

Navigating Gendered Waters: Examining Women's Participation in Maritime Economic Activities in Schiedam, 1600-1800.

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Head of harbour. View of sailing ships against the backdrop of a shore, trees, and mill named "De Morgenzon."

Published by Georg Balthasar Probst, manufacturing year approximately 1740.

ESHCC

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Abstract

This research examines the roles and contributions of women in the maritime economy of Schiedam during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century, Schiedam's economy was driven by primary maritime activities such as herring fishing, whaling, canal transportation, trade, and employment connected to major companies like the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC). As the century progressed, a significant shift occurred towards the jenever industry. Despite societal norms and legal constraints that limited their participation in many seafaring roles, women in Schiedam played crucial roles in shore-based industries. They were integral to the economy, managing businesses, producing essential maritime goods like nets and ropes, and were also involved as shipowners and traders. By the eighteenth century, their roles had evolved to include bookkeeping and active participation in the jenever industry. The study reveals that, contrary to the stereotypical image of women in the Dutch Republic as merely homemakers, women in Schiedam were dynamic participants in the local economy. They navigated societal and legal obstacles, finding ways to contribute significantly to the maritime and commercial life of their community. This research underscores the often-overlooked economic contributions of women in early modern Schiedam and suggests a need for further exploration of their roles across the broader spectrum of Dutch society during this period.

Introduction

The Netherlands, a nation that owes much of its prosperity to its connection with water and the maritime trade, grew to be one of the world's wealthiest nations in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The Netherlands became a major maritime and trading hub and benefited from its strategic location and well-developed ports and grew into a province with high rates of urbanization, high literacy rates and technological dominance.¹ Trade to the Baltic and fishing brought wealth to the region and large companies like the Dutch East India Company (VOC, 1602-1799) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC, 1621-1792) emerged. The sea shaped the lives of community in the bustling harbour towns of the Dutch Republic. While the docks were predominantly inhabited by men involved in seafaring ventures such as sailing, exploration, fishing, whaling, and trade, the maritime world was not exclusively a male domain. Women played roles within this maritime society, contributing significantly to various occupations intertwined with the sea.²

There have been two opposing views about women working in the pre-modern Dutch society. Some historical accounts suggest that Dutch women enjoyed a distinct position, exercising more agency in their lives and possessing a higher rate of labour participation. However, opposite narratives persist, with some emphasizing traditional roles and perpetuating the image of the dutiful wife who took care of the home. Prescribed gender roles became more rigid in the late eighteenth century, with the glorification of the central task for women as wives and mothers. Further research is needed to determine which of these characterizations most accurately represents the reality of women in the Dutch pre-modern economy. In most studies of the early modern economy the role of women in economic activities has been left out due to a lack of information about the topic.³ So, expanding our knowledge and incorporating gender into our analysis are crucial steps toward gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the labour market during the early modern period.

¹ Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship: Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands c. 1580-1815* (Amsterdam: Askant, 2007), 17.

² Annette de Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk. De arbeidsmarktpositie van vrouwen in Maassluis, Schiedam en Ter Heijde (1600-1700)," *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis* 2, no. 3 (September 2005): 60.

³ Ariadne Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd in Nederland," *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis* 2 (15 september 2005): 2.

Research question

This thesis will focus on the case study of one port city that has been active in maritime endeavours since the late Middle Ages: Schiedam. Schiedam is a city and municipality in the Dutch province of South Holland, situated between Rotterdam and Vlaardingen, originally along the Schie river and later also along the Nieuwe Maas river. A comprehensive understanding of the roles of women in the early modern Schiedam still remains elusive, primarily due to their often obscured presence in archival materials dominated by male-centric paperwork. However, seek, and ye shall find, often holds true for identifying working women in these centuries. As other regional case studies have shown, women were deeply embedded within maritime networks. The choice for Schiedam as a case study for this thesis goes beyond the challenge of obscured archival records, as this is common to many cities. Schiedam's longstanding maritime legacy as port city makes it an interesting city to study. Also, in the course of the eighteenth century, the economic focus of Schiedam shifted to the distillery business. What happened to the maritime communities remains an unanswered question, which makes this century especially interesting. The main research question driving this study is: Which factors determined women's participation in economic maritime activities in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Schiedam? To address the main question, three sub-questions have been formulated:

1. Which economic maritime activities existed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Schiedam?
2. In what types of economic maritime activities did women participate in Schiedam?
3. To conclude: Which factors determined the women's participation?

The identified factors will be weighted and a comparative analysis will be done with the outcomes from literature on other communities to provide a broader perspective on women's participation in economic maritime activities.

Main theoretical concepts

This thesis will investigate women in the maritime community and what role they had in the local maritime economy. In this thesis the term "maritime community" denotes a group of people or a society living in a region closely tied to maritime activities. This community often

relies on the sea for its livelihood and economic sustenance. The maritime economy refers to the various economic activities and industries associated with the use of the sea and encompasses a broad range of sectors like fishing, whaling, shipbuilding, transportation, (colonial) trade, working in the harbour, maritime insurance, and other related activities. Some related industries on the shore where women were active in, were for example fish-processing, recruiting sailors, making and repairing nets, selling fishing equipment or making clothing for sailors. This thesis studies the work of women who had an income in a maritime (related) industry, which leaves unpaid work out of the scope. Of course economic value cannot always be measured or quantified. Women did do other types of (unpaid) work and contributed to society in all kinds of ways, but these contributions are harder to deduct from the sources and are beyond the scope of this thesis. The possibility for women to earn an income often depends on the status of women and the agency they have in a certain society. The definition of agency that is used here, is that of the *Cambridge Dictionary*: “the ability to take action or to choose what action to take.”⁴

This study draws upon the framework of feminist theories, which seek to understand power dynamics between men and women, striving for equality across political, social, and economic realms. Gender studies analyse the impact of gender on society and scrutinize how social constructs influence gender roles. A social construct can be defined as a concept or phenomenon that is created, shaped, and maintained by society through shared beliefs, attitudes, and cultural practices rather than being an inherent or objective feature of the natural world. In other words, social constructs are ideas or categories that people in a society agree upon and treat as real, even though they may not have a concrete existence. The gap in knowledge about women in the pre-modern society informs the decision to write specifically about working women in this case study, however, it is important to acknowledge I am looking with a more feminist twenty-first century perspective to a way of life from centuries ago.

When searching the archives the term “housewife” appears often (huysvrouw/huisvrouw). In modern terms, this means a wife who stays at home doing home chores, looking after the kids and does not have a job outside of the home. However, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, this term was used as a description of a married women. The term depicted her status and not her (economic) activities. A woman working in the job

⁴ "Agency," *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed 10-01-2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/agency>.

of her husband for example and providing income, cannot be seen as a housewife can in modern terms. It is important to note the difference for this study.

Position in the academic discourse

The traditional debate

In the traditional historiography of women's labour participation in Europe, many scholars aimed to prove whether women's economic agency became worse since the Middle Ages or pre-modern times (the theory of change over time) or stayed the same (the theory of continuity). Scholars claiming the position of women in economy used to be better and gradually became worse, pointed to the introduction of paid labour and separation between production and consumption as reasons for women being pushed from the market. Other proposed factors include the emerging capitalist economy, industrialisation and specialisation. However, historians increasingly questioned the use of this sharp dichotomy of change or continuity, considering it a too limiting reduction of the complex reality. Therefore, there was a push to incorporate more bottom-up case studies into the debate and dedicating attention to women in the context of individual choices, family situations and the structure of local communities and the labour market.

Contemporary reports from foreign travellers gave some clues that the position of women in the Dutch Republic was better than in other countries.⁵ The English Sir William Montague wrote down in his travel journal in 1696: *'t is very observable here, more women are found in the shops and business in general than men; they have the conduct of the purse and commerce, manage it rarely well, they are careful and diligent, capable of affairs, (besides domestick), having an education suitable, and a genius wholly adapted to it.*⁶ Other literature showed that women were present across all layers of the working society and many could provide for themselves.⁷ Typical "female" occupations can include spinning, sewing, or domestic services. It was common that girls already began to work for rich families as domestic help at young age. There were women in various other occupations, such as washers, midwives, nursemaids and brothel managers. However, since these are not maritime

⁵ Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd," 2.

⁶ William Mountague, *The Delights of Holland: Or, A Three Months Travel about That and the Other Provinces: With Observations and Reflections on Their Trade, Wealth, Strength, Beauty, Policy, &c. Together with a Catalogue of the Rarities in the Anatomical School at Leyden* (London: J. Sturton and A. Bosvile, 1696), 183.

⁷ Anne Laurence, "How Free Were English Women in the Seventeenth Century?", in *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in the Seventeenth Century Holland, England, and Italy*, eds. Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Huisman (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1994), 127.

occupations, they fall out of the scope of this theses. The women who produced exclusively for the maritime market, like the women sewing nets for the fishing boats, are included.

Historian Anne Laurence suggests that women had more economic opportunities in the pre-modern Dutch Republic due to the rise of the first modern economy.⁸ She connects the range of economic activities open to women with factors like urbanization, commercial development, and the importance of maritime trade.⁹ Due to the Dutch Republic's focus on maritime trade and seafaring, women had increased opportunities. The importance of maritime trade often meant that men, like those involved in the VOC and WIC, were frequently away for long periods.¹⁰ Their husbands' wages proved insufficient, prompting wives to supplement these earnings.¹¹ The uncertainty of their husbands' return loomed due to the dangerous nature of maritime life—full of storms, scurvy, privateers, and the constant threat of shipwrecks. With a large number of men not returning, women shouldered the responsibilities, contributing to their households' economic survival and, often had to take on multiple jobs to make ends meet (as did many men).¹² Due to the surplus of women and the frequent absence of their sailor husbands, at least half of the women in the lower social strata had to manage without financial support from their spouses.¹³

Laurence also linked the variety of economic pursuits available to women with the legal status of women. In the province Holland, reaching the age of twenty-five marked the transition to adulthood for both boys and girls. At this age, they were deemed legally competent. Adult unmarried women were legally competent and could manage their own property, had the ability to conduct business and enter into contracts without the need for a guardian.¹⁴ The same held true for widows. Unmarried women over the age of twenty-five engaged in trade, and widows frequently continued their husbands' businesses. In contrast to an unmarried adult woman, a married woman had fewer rights. She was incapacitated and under the authority of her husband. Consequently, she could no longer dispose of her own property and had limited legal agency.¹⁵ Unlike other married women, sailors' wives had

⁸ Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd," 2.

⁹ Laurence, "How Free Were English Women in the Seventeenth Century?," 127.

¹⁰ Michel Ketelaars, *Compagniesdochters: Vrouwen en de VOC* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2014), 23.

