Schoonhoven and Nieuwpoort. From 1654 the commissioners carried out one journey a year only.<sup>28</sup>

The commissioners rendered detailed accounts of the state of the fortifications of the respective frontier towns. These accounts are well preserved in the National Archives at The Hague, at least from the middle of the seventeenth century. They allow for an overview of the service arrangements that were contracted out at the town of Gorinchem. Owing to these reports, we are able to gather information on the procedures of contracting out public works, the number and the nature of the works to be carried out, the identity of the persona with whom contracts were signed, the conditions of the subsequent contracts, the amounts of money that were earned and the division of this burden between the town and the Province.<sup>29</sup>

The accounts bear witness to the fact that the coordination of the tasks of maintenance through a provincial body facilitated an efficient cooperation between the various actors concerned. Accompanied by representatives of the local government, the inspectors conducted extensive assessments of the state of the defence works. They contracted out new works and examined the works that had been carried out. Frequently, the local government, the garrison, the water board and the inhabitants made use of these approachable provincial agents to make their views and wishes known. For instance, when the burgomasters requested the lifting up of a batardeau (*beer*), the commissioners contracted this out in the same year to Jan Innevelt for a sum of 5,000 guilders. When officers of the local garrison asked for an enlargement of a guardhouse, this was arranged soon thereafter.<sup>30</sup>

The inspectors mainly initiated the procedure of the maintenance works. They invited a few master craftsmen to determine the cost and materials of the works that were to be carried out. At times, this was assigned to the local government. The moment of allotting a new contract was announced by the town crier and by placards. A few days later, the work was contracted out publicly to the building contractor who offered the lowest price. With the aim of attaining the lowest price the inspectors did all they could in order to attract as many contenders as possible. For example, in

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<sup>28</sup> L.J. van Klooster, *Archieven van de contrarolleurs*.

<sup>29</sup> NA, AC, nrs. 7-10.

<sup>30</sup> NA, Archieven van de contrarolleurs (AC), nr. 9-10.

August 1650 the contracting out of the construction of a new bridge at nearby Heusden -with a value of 3,900 guilders- was announced in Gorinchem as well.<sup>31</sup>

As a rule, the building contractor was expected to assume all the costs of the works in advance. He was only paid after the provincial inspectors had inspected his work and given their consent (*attestatie*). Seeing that the works were rather expensive, only entrepreneurs with substantial resources were able to engage themselves in the public sector. They were to indebt themselves so as to pay their employees and the materials. In 1628, for example, a few building contractors who had not been able to finish their job on time, complained that they were able no longer to pay for the interests on the loans they had raised in order to start the job in the first place.<sup>32</sup>

Recurrently, the inspectors did not approve of the maintenance works. Then, they made a list of all failings and fixed a new date of inspection. As contractors regularly attempted to reduce their costs by employing inferior materials, the inspectors closely verified the materials that were used. At times, a supervisor was appointed to watch over the works. In April 1571 Maarten Pompe received the handsome sum of one and a half guilders a day for keeping an eye on the construction of a new bridge at the Arkel gate, since the contractors responsible had no relevant experience. Another manner to ensure the quality of the job was the negotiation of a contract whereby the Estates provided the materials.<sup>33</sup>

How popular were these public contracts? Did the practice of public contracting out advantage the Estates or the contractors? At times, contractors tried to prolong their contract through personal arrangements with the commissioners, avoiding the act of bidding in public. Possibly, they feared rivalry from other contractors. For instance, Jacob Kien, when his contract of maintaining the breakwaters was to end in 1660, proposed to add a new *ritsing*, a sustaining part of a breakwater, on his own account on the condition that his contract was prolonged with four years. Conversely, it happened that the market forces acted against the interests of the Estates. In 1670 the commissioners refused to contract out work on the breakwaters, since the contractors present did not offer a price lower than 490 guilders.<sup>34</sup>

As I mentioned before, it was only a limited number of entrepreneurs who were able to engage themselves in these contracts. The same names reappear several times

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<sup>31</sup> NA, Archieven van de contrarolleurs (AC), nr. 8.

<sup>32</sup> NA, AC, nr. 7.

<sup>33</sup> NA, AC, nr. 10.

<sup>34</sup> NA, AC, nrs. 9-10.

in the commissioner's accounts. For instance, Jacob Kien, and after 1668 his widow, was responsible for the maintenance of the breakwaters throughout the third quarter of the seventeenth century. He arranged additional, smaller contracts with the inspectors as for example the reparation of a batardeau in 1659. Between 1650 and 1675 the family Kien must have earned about 28,800 guilders. Dirck Gerritsz. Van Buren is another contractor who dealt with a similar amount of money. More than 45,000 guilders were involved in his engagements in the maintenance of the walls, the construction of a bridge and the putting of floating trunks in the harbour in the 1660s. Dirck de Graef was to receive 30,000 guilders after deepening the town ditch.<sup>35</sup>

So, the maintenance works implicated substantial amounts of money. The aggregate sum of the amounts that were disbursed in the 1650s, 1660s and 1670s were respectively 15,850 guilders, 79,515 guilders and 68,765 guilders. These amounts are absolute minima, since the price of many works remains unknown. The question arises who was to assume these costs: the generality, the Province or the town of Gorinchem.<sup>36</sup>