¹¹ Manon van der Heijden and Danielle van den Heuvel, "Sailors' Families and the Urban Institutional Framework in Early Modern Holland," *The History of the Family* 12, no. 4 (January 2007): 296-309.

¹² Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd," 8.

¹³ J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, *1800 blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (Sdu, 2001), 245-246.

¹⁴ De Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk," 60-61.

¹⁵ A. F. Broekema, "De weg naar het gerecht. Mondigheid van vrouwen getoetst aan de hand van separaties en divorcies in Den Haag en Dordrecht 1740-1810." (Master Thesis, 2011), <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/6620>, 15-16.

unique opportunities to obtain legal powers delegated by their husbands when they were at sea for a long period of time.¹⁶ Some women engaged in trade and obtained permission from their husbands to do so, earning the designation of public trader.

With its open society and the absence of absolute power, the Republic also deviated culturally.¹⁷ These distinctive attributes may be accountable for the higher involvement of women. Also, guilds in Holland's urban centres had more accessible entry conditions for both men and women, marked by lower entrance fees, when contrasted with guilds in provincial towns. The presence of more women being involved in trade activities was thus probably a distinctive feature observed primarily in the urban regions of the province of Holland, where specialization and commercialization prompted the organization of diverse trade types, fostering women's access to independent entrepreneurship in commerce.¹⁸

The proper, cleaning wife

When archival specialists were asked about women and their role in the maritime economy, their answer were quite hesitant. 'Women working in the pre-modern era in Schiedam? Hate to disappoint you, but there weren't many...' and 'Well there is nothing written about them, because they only stayed at home and took care of the kids.' These views share some similarities with the theory of continuity, which emphasised that the position of women was different from that of men, and that women were rarely found in the workforce. This theory points out that the prevailing patriarchy endured and labour in pre-modern society was divided between male and female occupations. Professions associated with women were generally marginal, low-skilled, and poorly paid.¹⁹ Their status was often defined by their subordination to their husbands and lack of agency.²⁰

An often-depicted image of women in the Dutch Republic was that of the obsessively cleaning, child-raising wife who stayed at home, while the man was the breadwinner.²¹ The emerging domestic ideal in the theoretical discussion assigned women to the roles of wives, marking the private sphere as their domain and reserving the public sphere for men. This ideal gained prominence in Europe from the late eighteenth century and was associated with the

¹⁶ Van der Heijden and Van den Heuvel, "Sailors' Families," 296-309.

¹⁷ Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd," 2.

¹⁸ Van den Heuvel, *Women and entrepreneurship*, 276.

¹⁹ Judith M. Bennett, "History That Stands Still: Women's Work in the European Past," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 269-283.

²⁰ Ketelaars, *Compagniesdochters*, 21-26.

²¹ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 376-378.

rise of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie, also known as the middle class, was a social class of individuals deriving their power or status from their wealth, education, and employment, in contrast to aristocrats whose status primarily stemmed from their family background. Some scholars suggest the introduction of this ideal might have occurred earlier in Holland due to the early establishment of bourgeois family structures in the seventeenth century.²²

Furthermore, it became fashionable not to work.²³ With the Republic reaching a high standard of living since the seventeenth century, rich women could afford not to work, which became a symbol of high status.²⁴ Also, industrialisation caused the separation between agrarian jobs that could be done from home and industrial jobs elsewhere outside the home. This shift led to significant changes in the organization of labour, with many people transitioning from agricultural to industrial employment and a consequent reshaping of social and economic structures. With industrial jobs primarily located outside the home, women's roles became more defined within the domestic sphere.

Advice literature further reinforced the patriarchal norms. The magazine *De Hollandsche Spectator* analysed Dutch eighteenth-century society in short moralistic sketches, in which authors drew attention to all kinds of topics such as the cleaning tasks of housewives.²⁵ Another example was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1762 educational novel *Emile, ou l'Education*, in which Rousseau explained his vision of human nature and depicted his ideal methods of raising children, assigning a pivotal role to mothers. While seen as revolutionary in Parisian circles, in Dutch households, it was merely viewed as a confirmation of existing norms. Rousseau, despite recognizing some equality in the state of nature, acknowledged that through marriage, women willingly surrendered certain rights.²⁶ Where did this divide of the genders begin? One could argue that gender is historically constructed, with women historically attributed to qualities such as passivity, softness, weakness, modesty, and shame, and men with power and strength.²⁷ Gender imbalances were deeply rooted in the prevailing Christian values of Dutch society and the Christian interpretation of gender roles. After the Middle Ages, when Christianity spread from Southern

²² Jan de Vries en A. M. van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815: de eerste ronde van moderne economische groei* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1995), 698.

²³ Van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship*, 43-46.

²⁴ Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd," 9.

²⁵ James Kennedy, *Een beknopte geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2019), 202.

²⁶ Kloek and Mijnhardt, *1800 blauwdrukken*, 250.

²⁷ Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, Gender Relations in the American Experience (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 35.

Europe during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, it had a significant impact on how women were treated.²⁸ Women were often considered inferior to men, influenced by various ideas from Greek, Germanic, Roman, and Christian traditions. These notions were adopted during the pre-modern era. This cultural perspective, reinforced in the eighteenth century, structured gender differences around the acceptance of such beliefs.²⁹ The eighteenth century witnessed an increased emphasis on the perceived physical and emotional fragility of women, with these gendered notions seen as inherent in the "nature" of women.

Innovative aspects

A new tool employed in this research enabled the tracing of women who had long remained unfound in maritime activities in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Schiedam. Using Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) technology from Transkribus, notarial archive records were digitised and transcribed with the aid of artificial intelligence. This technology, supported by language models trained specifically for transcribing old Dutch texts, surpassed human capabilities in its speed of deciphering archaic language. For the first time, keyword searches allowed for efficient navigation through about 200.000 scans, replacing the task of manually reviewing thousands of pages. Focusing on notary records rather than birth, marriage, and death records—where women's occupations were infrequently documented in Schiedam—this thesis adopted a holistic approach. By combining digital methods with close reading of primary sources, the study aimed to illuminate the roles of working women, filling historical gaps in Schiedam's maritime history.

Sources and expected challenges

Exploring the notarial archives provides an insight in various aspects of society, containing economic, social, and personal dimensions. The records contain a wide range of documents, from wills, inventories and divorce proceedings to criminal cases, sea voyages, inheritance documentation, and even disputes with neighbours. The initial step in this research was the sorting of the notarial records of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. This was the first obstacle, as there was no filtering on metadata available and the document types were not sorted. The absence of metadata and pre-sorted categories meant that I had to manually sort

²⁸ Broekema, "De weg naar het gerecht.", 10.

²⁹ Broekema, "De weg naar het gerecht.", 10.

through a vast array of documents without clear categorisation. This lack of organisation made it difficult to pinpoint specific types of records, such as wills, inventories, or criminal cases, which was crucial for understanding the context. I had to manually sift through each document to categorise them based on their content. This process is time-consuming and labour-intensive.

The notarial archive offers glimpses into the lives of both important people and ordinary folks. However, it is crucial to recognize that many records may mainly represent the richest segments of the population. It is also important to exercise caution due to inherent biases within the records. These records were intentionally created by individuals seeking to establish guilt, innocence, capacity, marital status, or death.³⁰ The person making a claim, known as the 'recurant,' might not have always presented an objective viewpoint and might have had various motivations to manipulate the truth, such as employing tactics like paying a false witness and later using these 'official documents' for the judge. It is important to note that visiting a notary was not accessible for everyone, and many contracts were instead registered with the city's government. Furthermore, when using these sources, it is important to bear in mind the possibilities and limitations of the dataset. No corpus, nor researcher is value free and completely objective. Therefore, there should always be a critical reflection on the sources.

The transcriptions that were made automatically in Transkribus were not perfect; the automatically transcribed texts underwent minimal manual corrections. Also, transcription mistakes were made when the text was slanted, curved, vertically written, or written in the margins. Additionally, physical damage, such as ink stains, faded sentences, crossed-out parts, or paper deterioration, posed challenges for the computer in reading the texts. The research process was further complicated by the absence of standardized spelling during the early modern period. This presented the risk of potentially missing out on undetected or differently spelled words. That's why a combination of digital research methods and close reading was necessary.

The methods

To examine the role of women in the maritime community of Schiedam, specific search terms were selected based on their relevance to identify women's activities and roles in historical

³⁰ Maarten Hell, ed., *Alle Amsterdamse akten: Ruzie, rouw en roddels bij de notaris, 1578-1915* (Zeist: Virtùmedia, 2022), 13.

notarial records. Keywords such as 'wife' (vrouw van), 'woman' (vrouw), 'housewife' (huisvrouw), 'abroad/overseas' (uitlandig), 'procuration' (volmacht), 'widow' (weduwe), and various occupational names in male and female form chosen because they directly identified women or indicated their occupational roles. Terms like 'procuration' (volmacht) indicated legal documents granting authority, frequently used by women to manage business affairs in their husbands' absence.³¹ Including names of various occupations provided insights into the diverse roles women undertook, ranging from direct involvement in maritime activities to ancillary roles supporting maritime trade. A list of the search words is added in the appendix.³² Because there were many spelling variants and because of the possibility of HTR-errors, the fuzzy search tolerance was set high and many different spelling variants have been used.

³¹ An example of a woman who is granted rights by a 'volmacht' is included in appendix IV.

³² See appendix III.

1 Maritime activities in Schiedam

To answer the main research question, it is important to first provide a complete picture of the main maritime economic activities that existed in this pre-modern period in Schiedam. That is why this first chapter answers the question: which economic maritime activities existed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Schiedam? The mapping of the maritime community will be used as a starting point for a deep dive to search for the women in these branches which will be studied in chapter two.

During the fourteenth century, Schiedam became a fishing hub and the fishing boats, shipyards, rope-making facilities, rope walks, tanneries, cooperages, and sail lofts provided direct and indirect employment opportunities for numerous residents of Schiedam. For those observant of street names, remnants of the town's fishing heritage are still visible in the street names as the: Vismarkt (Fish Market), Taansteeg (Tanning Alley), Achter de Teerstoof (Behind the Tar Oven), Baan (Rope Walk), and Grofbaan (Coarse Rope Walk). Every day, many ships entered and left the harbour in Schiedam. The ships went for inland shipping, but also international destinations like the Baltic region, the Caribbean, and Asia, the Mediterranean region, or Africa. In the bustling town of Schiedam during the seventeenth century, approximately one-third of the male residents worked in maritime activities. The major activities were (herring) fishing, whaling, trade, canal transportation, and jobs related to the VOC/WIC.

(Herring) Fishing

Herring fishing, also called the ‘large fishing industry’ (‘groote visscherije’), and accompanying trade became the main source of income for Schiedam. Schiedam had a considerable herring fleet, and a considerable number of Schiedam residents were directly or indirectly engaged in the herring fishing industry.³³ When Englishman John Nortleigh, on his tour in Europe, came across Schiedam, he wrote that it was clear that herring fishing was very important: ‘*It abounded in Fishery; and abundance of Busses, Cord, and Network were there made for that purpose*’.³⁴ With the introduction of the herring buss (‘haringbuis’), a big fishing vessel with large storing capacity, the Dutch fishermen had a longer fishing season

³³ Annette de Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven in zeevarende gemeenschappen: Schiedam, Maassluis en Ter Heijde in de Zeventiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 27-29.

³⁴ John Northleigh, *Topographical Descriptions: With Historico-Political and Medioco-Physical Observations, Made in Two Several Voyages Through Most Parts of Europe* (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1702).

because they could bring home large quantities of herring. In June, the boats set sail for the Shetland and Orkney Islands, where they remained until the end of July. Additionally, there were boats that sailed to the Scottish and English coasts. Fishing at the Dogger Bank continued until well into October, and in November, the fishermen moved to the deep waters east of Great Yarmouth. In favourable weather conditions, they stayed in the Channel fishing for herring until January. On average, three voyages were made between June and January. During these trips, the men were away from home for about two to three months each time. After the fish were selected, they were gutted and salted at sea.³⁵ Buss vessels were one of the most important innovations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and trading with these vessels played a leading role in the economic rise of the republic. The unfinished product was brought in, underwent further processing, was packed by the herring-packers, and then re-entered the national and international trade flow, being sold by fish merchants. Alongside wine, textiles, and salt, herring was one of the export products to the Baltic region and Germany.³⁶ After the herring season, fishermen also caught cod and haddock. In the Maas River near Schiedam, fishermen have also been casting their nets for migratory fish such as salmon and sturgeon.³⁷

Supporting industries included, for example, the spinning mills, where yarn for rope and nets was spun, and ropemaking facilities, where yarns were processed into rope used, among other things, for rigging ships. The ropes and nets were made from hemp, which was imported from Germany or the Baltic region. The fibres of the hemp plant were strong enough, but they were also incredibly stiff. To make the hemp fibres flexible, the men from the rope shops used their spit. This is why the nickname of the Schiedammer became ‘hemp drooler’ (hennepkwijler), as Huygens wrote in his poem about Schiedam.³⁸ Other important branches of industry were the tar works, where ropes and nets were treated to better withstand seawater. Many other companies were established to support the herring industry, such as blowing glass balls in the glassworks to make the nets float, and fishermen's wives making, cutting, and mending nets. In the cooperages, necessary for the production of herring barrels, they manufactured barrels of different sizes, the largest being for a thousand herrings.³⁹ The fish had to be salted to be preserved, so salt was imported from Spain, Portugal, and Bonaire.

³⁵ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 106.

³⁶ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 294.

³⁷ “Vergeten Verhalen: Zalmvisserij in de Maas,” March 29, 2018, <https://www.rijnmond.nl/nieuws/166616/vergeten-verhalen-zalmvisserij-in-de-maas>.

³⁸ Constantijn Huygens and Claas Wybe de Kruyter, *Stede-stemmen en dorpen*, Klassiek letterkundig pantheon 223 (Zutphen: Thieme, 1981), 48.

³⁹ Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 63.

The salt was then stored in the salt chain. The person who rented the 'salt mate' from the city received the salt tax from the buyers. For every ton of herring, 35 kg of salt was required; this is why the salt works also flourished.⁴⁰ Additionally, there were the supporting industries like the shipbuilders, carpenters, blacksmiths, sailmakers.⁴¹ Other related professions included suppliers of food and drinks for the crew on board. Breweries, particularly important for supplying ship's beer, were also found in Schiedam.⁴² Other jobs that emerged from the herring industry were inspectors. Herring was so important that there were many regulations for fishing and the quality of the herring, hence the presence of herring inspectors.⁴³

The herring (along with salted cod and haddock) formed the basis of the emerging merchant shipping in the region. The merchants sold many different kinds of herring for different prices.⁴⁴ Salted fish was transported to Northern France, Spain, and Portugal. The cargo of merchant ships heading south also consisted of cheese, wheat, and soap. The ships returned with salt to be used in herring fishing, wine, and olive oil. Other buyers of herring and salted fish were traders in Germany and Flanders. England, which was also a market for French wine, was supplied with fish by Rotterdam and Schiedam ships. Upon return from England, the ships were loaded with minerals such as coal, lead, alum, and foodstuffs. Ships loaded with herring also sailed to the Baltic region, although the Maas cities were less favourably located for this trade than Hoorn, Enkhuizen, and Amsterdam. Some of the Schiedam herring was first transported to Amsterdam and then further to the Baltic region.⁴⁵

We can figure out the size of the fishing industry by examining the amount of herring caught. The table below, spanning from 1598 to 1788, shows the quantity of fish brought in by captains. The size is measured by weight, with each unit equalling about 14 tons or 1000 fish. The amount of herring caught started to decline slowly. During the eighteenth century, many herring fisheries ceased operations, and the amount of herring caught decreased significantly. Eventually, in 1788, herring fishing was officially halted. This decline in the herring industry was influenced by the seasonal nature of herring fishing, leading investors to prefer investing in distilleries, which provided steady profits throughout the year.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 320.

⁴¹ Ser Louis, "Economie in de jaren 1275 tot 1598," *Scyedam*, February 1, 1998, 26.

⁴² De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 27-29.

⁴³ C. Jong, "Walvisvaart vanuit Schiedam," *Scyedam*, March 1, 2001, 4.

⁴⁴ Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 23-24.

⁴⁵ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 27-29.

⁴⁶ Jong, "Walvisvaart vanuit Schiedam," 4.

Annual supply:⁴⁷

Year	Catch	Year	Catch	Year	Catch	Year	Catch
1598	1098½	1608	1732	1618	916	1628	787½
1599	1185	1609	1759	1619	1656	1629	921½
1600	443½	1610	1531½	1620	1241	1630	878
1601	770	1611	2788	1621	1634½	1631	803½
1602	1763	1612	2415	1622	1273½	1632	590½
1603	1048	1613	1998	1623	1980	1633	644
1604	1542	1614	1959	1624	1945½	1634	1054
1605	1639	1615	2008	1625	1209	1635	643½
1606	2351	1616	1780	1626	796½	1636	1003
1607	2183	1617	1671	1627	698	1637	659
1638	817	1676	1170½	1714	1913	1752	129
1639	1220	1677	1015½	1715	2266	1753	198½
1640	808½	1678	1515	1716	1757½	1754	298
1641	757	1679	1437	1717	2108	1755	274
1642	1136	1680	1780	1718	1964½	1756	343
1643	1015½	1681	1603½	1719	1528½	1757	289½
1644	1435½	1682	1056	1720	718	1758	107
1645	1559½	1683	1309½	1721	1017	1759	233
1646	1351	1684	1170½	1722	828½	1760	182½
1647	1493	1685	2309½	1723	968	1761	115
1648	1227	1686	1757½	1724	538	1762	175½
1649	1430	1687	1082	1725	1140	1763	119
1650	1369	1688	1114	1726	999	1764	163
1651	1464	1689	1597½	1727	601	1765	209
1652	467	1690	1455	1728	276½	1766	234
1653	353	1691	919	1729	230	1767	303½
1654	1450	1692	1179½	1730	254	1768	375
1655	921½	1693	1465	1731	223	1769	358
1656	718	1694	1711	1732	294	1770	283
1657	897	1695	1523	1733	455	1771	285

⁴⁷ Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 102-107.

Year	Catch	Year	Catch	Year	Catch	Year	Catch
1658	1011	1696	923½	1734	386½	1772	234
1659	1104	1697	702	1735	606½	1773	205
1660	1460	1698	2218½	1736	658½	1774	88½
1661	1508½	1699	3027½	1737	587	1775	74½
1662	1657	1700	3069	1738	416½	1776	58
1663	1408	1701	1552	1739	311	1777	59
1664	1749	1702	880½	1740	165½	1778	21½
1665	0	1703	189½	1741	228	1779	26
1666	3	1704	423½	1742	120	1780	10½
1667	740	1705	386½	1743	131	1781	0
1668	1964	1706	647½	1744	115½	1782	0
1669	1170½	1707	763	1745	175	1783	27
1670	776½	1708	1152	1746	255	1784	40
1671	1624½	1709	1423	1747	104	1785	22
1672	31½	1710	1141	1748	97	1786	41½
1673	35	1711	1220	1749	110	1787	6
1674	1205	1712	1092	1750	80½	1788	13
1675	1671½	1713	2528	1751	186½		

The decline and eventual demise of the herring fishery in Schiedam during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was influenced by a confluence of factors. As Schiedam's industrial landscape expanded, space at the harbours became increasingly limited. The docks, once bustling with herring boats, were increasingly occupied by merchant ships carrying grain, pushing the fishing vessels to relocate to other ports such as Brielle and Vlaardingen. This spatial pressure coincided with a financial shift among the city's ship owners. Recognizing the higher profitability and lower risks associated with distilleries, many investors redirected their funds from the uncertain fishing industry to the booming distillery industry. Consequently, many fishing vessels were repurposed as cargo ships, primarily for transporting grains and distilled spirits, thereby increasing maritime traffic rather than maintaining a robust fishing fleet. Compounding these challenges were the frequent attacks by privateers from Dunkirk and Calais between 1700 and 1710, resulting in significant financial setbacks for ship owners. Furthermore, the composition of the city's governing body began to

reflect the growing influence of affluent distillers. This shift in political power meant that policies increasingly favoured the distillery industry. Measures that could have supported or revitalized the fishing sector were neglected, as the focus remained on the more profitable and influential distilling business.⁴⁸

This decline in herring fishing is in line with the share of the Republic in international herring trade. The Republic started with eighty percent of the international herring trade in 1650; however, in the eighteenth century, this decreased to only 20 percent. Competitors from Scotland and Norway preferred Hamburg as a transshipment port. Later, trade policy measures in France, the Southern Netherlands, Denmark, and Prussia further restricted herring exports. Additionally, the shifting fishing grounds and changing diets of northern European peoples had a significant influence on the decline. The salt trade continued, as other countries now started salting their own herrings; however, salt trade did decline in the Republic, partly due to decreased domestic demand.⁴⁹ In summary, the interplay of these factors led to the decline of the herring fishery in Schiedam, where the increased profitability of the distillery industry was particularly influential. The future of the maritime community was uncertain, with individuals potentially moving to different ports, shifting to cargo transportation, or entering the distillery sector.