The evidence tends to suggest that the local treasury was accountable for a minor portion of the burden only. At times, there were particular negotiations as for who was to pay. In June 1649, the local government pointed out that a batardeau was to be repaired, but that they did not feel responsible for assuming the resultant cost. In the same year, the required reparations were carried out and disbursed by the Province.<sup>37</sup>

The demands of the local rulers were not always complied with that straightforwardly. In November 1649, the burgomasters urged that the Runmolen bastion nearby the river was to be renewed urgently were it not to be damaged by the river current. They asserted not to be responsible for the resultant costs, but the commissioners did not agree. In June 1655, the burgomasters repeated their assertion not to bear responsibility since the bastion 'was made newly by the Estates'.<sup>38</sup>

This reasoning indicates that the nature of the works affected the identity of the financier. The indications of the financial responsibilities of Gorinchem support this postulation. In 1641 the reparation of the Dalem gate was partly financed by the local

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<sup>35</sup> NA, AC, nrs. 7-10.

<sup>36</sup> NA, AC, nrs. 7-10.

<sup>37</sup> NA, AC, nr. 7.

<sup>38</sup> NA, AC nr. 8. In the original quote: 'de heeren van de stad meenen hier niet in gehouden te zijn, om dat het selve bij het lant van nieuws is gemaekt'.

treasury. In 1644 the town paid a third -or two hundred guilders- for the lifting up of a part of the parapet (*borstwering*). The Province funded other works on the gates and the parapets, on the condition that the local community was to assume the expenses of maintenance 'for all eternity'. In the 1660s the town was responsible for the annual reparation of hundred rods of the earthen walls on a permanent basis.<sup>39</sup>

The town does not seem to have invested any money in the construction and maintenance of the important breakwaters. The Province was fully accountable for the maintenance of the batardeaus and the ravelins as well. In addition there is an example that the town government was a contender for the public contracts. In 1662 the burgomasters were assigned the contract of placing floating trunks in the harbour, as they had offered the lowest price. This contract involved a handsome sum of 1,550 guilders. So the town of Gorinchem even earned money in organizing its defence.<sup>40</sup>

It turns out that the Province paid for the dominant part the maintenance of the fortifications of Gorinchem. The Province, for its part, recovered the expenses on the Provincial share in the generality contribution. In the generality budget 150,000 guilders were foreseen for expenses on fortifications. Holland contributed 58 percent or 87,464 guilders a year.<sup>41</sup>

Although archival records are lacking at the local level, the analysis allows for a relatively refined picture of the process of decision-making and the initiatives with regard to the maintenance of the fortifications in the town of Gorinchem after 1600. Through the institutionalisation on the Provincial level of the duties of inspecting and contracting out of the works of maintenance, the various agents that were involved cooperated with each other. It appears that the town was only prepared to assume financial responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of parts of the fortifications that dated back to the era before the involvement of the Estates in the defence of the town. This implies a shift from the local to the Provincial dynamic in the organisation of the defence.

Whether this new type of defence can be valued as an demonstration of the efficiency of the newly born fiscal military state, is to be assessed by a comparison of the beginning of this new state with the new crisis of the 1670's.

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<sup>39</sup> SAG 4000, Subsidies of the Province; NA, AC, nrs. 7-10.

<sup>40</sup> NA, AC, nr. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Staten van Oorlog

## **Conclusion**

It turns out that the transformation of the Dutch Republic into a fiscal-military state in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth century entailed a transformation of the practice of building and maintaining of fortifications. The changes concerning the fortification of Gorinchem are twofold: there was an organisational and a financial shift.

Whereas in the late sixteenth century the buttressing of the town was subject to local problem solving, the provincial authorities soon assumed the responsibility to ensure the defence of the town. In 1628 an administrative body to organise and inspect the works of maintenance of the fortifications of Holland was installed. The coordination of the works by this provincial body allowed for an efficient cooperation of the local rulers with the provincial agents.

The shift of the organisational efforts to the province was accompanied by an analogous shift of the financial efforts. It turns out that the town only assumed financial responsibilities concerning the maintenance of parts of the fortifications that dated back to the era before the provincial involvement therein.

In addition, these shifts could be qualified as a shift of mentality. The defensive parts of the town that had been built through provincial funds and efforts were no longer viewed as forming part of the urban responsibilities. In other words, the defence of the town as one of the vital elements of the town as a corporate unity had changed profoundly.

## Tables

*Table 1. Relative share of the buying of materials and the hiring of labour in the urban expenditure of the urban treasury of Gorinchem (1546-1597)*

Book years	Total urban expenditure	Expenditure on labour and materials	Percentage
1546-1547	7,695	772	10
1571-1572	7,512	521	7
1572-1573	9,417	2,457	26
1576-1577	10,186	1,514	15
1578-1579	8,848	2,416	27
1583-1584	12,100	3,577	30
1585-1586	16,880	4,057	24
1589-1590	16,853	3,131	19
1591-1592	18,515	4,952	27
1592-1593	18,282	8,463	46
1596-1597	13,420	3,723	28

*Source: SAG 1413-1424, Rekeningen van de ontvangsten en de uitgaven van de stadsthesauriers 1546-1597.*