Whaling

From the early seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth century, voyages to Greenland were conducted from Schiedam (known as ‘groenlandvaart’ or the ‘kleine visscherij’).⁵⁰ These seafarers sailed to the icy waters of the Arctic, facing the dangers of hunting whales for their valuable oil. These ventures were undertaken by joint companies known as the Greenlandic, New Greenlandic, and Nordic Company. The Nordic Company was established by merchants from Amsterdam, Delft, and Medemblik with interests in whaling and obtained exclusive rights from the States General to fish in the Arctic coastal waters until 1642. Soon, other Dutch port cities joined the Company, however, Schiedam was no part of the Nordic Company. From 1643, the Nordic Company lost its monopoly and independent whaling vessels from Schiedam began whaling. Some whaling skippers normally earned their living in the herring trade and took crew members with them who normally

⁴⁸ Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 108-110.

⁴⁹ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 489.

⁵⁰ G. van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam* (Schiedam: Interbook International, 1975), 113.

worked on the herring fleet.⁵¹ They faced some challenges with the old chambers of the Nordic company, who felt threatened by the new competition, leading to a protective act requested from the States General in 1645. Despite this, they continued whaling and were granted a business site near the Rijstuin in Schiedam by the harbour head by the city council. In 1651, the city council rejected the request of the New Greenland Company to establish a blubber refinery on the Oosterhoofd, but promised to consider if a location on the Galgeveld, which is on the east side of the Voorhaven, was feasible. The whale oil harvested was processed in refineries located far from residential areas due to the foul odour.⁵²

Whaling was a lucrative industry, providing valuable resources that were in high demand across Europe. The primary product derived from whaling was blubber, which, when refined, produced whale oil. Whale oil and blubber harvested from whaling expeditions were processed in refineries in Schiedam, converting the raw materials obtained from whales into various products. The process in the refineries typically involved several steps. First, the blubber, which is the fatty tissue of whales, was rendered down into oil through heating, separating the oil from the solid tissues. Following rendering, the oil underwent filtration and purification to remove impurities and solid residues, ensuring that the resulting oil was of high quality. Once processed, the whale oil was stored in barrels or other containers and prepared for distribution. This oil had a variety of uses that made it an essential commodity. It was used as a fuel for lamps, providing a bright and reliable source of light before the advent of kerosene and electricity. This made it valuable for lighting homes, streets, and public buildings, contributing to longer productive hours after dark. Additionally, whale oil was used in the manufacturing of soap, candles and as a lubricant for machinery, which was increasingly important with the rise of industrial activities during this period. It also played a role in the production of textiles and leather, making it a key ingredient in a variety of industries.

Narwhals (family of the dolphin) were also caught for their blubber, like the whales, and long tusks. In this period, a narwhal was called an ‘eenhoorn’ which translates literally to ‘unicorn’. The long and twisted horn from a narwhal often sparked fantasy creature tales. In wills, there were four people who have an ‘eenhoorn’ in their inventory in the eighteenth century in Schiedam.⁵³ It was probably a prominent piece of display, and they were

⁵¹ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 88.

⁵² Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 113.

⁵³ Examples of people who had an “unicorn horn” in their inventory. Antonij van Vollenhoven: Gemeentearchief Schiedam (GAS) 0257 Oud-Notarieel Archief, inv.no. 0820, folio no. 263 (10-04-1704), Ewout Juijst: NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0824, folio no. 691 (10-09-1722), Anthonij van Wyk: NL-GAS-0267

occasionally included in cabinets of curiosities during the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ The whale industry also served a role in fashion. The eighteenth century was an era of refinement and extravagance in fashion. (Higher class) women also often wore their hair in a high wig or in intricate hairstyles adorned with ribbons, jewels, and feather accessories. Corsets were also a part of eighteenth-century fashion and were worn to support the upper body and accentuate the waist. They were often made of sturdy materials like whalebone and were richly decorated. Whalebone is the elastic, horn-like substance made of keratin derived from the baleen of a baleen whale, which is a type of sieve-like (teeth) structure it uses to filter plankton from the water. Baleen was used in various items such as the ribs of an umbrella or parasol and in garments like corsets and hoop skirts.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, whaling experienced a decline in popularity among investors, mainly because the whaling-business was not profitable anymore and the catch of whales declined every year. They began to favour investing in the distillery business, which, unlike whaling, was not subject to seasonal fluctuations, similar to the fate of the herring industry. In 1683, Alewyn Koningh was the sole whale ship owner in Schiedam, operating two ships. However, in the eighteenth century, whaling persisted with one to three ship owners, operating two to three ships.⁵⁵ The whaling ships also served as merchant vessels. When looking for voyages to Greenland, there are six reports between 1652 and 1695 from whalers and eighteen reports between 1719 and 1798 containing attestations or shares in whaling vessels being sold. The most of them are about the storms they encountered, the ice they were stuck in or shipwreck. The frequency of voyages to Greenland, indicates that whaling was a persistent economic activity for Schiedam in the eighteenth century and there were still people investing in it, despite the dangers.

One notable Schiedam resident mentioned in the notarial deeds in the eighteenth century is Mr. Bernard Johan Pielat van Bulderen, a businessman who sailed between 1787 and 1790 on a whaler named 'De Patriot,' later renamed 'de Hoop.' Pielat van Bulderen's involvement as both a businessman and a commander aboard highlights the direct engagement of local entrepreneurs in whaling operations. In the sources, there were several other commanders, harpooners and 'blubber cutters' who ventured into the dangerous Arctic waters. For example, Willem Jansz. Snel served as a commander from 1785 to 1794,

(ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0960, folio no. 399 (17-09-1785), Jan Fokkendijk: NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0831, folio no. 531 (16-05-1733), Catarina van Vollenhoven: NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0823, folio no. 156 (13-12-1727).

⁵⁴ Example of a narwhal being caught: NL-GAS-0267 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0957, folio no. 724 (06-08-1789).

⁵⁵ Jong, "Walvisvaart vanuit Schiedam," 4.

undertaking ten seasons to Greenland for the ship owner Bernard Johan Pielat van Bulderen. Similarly, Pieter Bezemer served as a commander between 1778-1779 and 1783-1794 for ship owner Eduard Jacob Penning. The fourth Anglo-Dutch War from 1780-1784 caused an interruption in whaling during this period, as did the fifth Anglo-Dutch War from 1795-1802. During the trade wars against England, the Dutch government banned whaling to make the manpower available for the war fleet.

Economic Challenges and Transformations in Dutch Fisheries during the Eighteenth Century

After 1650, herring fishing declined in importance due to numerous wars afflicting the Dutch Republic and mercantile measures from other countries, rendering the herring industry no longer profitable. The herring fishing results reveal a nationwide trend indicating a significant decline in the profitability of herring fishing throughout the eighteenth century. Similarly, the results of whaling were unfavourable. Both herring and whale fishing had to be sustained with subsidies as the century progressed due to diminishing catches. Additionally, issues with market demand arose, as there was a declining interest in Dutch oils, intensifying competition with vegetable oils. Furthermore, shifts in fashion impacted the industry; during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, there was high demand for whale baleen, which subsequently declined.

The herring trade furthermore faced competition from English and Scandinavian herring in the Baltic Sea market. The high-quality yet costly Dutch herring struggled in this competition. Domestic demand also waned, as people turned to cheaper fish options like salted haddock, cod, and stock fish. This shift may have been influenced by purchasing power issues. As herring catches decreased, associated employment opportunities dwindled in Dutch fishing towns. Thousands of herring packers lost their jobs in cities such as Rotterdam, Maassluis, and Enkhuizen.⁵⁶ Furthermore, there was almost certainly overfishing in the eighteenth century. By the end of the century, there were fewer barrels of blubber per whale, indicating that a small percentage of mature animals were caught by then with, on average, a lighter weight. By the late eighteenth century, results were completely unprofitable due to overfishing, climate changes, and market demand issues.⁵⁷

In Schiedam, poor relief was administered by the municipal Poor Relief Chamber. Accounts from the early eighteenth century indicate that a relatively high number of seafarers

⁵⁶ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 319.

⁵⁷ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 314-315.

sought assistance. Often, the poor relief officials provided funds to outfit sailors for their voyages. Additionally, men from the naval fleet arranged for security for their wives by transferring their salaries to the Poor Relief Chamber. This ensured that their wives were supported during the period the men were 'abroad'. If the salary payments stopped due to the man's death while at sea, the provision for the women continued nonetheless.⁵⁸ Although seafarers and their families often received support, particularly during wartime, the available data does not conclusively indicate that the seafaring communities in Schiedam faced higher levels of poverty compared to other parts of the Republic.

The urban industrial sector suffered significant losses in labour-intensive and capital goods production in the Republic during the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ In the beginning of the eighteenth century, several industries experienced declines: textiles, carpet weaving, breweries, sea salt production, saltworks, cooperages, and pottery. Others maintained production levels at a much lower scale (construction, tile manufacturing). Some industries retained their production levels, such as sailcloth, sawmills, shipbuilding, and cloth finishing. New industries emerged and gained importance, such as tobacco, sugar, cotton printing, pottery, pipe manufacturing, and distilleries. By the mid-eighteenth century, almost all industries faced challenges. Only distilleries, the paper industry, and the graphic industry seemed to escape these difficulties. Many traditional domestic industries almost disappeared entirely, including breweries, shipbuilding and its suppliers, and textile branches. During the subsequent Batavian-French period (1795-1813), the trends continued. Due to the wartime situation, the supply of raw materials decreased, leading to reduced production. However, it also meant a decrease or elimination of competition.⁶⁰

Trade, merchants and jenever

While the fishing industry declined, a new industry emerged in the city of Schiedam: the distillation of spirits. In the last half of the seventeenth century and throughout the course of the eighteenth century, Schiedam underwent a significant transformation from a fishing town to an industrial hub, as distilleries became the primary business. This industry not only fuelled commerce but also stimulated maritime trade. Until the late seventeenth century, brandy and Dutch gin were primarily produced from wine. Due to the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678),

⁵⁸ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 66-226.

⁵⁹ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 782.

⁶⁰ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 396.

along with various bans on importing French wine and increased taxes, wine supplies declined, prompting locals to produce their own spirits and leading to a significant rise in malt and grain distillation.⁶¹ This malt wine ('coornbrandewijn') served as a semi-finished product, further refined into gin through distillation with added herbs, like the Juniper berry. The years 1688-1697 saw a rapid increase in the number of distilleries in Schiedam. This raises the question: did the distilleries cause the decline of fishing in Schiedam? Requests for the establishment of a distillery were discussed in almost every meeting of the City Council, and by 1690, a guild for distillers was established.⁶² Distilleries relied on British coal and sourced grains from the Baltic region (a legacy reflected in the eastern names of the warehouses where grains were stored), while Rotterdam served as a hub for exporting the distilled and refined spirits worldwide. In 1699, established markets included the possessions in Asia and America, along with the Mediterranean region, Germany, Flanders, Brabant, Scotland, and countries bordering the Baltic Sea.⁶³ Interestingly, the export was facilitated by converted fishing vessels, known as 'buizen' or 'hoekers.'

The distilleries were highly polluting, causing them to be banned or moved to the outskirts of many cities, including the neighbouring Rotterdam. However, due to the decline in its fishing industry and its impact on the local economy, the city government of Schiedam permitted the distilleries to operate in view of the future revenue. Furthermore, these distilleries provided year-round profitability, not just during the fishing season, benefiting the city economically. To mitigate the issues of odour and smoke, distilleries were situated in the northern region of Schiedam, where population density was lower and prevailing southwest winds helped disperse any lingering smells. As the eighteenth century unfolded, mills and distilleries rapidly emerged, and the profits gained from the distillery business made the eighteenth century the Golden Age for Schiedam. This century was not marked by stagnation and decline as in many other maritime communities in the Netherlands; rather, it witnessed remarkable growth and prosperity. This legacy is still visible as you stroll through present-day Schiedam, where the facades of the beautiful houses constructed during this age serve as a visible testament to its prosperity.⁶⁴

⁶¹ J. Riemsdijk van, *Het Brandersbedrijf te Schiedam in de 17de en 18de Eeuw* (Schiedam: Roelants, 1916), 7-10.

⁶² Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 129

⁶³ P. J. Dobbelaar, "Over de opkomst van het Schiedamsche korenwijnbrandersbedrijf," *De Economist* 69, no. 1 (December 1, 1920): 552-564.

⁶⁴ Laurens Priester, Henk Slechte, Geert H. Medema, and Hans van der Sloot, *Historische atlas van Schiedam: stad van vis, schepen en jenever*, Historische atlassen (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2014), 20-21.

As the profitability of the distillation business grew, merchants gradually shifted their investments from herring fishing to distilleries.⁶⁵ Dutch producers began to dominate the alcohol markets, replacing foreign competitors in Holland, the Baltic Sea, Asia, and America. However, this shift did not benefit everyone. The fate of the fishing population during this period remains rather obscure. In the early eighteenth century, some herring boats were repurposed as freighters to transport grain and coal to distilleries and to facilitate the export of spirits.⁶⁶ While a few fishermen relocated to different ports, transitioned to cargo shipping, or entered the distillation business, many likely faced unemployment. This shift contributed to the severe poverty observed among the fishing community by the 1770s. Literature suggests that the rise in unemployment and subsequent poverty began rapidly after 1720, particularly affecting the traditional fishing population.⁶⁷

To gain insight into the ships that departed for the Baltic region, the Sound Toll Registers serve as an interesting source. These online registers document the tolls imposed on ships during the period of 1497-1857, encompassing data from 1.8 million passages. Levied by the kings of Denmark, this toll was enforced through the Sound, the strait that serves as the primary connection between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. From 1600 to 1700, there was limited trade between Schiedam and the Baltic. Only 12 ships were recorded as destined for Schiedam, while 36 ships departed from Schiedam. Exports from Schiedam included pepper, sugar, anise, tobacco, herring, salt, and wines, as shown in Chart 1. Commodities imported from the Baltic region included rye, tools, hemp, leaves, livestock, linen, buckwheat, and barley, as shown in Chart 2. Analysing data on exports from the years 1700 to 1800, there were 176 departures from Schiedam. Conversely, examining ships arriving from the Baltic region with Schiedam as their destination, with a staggering 2,791 recorded transports. This stark contrast indicates a significant imbalance, with far more ships importing goods from the Baltic region than exporting goods from Schiedam.⁶⁸ When vessels departed from Schiedam for the Baltic region, they often carried only ballast to stabilize the vessel, as evidenced in Chart 3, as their primary objective was to return with grain, a crucial import from the Baltic. One of the prominent export products was 'genever' or jenever, along with stone, herring, cheese, wine, and some sailcloth produced in Schiedam. Additionally, a portion of the cargo

⁶⁵ Annette de Wit, "Reders en regels. Visserij, overheid en ondernemerschap in het zeventiende-eeuwse maasmondgebied," in Clé Lesger and Leo Noordegraaf (eds.), *Ondernemers en bestuurders. Economie en politiek in de noordelijke Nederlanden in de late middeleeuwen en vroegmoderne tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 633-648.

⁶⁶ Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 113.

⁶⁷ Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 105-111.

⁶⁸ "Soundtoll Registers Online," accessed 22-03-2024, <https://www.soundtoll.nl/>.

sent to the Baltic region comprised cheese and staple products originating from Spain, Portugal, and France. The primary import products were grains, such as rye and barley, essential for jenever production. Moreover, in Chart 4 the import of juniper berries is visible, utilized to impart flavour to the jenever. The return cargo included commodities like wood, wheat, potash, meat, feathers, and pitch.⁶⁹

Once in the city, the ‘sack carriers’ (porters or in Dutch: ‘zakkendragers’) were responsible for loading and unloading ships, a crucial task given the multitude of distillation businesses in the city. Their main duty was to transport grain from the ships to the malt distilleries. They carried heavy sacks on their backs up steep planks from the boat, which understandably imposed a significant strain on their backs. When there were no ships to unload, the sack carriers would wait in a waiting room. As there wasn't enough work for everyone, they often resorted to gambling with dice to determine who would unload a cargo next. The sack carriers' guild, known as Sint-Anthonis, was located near the old lock in Schiedam. During the peak of the Schiedam gin industry, hundreds of small and large distilleries, malt houses, and breweries defined the cityscape, accompanied by related enterprises such as grain mills and glass factories.⁷⁰ Between twenty to thirty distillery windmills were built and they were primarily used for grinding grain or for industrial purposes.⁷¹ The economic progress was also evident in the city's appearance; in 1779, a new and bigger lock (schutsluis) was constructed at the Dam in the Schie, featuring costly finishing in natural stone and two fancy inscribed tablets in the Louis XVI-style. This new lock replaced the smaller Old Lock, which was no longer capable of handling the busy shipping traffic. Additionally, in 1792, the impressive Corn Exchange (Korenbeurs) was completed, which functioned as a hub for the trading of malt wine, grains, and distiller's wash.

⁶⁹ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 27-29.

⁷⁰ Cees van der Geer, *Schiedam: De geschiedenis van onze stad* (Schiedam: Historical society Schiedam, 1980), 73.

⁷¹ Jaap Evert Abrahamse, Ad van der Zee, and Menne Kosian, eds., *Atlas van de Schie: 2500 jaar werken aan land en water* (Bussum: Thoth, 2016), 95.

Chart 1: Type and amount of cargo from Schiedam to the Baltic region
seventeenth century

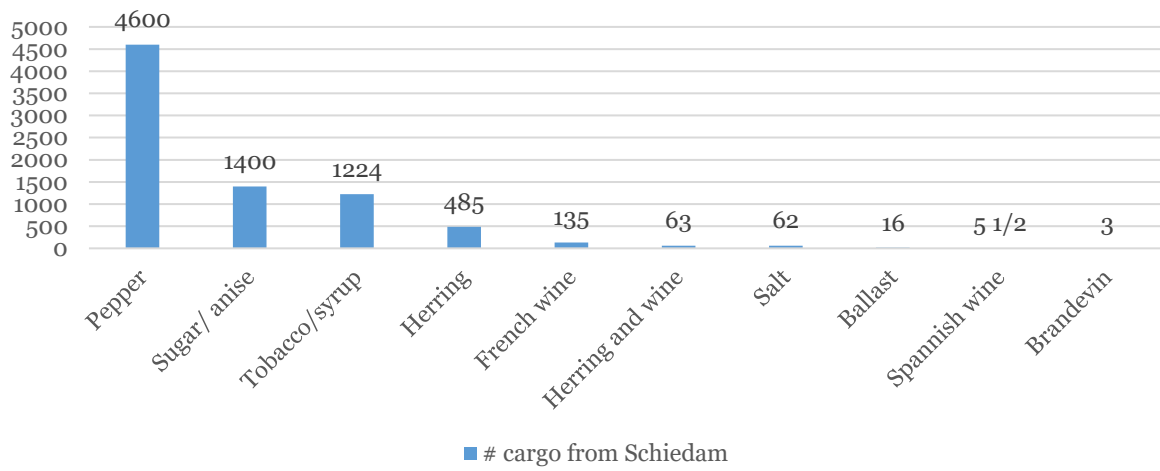
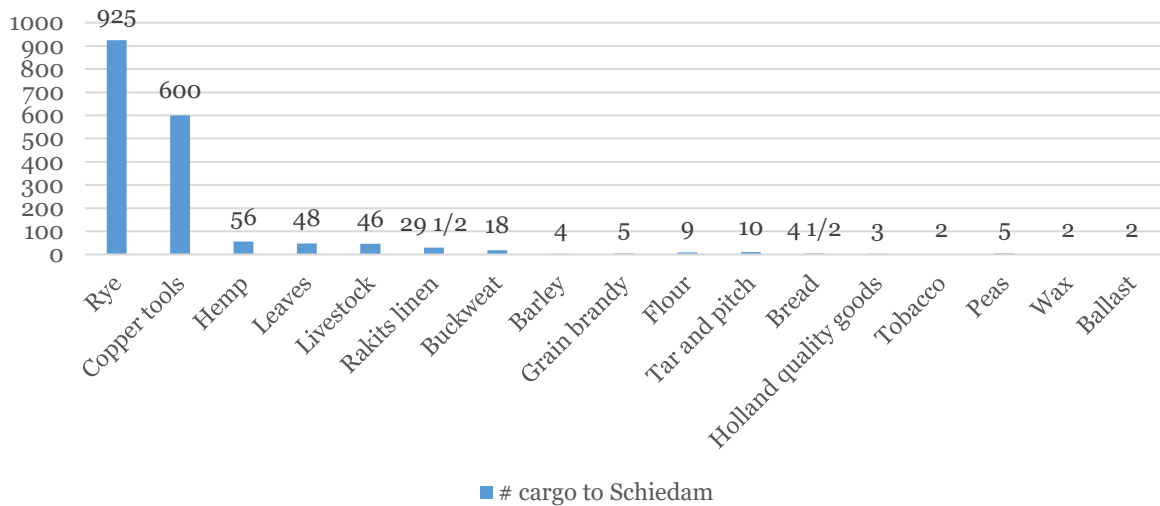


Chart 2: Type and amount of cargo from Baltic region to Schiedam
seventeenth century



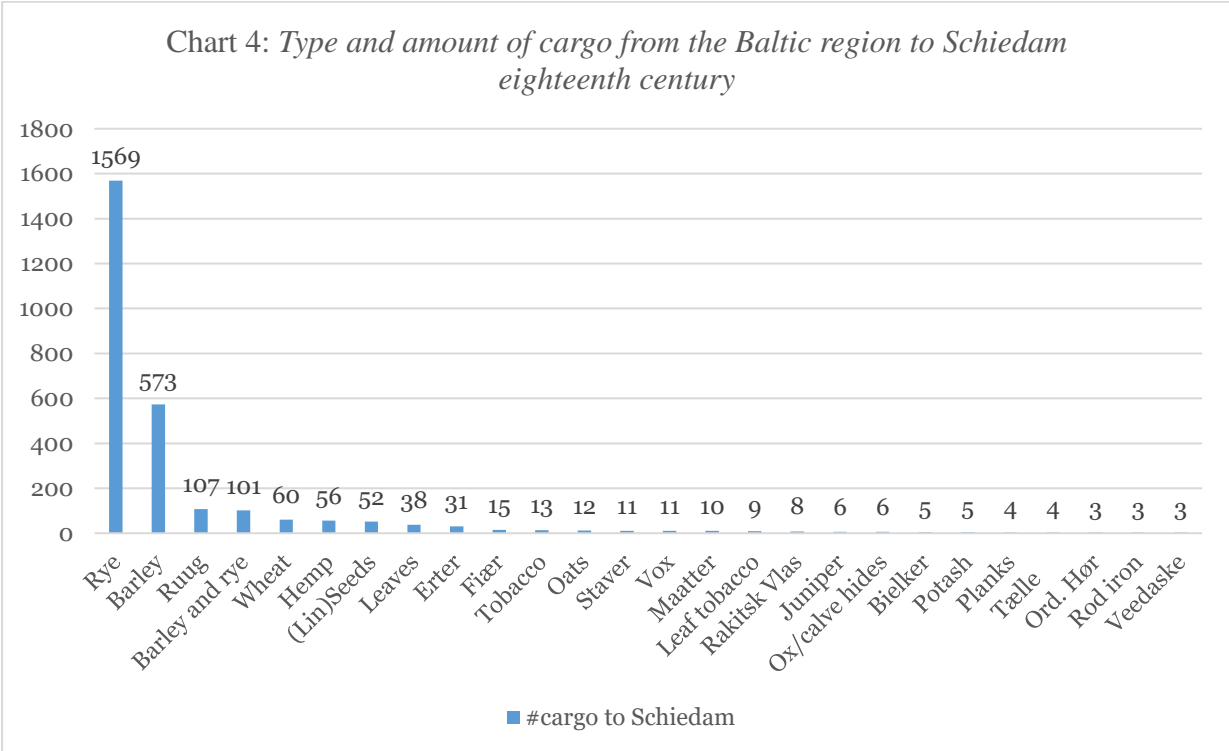
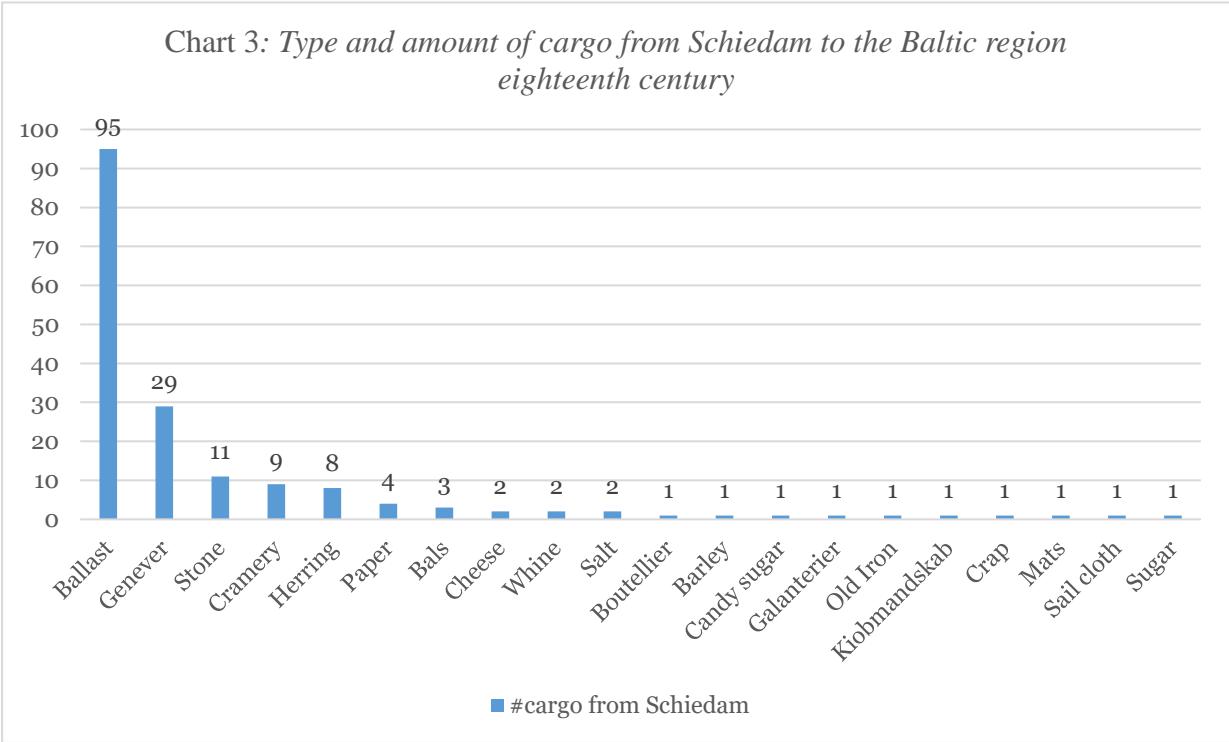


Chart 1, 2, 3 and 4: Own calculations from an export from the Sound Toll Registers from of seventeenth and eighteenth century departures and arrivals from Schiedam with type of cargo: "Soundtoll Registers Online," accessed 22-03-2024, <https://www.soundtoll.nl/>.

Canal transportation

Around 1700, the Schie area developed into a region with significant urban influence, characterised by infrastructure linking Schiedam, Rotterdam, Delft, Overschie, Delfshaven, and Vlaardingen. Trekschuiten, or ‘tow barges,’ were a specific type of vessel used in the Netherlands and were often referred to as the ‘intercity of the Golden Age.’ These boats were designed for both passenger and cargo transport along the extensive canal network. They were typically pulled by horses walking along towpaths beside the canals, providing a steady and efficient means of transportation. Unlike in other areas, Schiedam did not have dedicated tow barges for passenger transport; instead, all boats served dual purposes, carrying both freight and passengers.⁷² Schiedam had regular shipping connections with many other cities across the country. Routes originating from Delft included destinations such as Schiedam, Delfshaven, and Rotterdam, while other ships departed for Maassluis, Vlaardingen, The Hague, Leiden, and beyond. The operation of these services was controlled by Delft and Rotterdam, relying heavily on tight organisation and strict regulations. Violations of these regulations incurred monetary penalties, and repeated offences could lead to dismissal. Guild regulations governing trading rights were strictly enforced. Market boats had to comply with city regulations, while passenger yachts were operated directly by the cities themselves.

During the seventeenth century, Schiedam's harbour district was relatively small, especially when compared to Rotterdam. However, in the eighteenth century, Schiedam emerged as a prominent centre for the jenever industry, which led to a boom in canal transport.⁷³ In addition to the jenever trade, there was significant transport of distiller's wash, a by-product of jenever production, which was sold as animal feed to farmers. The success of the jenever industry in Schiedam was largely due to its convenient access to efficient inland waterways. However, comparing the trade and transport activities between centuries is challenging, as records of tow barge connections in Schiedam only became available from the late eighteenth century onwards. It was only in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that the city government began to regulate these connections, likely to facilitate the distribution of

⁷² Abrahamse, Van der Zee, and Kosian, *Atlas van de Schie*, 119.

⁷³ Abrahamse, Van der Zee, and Kosian, *Atlas van de Schie*, 83-77.

jenever throughout the Dutch Republic.



Freight transport in Schiedam, etching by Abraham Zeeman from 1730.

Colonial shipping: VOC and WIC

Men in Schiedam also enlisted in the VOC (Dutch East India Company) or the WIC (Dutch West India Company) to earn a living. The VOC primarily focused on the Asia, trading in valuable spices like pepper, nutmeg, and cloves, as well as tea, silk, textiles, porcelain, and coffee. These commodities were highly sought after in Europe for their use in preserving and flavouring food, luxury fashion, home decor, and popular beverages, significantly impacting European culture and lifestyle. The WIC concentrated on the West Africa and the Americas, dealing in sugar, tobacco, salt, furs, and the transatlantic slave trade. Sugar and tobacco became everyday essentials in Europe, driving changes in consumption habits. Salt was crucial for food preservation and industrial processes, while furs, particularly beaver pelts, were fashioned into luxury clothing. The WIC also played a significant role in the slave trade, providing labour for plantations in the colonies. Due to the risky nature of the voyages and the relatively low wages, organisations were constantly in search of new recruits. The unhealthy conditions in Batavia, due to chronic malaria, further heightened the need for manpower. In the eighteenth century, this demand surged even more as larger ships and increased shipping activities required twice as many recruits.⁷⁴ In the early part of the seventeenth century, recruitment for the VOC primarily relied on personal connections. However, from the 1640s

⁷⁴ J.R. Buijn, "De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee en aan boord, gezien in Aziatisch en Nederlands perspectief," *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 91, no. 1 (1976): 221-222.

onwards, maritime personnel were rarely approached through personal contacts. Instead, potential sailors could present themselves on designated days at the VOC recruitment offices in the cities where the Company's chambers were located. There, they appeared before a commission comprising several directors and officers who assessed their qualifications. This assessment process was not very rigorous for lower-ranking positions. In the eighteenth century, the demand for recruits doubled due to the construction of larger ships and an increase in shipping activities.⁷⁵

As more maritime personnel arrived from outside the cities where the VOC chambers were established, there was a high demand for accommodation. Whenever possible, men tried to secure lodgings with family or acquaintances, but often they had to rely on inns. Those with some money could find decent lodgings, but poorer sailors ended up in small inns, taverns, or brothels. The owners of these establishments, also known as keepers or bedmasters, acted as informal recruiters for the VOC. Once newcomers were settled in an inn, the keepers endeavoured to inflate their bills as much as possible. When it came time to pay, the keeper suggested that the guest enlist with the VOC. He would then arrange the outfitting of the future sailor. The sailor paid him the hand money, which was two months' wages paid in advance. However, this amount was often insufficient, and the sailor was compelled to transfer his future earnings to the keeper. To do this, he signed a transport letter, also known as a 'cedulle,' specifying the amount owed. The keeper could then cash in this cedulle at the VOC office, but only once a year, and only if the sailor had sufficient funds in his account. Because keepers and bedmasters often had debts with suppliers, they frequently could not wait for the annual payment and sold the cedulle to transport buyers. This way, they also minimised the risk of not being paid if the sailor died while travelling.⁷⁶

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Middelburg, and Delft served as the locations for the VOC chambers. Significant maritime traffic existed along the Schie, particularly due to the presence of the Delft chamber. Despite Schiedam itself not having a VOC chamber, men and sons who sailed with chambers from Delft, Middelburg, or Rotterdam are documented in the notarial archive. For example, as ship carpenters, soldiers, or sailors. There were also inns where sailors were recruited, and at least two 'soul sellers' were active in Schiedam in the latter part of the seventeenth century.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Bruijn, "De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee," 221-222.

⁷⁶ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 91-93.

⁷⁷ de Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk," 77.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the economic maritime activities that characterized Schiedam during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The primary activities that prospered in the seventeenth century included herring fishing, whaling, canal transportation, trade and jobs related to the VOC/WIC. Herring fishing emerged as the cornerstone of Schiedam's economy, with a significant portion of the population directly or indirectly involved in the industry. The transformation from the fisher town to distillers-district in the eighteenth century marks a fundamental shift in Schiedam's economic landscape. During the decline of the Netherlands' golden age, Schiedam charted a course towards prosperity, mainly driven by the thriving distillery industry. The shift to the other industry, influenced by factors such as the pursuit of greater profits, likely contributed to the downturn of the herring and whale fisheries, changing the maritime community. Some may have sought refuge in other ports or transitioned to alternative industries such as cargo shipping or the booming distillery sector. Furthermore, the distillery business sparked increased trade. There were more English merchants in the city importing coal, while a surplus of resources and grains were imported from the Baltic region. Colonial shipping also persisted into the eighteenth century, and although there were fewer fishermen, they remained active in the region. These drastic changes also reshaped the societal landscape. Large groups of men remained in Schiedam and were no longer away for extended periods at sea, as they had been in the previous century. Instead, they found employment in the distillery business. Migrant workers also arrived to work in the gin industry. Amidst these changes, questions emerge regarding the impact on women's participation in the maritime world. This will be further explored in the next chapter.

2 In what types of economic maritime activities did women participate?

Having previously outlined the various maritime undertakings characteristic of this period, our focus now turns towards understanding the specific forms of labour participation of women in Schiedam's maritime economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The tax registers of Schiedam provide a comprehensive view of the various sectors of the local economy. However, they offer little insight into women's employment. Occupations pursued by women were seldom documented. Furthermore, women often engaged in multiple economic activities concurrently, meaning they did not identify themselves with a specific profession.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, I found references to women involved in specific professions, either through attestations or when they sold crafts or ran businesses. For instance, archival records often mentioned widows who continued their husbands' businesses and the wives of sailors, who had greater legal authority while their husbands were at sea or in foreign lands for extended periods. The system of procurations gave sailors' wives legal capacity and enabled them to run a shop or business independently.⁷⁹ A procuracy is a legal document that grants someone the authority to act on behalf of another person. By this, legally, seafaring women gained a unique status, with their husbands designating them as "agents" through the procuracy document, granting them the ability to temporarily manage businesses in their husbands' absence.⁸⁰ Wives of seamen in Schiedam often did work related to that of their husbands. Women had their own working field, as many occupations were reserved for men only.

The economic circumstances of women married to men in maritime occupations were largely influenced by the unpredictable and often insufficient incomes of their husbands. These women frequently had to manage their households and find ways to support their families during their husbands' long absences at sea. The maritime household was flexible, and all family members contributed to the income through various types of work. The women played a crucial role in supporting their families within the community. This was quite special for pre-modern times in Europe.⁸¹ The social and economic environment shaped the type of work available to these women. Women were active in various activities, such as net and line production, fishing supply, and selling goods like food and drinks. Women also kept inns and

⁷⁸ De Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk," 147.

⁷⁹ De Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk," 79.

⁸⁰ De Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk," 71.

⁸¹ De Wit, "Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk," 61.

pubs. Wives of the captains bought the food for the crew. However, this task was later taken over by the 'solliciteurs'.

Women in the fishing industry

No women were listed among the crew on ships involved in maritime activities in the consulted notarial deeds. Women primarily worked in various occupations off the ships, on the shore, such as manufacturing nets and lines, cooperage, rope-making, supplying fishing equipment, and selling items like food and beverages. By the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, household activities remained crucial in the fishing industry as significant production units. Fishermen still co-owned the ships and brought their own nets and lines, which were made within the household. However, in seventeenth-century Schiedam, this practice shifted away from households to spinning lanes, which could be owned either by the city or by private individuals. Women often ran and sometimes owned these private spinning lanes.⁸² Both men and women worked at the lanes. Young sons of fishermen, who were not yet old enough to go to sea, also carried out tasks there.

Traditionally, fishermen's wives and their daughters were engaged in knitting and repairing herring nets and crafting the lines used in cod fishing. Additionally, retired sailors, who could no longer go to sea, assisted the women. Men also acquired the skill of knitting and repairing nets, as they needed to mend them when they broke at sea. Fishermen's daughters typically learned this craft at a young age, often joining the workforce at eight or nine years old.⁸³ This work continued until old age: For instance, Janneken Heijnderijksdr. was 80 years old in 1664 and still worked as a net maker.⁸⁴

The net makers were organized into the ship preparers guild (the 'opreders guild'). They were tasked with equipping ships with nets, lines, ropes, and bait, and providing these essentials to fishermen and ship-owners. This guild had a close association with the herring fishery. In this guild, there were the highest number of women compared to all other guilds in Schiedam. While only men were formally accepted as members of the opreders' guild, in practice, many women managed the business while their husbands were at sea.⁸⁵ This was similar to the women of places like Scheveningen, where fishing was also the primary livelihood. Recently, a study by Sjors Stuurman on women in Scheveningen between 1830 to

⁸² Van der Feijst, *Geschiedenis van Schiedam*, 116.

⁸³ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 150.

⁸⁴ NL-GAS-0240 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0753, folio no. 955 (31-03-1664).

⁸⁵ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 150.

1960 found out that life in Scheveningen was harsh, and to earn extra money, women sold fish on the streets, worked as net menders, or in fish processing. They took over the businesses of their husbands whilst they were at sea.⁸⁶

Unfortunately, the deep dive for more information about these women is fruitless, as the membership register in the old archive looks like it was thrown overboard centuries ago and has largely deteriorated. However, within the small snippets that are still visible, there were several female members of the guild, which also align with the findings in the transcriptions of the notarial sources where there were many women of various ages selling, mending, knitting, and making weights for the nets. On a page where eight names are visible, four of them are the names of widows. On every page fragment, there is at least a name of a widow or a woman (such as Lijsbet Barends and Leena de Munnik) visible as a member of the guild, or involved in buying or selling things.⁸⁷ From the resolutions is clear that the sworn counters were all women, although knitter is written in the male and female form.⁸⁸ The guild masters supervised both male and female members to ensure they became proficient in their craft. From 1795 to 1797, there were only men as 'hoofdlieden' in charge; however, 2 out of the 16 guild members were women: Elisabeth Plooy and Elisabeth Rijke. Additionally, Pieterella den Boer and Maartje Gouka had to pay 12 guilders for a guild test that year, which was listed under expenses and income. A maid was paid for the groceries every year.⁸⁹



Gemeentearchief Schiedam (GAS). Archief van het Opreedersgilde, 1699-1798, inv.no. 3028 (left: Memberlist, right: Guild letters)

Nets were sold for approximately eight to nine guilders per net. The records reveal trade of nets between men and women but also among women. In 1649, Pietertgen Jans

⁸⁶ Sjors Stuurman, *Vrouwen op Scheveningen: van nettenboetster tot redersweduwe* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2024), 36.

⁸⁷ NL-GAS-0305, Schiedam, Archief van het Opreedersgilde (1699-1798), inv.no. 3028.

⁸⁸ NL-GAS-0305, Schiedam, Archief van het Opreedersgilde (1699-1798), inv.no. 3029.

⁸⁹ NL-GAS-0305, Schiedam, Archief van het Opreedersgilde (1699-1798), inv.no. 3030.

(widow of Arijen Barentsz.), owed Neeltgen Huijbrecht (widow of Ole Pietersz.) the amount of 111 guilders and 11 stuivers. She also owed Martijntge Cornelis, 'elderly daughter', the sum of 125 guilders, for the delivered nets.⁹⁰ Furthermore, there was Pieter Cornelisse Dijckhuijsen, who paid Aegje Cornelis Buijsing (widow of Ruchus Leendertse Backer) 209 guilders for 22 sold nets in April 1715.⁹¹ There were also widows engaging in legal transactions and also married women (whose husbands are always named in the sources) who were granted the rights to do so in procurations. For example, Jan Pietersz. Schoon, a net mender, authorised his wife, Burchje Willems, in 1670 to receive on his behalf from Maertjen Roockus (widow of Johannis Vilerius) residing in Vlaardingen, the sum of 1221 guilders and 14 stuivers for the delivery of herring nets for a hooker ship, and she may take the ship as collateral if Maertjen Roockus is unable to pay.⁹² The production, mending, and selling of nets by women within the Schiedam community, as well as to other communities such as Vlaardingen, continues in the sources up until the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁹³

The inspection of the fishing nets was conducted by male and female inspectors appointed by the city government. Women comprised the majority in this industry and were referred to as 'sworn counters,' indicating they had to take an oath to perform their profession. Typically, the counters were wives or widows of fishermen, occasionally including unmarried women. They were paid per inspected net. Lead seals were affixed to the inspected nets, displaying the city's coat of arms and the initial letter of the counter's name. These seals not only served to identify the nets but also aided in their sinking to the bottom of the sea. Sometimes, the women themselves cast these lead seals. An example from Schiedam is Annetje Arijens, who sought permission to cast her own leads.⁹⁴ Every fisherman was obligated to have his nets inspected before departure, so these counters held an important position in the fishing communities. These women would also visit the ships annually, before the fishing season, to examine the nets. If the nets were found to be in poor condition, fines

⁹⁰ NL-GAS-0243 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0758, folio no. 233 (13-08-1649).

⁹¹ NL-GAS-0258 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0855, folio no. 972 (04-01-1714).

⁹² NL-GAS-0245 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0779, folio no. 949 (18-01-1670). See Maertjen Rochus, widow, acknowledgment of debt. inv.no. 0779, folio no. 953 (01-21-1670), see Annetje Leenderts, inv. no. 0781, folio: 199 (1665), see David Heijndricksz. Hart in 't Veld inv. no. 0781, folio no. 293 (16-12-1665).

⁹³ In 1729, there is in Lijsbet Cornelis Verdoes' testament a lot of activity in the trade of netmaking, ropemaking, untangling nets, and repairing nets. The various payments received from the estate of Lijsbet Cornelis Verdoes indicate that different amounts were received for different services and goods provided or performed. Another example is the widow of Jacob Portugael, who paid eight hundred and thirty-five guilders to purchase one hundred nets NL-GAS-0258 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0865, folio no. 260 (10-1727). And Aegje Cornelis Buijsing, widow of the late Rochus Leendertse Backer, who got the amount of 209 guilders for the sale of 22 nets, NL-GAS-0258 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0855, folio no. 972 (04-01-1714).

⁹⁴ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 153.

could be imposed. The cost of inspecting the nets was covered by the fishermen and ship-owners. The counters received ten pennies for each section of net and eight pennies for each half section. A 'section' denoted a specific measured length or portion of the net, used for practical and administrative purposes in handling and managing the nets. However, during the eighteenth century, women began to lose their roles as inspectors or sworn counters. The task of inspecting the nets was increasingly assumed by male inspectors.⁹⁵ This shift may have been influenced by cultural norms that prescribed certain tasks to men, and possibly unequal access to training and formal positions required for net inspection.

The Schiedam city council began to regulate net production after 1650. A designated 'counting house' was set up in the cellars of the town hall. All nets on Schiedam ships underwent inspection at this location. Moreover, the counting house was responsible for both producing and repairing nets. The primary workforce comprised fisherwomen, overseen by head repairers. These women worked six days a week, for ten hours a day during the summer and six hours a day in the winter.⁹⁶ In another deed, it is evident that there were women of all ages and men in the profession. In 1670, it became necessary to ensure that the nets were properly weighted. When issues arose on the 30th of December 1671, a number of net menders were questioned. These included Willem Pouwelsz, a helmsman and net mender from Schiedam, aged around 31 years; Claesje Salomons, aged around 63 years (wife of Pieter Dircxsz); Lijsbeth Dircxsdr, aged around 56 years (wife of Cornelis Segersz), also a helmsman; and Dirckje Jeroens, aged around 52 years (wife of Leendert Jansz), all net menders within Schiedam. They declared that they had been engaged in knitting and repairing nets for many years and that the leads were poorly attached. Commertge Cornelisdr. (wife of Sier Jansz.), a seafarer, also declared that she had brought a new net to the Counting House beneath the City Hall, and the leads were loose.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, the outcome of this interrogation is unknown.

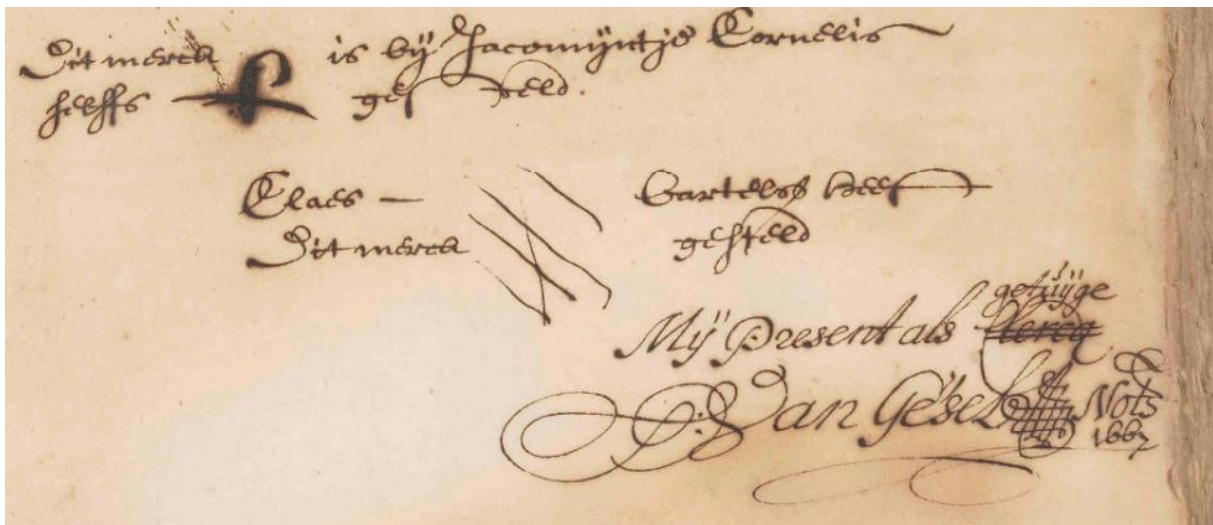
That women were owners of spinning and rope-making facilities becomes clear in reports of selling the lanes. Jacomijntje Coernelis (widow of Arijen Joppen Stierman) is an example of this. She resided in the provision house ('proveniershuis') in Schiedam, a charitable institution that offered accommodation, typically in small apartments or rooms, to elderly individuals who had paid a lump sum or annuity (known as a 'provenie') to secure their residence. These institutions served as a form of social welfare for the elderly before the

⁹⁵ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 153-154.

⁹⁶ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 152.

⁹⁷ NL-GAS-0243 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0763, folio no. 1029 (30-12-1671).

establishment of modern pensions and retirement homes. In 1667, Jacomijntje sold a spinning lane facility to Claes Bartelsz, a ropemaker in Schiedam, for 80 guilders.⁹⁸ In 1662, Pietertgen Lourisdr. (Poort), widow of Rochus Vriesenz. (Backer), sold Rochus Leendertsz. Backer two spinning lanes with two fruit trees, as well as the tools pertaining to the spinning lanes, located in the Oost Molenstraat, receiving 73 guilders.⁹⁹ In 1703, Ariaantgen Jansdr. (widow of Cornelis Cornelisz., brewer), sold a house and yard with a double spinning lane located behind it in the Oost Molenstraat. Also in 1703, Catharina Jansdr. (widow of Willem Hendricksz. Maatleen) owed Johannes Rotteveen, master painter, 500 guilders for borrowed money. Providing as collateral a house and yard with a spinning lane located behind it in the Zijlstraat, she sold to Jan Cornelisz., helmsman, a double spinning lane with a lane house located in the Groot Groenendal, and lent something to the widow of Claas Backer.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, the husband of Ariaantgen, who sold the spinning lanes, was a brewer, illustrating the shift from the fishing industry to the alcohol producing industries at the turn of the century.



October 13, 1667, Jacomijntje Cornelis, Claes Bartelsz both confirmed with their mark.

Women in trade

Women in the Republic traditionally found employment in the fish trade. Initially, this trade took place from home. Sailors and fishermen received part of their wages in fish, known as ‘women's fish’, which was sold by fishermen's wives immediately upon the arrival of the

⁹⁸ NL-GAS-0246 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0781, folio no. 587 (10-06-1651).

⁹⁹ NL-GAS-454 Archief van de gerechten van Schiedam, 1386 - 1811, inv.no. 0385-0386, folio no. 161 (07-01-1702).

¹⁰⁰ NL-GAS-454 Archief van de gerechten van Schiedam, inv.no. 0385-0386, folio no. 176 (08-10-1705) and folio no. 210 (30-06-1703).

ships. The rest of the fish, of inferior quality, was for personal consumption. These women sold fish door to door and were a familiar part of the street scene in various cities in the Dutch Republic, such as Scheveningen. Selling goods on the street didn't need much capital investment upfront start and was quite easy to get into. It also did not need any special training or education. Because of this, street vending could be a fall-back option for people who could not find work elsewhere, like migrants or women.¹⁰¹ In the course of the seventeenth century, the position of these women changed due to new rules requiring all fish to be sold at auction. Women who wanted to trade in fish then had to go to the auction, where they were allowed to act as traders but needed money to buy the fish. The local authorities aimed to safeguard the quality of the fish being sold in this manner while simultaneously increasing their revenue from the tax levied on auctioned fish.¹⁰² The fish trade in Schiedam was more focused on export, which may have made women's participation more difficult.

In the Dutch Republic, women who were involved in selling fish door-to-door or at market stalls were commonly referred to by various terms. They were called "viswijven," which translates to "fishwives" in English. This term depicted women who sold fish directly to consumers, often on the streets or in local markets. Another term used was "visvendsters," meaning "fish vendors." This designation highlighted their role in vending or trading fish within the community. Lastly, they were known as "ommeloopsters," which translates to "hawkers" or "itinerant sellers."¹⁰³ These women often moved around, offering their fish to households and businesses, making them a mobile part of the local economy. Each of these terms underscores the vital role these women played in the daily food supply and commerce of their towns, often becoming familiar figures within their communities. In the notarial deeds of Schiedam, no 'viswijven', 'visvendsters' or 'ommeloopsters' are found. However, there are women in the fish trade. In 1710, Miss Geltje Leenderts, widow of Alewijn Coningh, seemed to be a merchant in herring. She appears in a statement of three men involved in herring fishing. They declare on her behalf that the herring fishermen lost their catch.¹⁰⁴ She appeared to be the one in charge but delegated the task of visiting the notary to the men for a statement. After her husband, Eewout Juijst, passed away, Grietge Cornelisdr. continued the herring trade at the beginning of the eighteenth century. To manage business affairs, she occasionally designated a male family member as her representative. Herring constituted only a small portion of the Juijst family's activities. They also engaged in trading salt, wine, and other

¹⁰¹ Van den Heuvel, *Women and entrepreneurship*, 88.

¹⁰² De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 155.

¹⁰³ Jannie Stegeman, "Scheveningse visverkoopsters, ca. 1600-1900," *Holland* 21, no. 1 (1989): 47.

¹⁰⁴ NL-GAS-0251 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0804, folio no. 1405 (04-11-1709).

commodities. Although it is not clear how substantial women's share in the total fish trade was, these above examples are clear evidence that women were involved in the business.

The activities of Leenderts and Cornelisdr. were similar to the widows in wealthy families in Maassluis, however in Schiedam their numbers were larger and they tended to be wealthier.¹⁰⁵ According to secondary literature, Schiedam offered better opportunities to women than Maassluis, because there was more trade in Schiedam.¹⁰⁶ In literature about the Northern Netherlands during the same period, women there also had favourable opportunities to engage in commercial activities. The comparison of different local economies like Leiden and Amsterdam indicates that women's engagement in commerce was more prevalent in areas primarily focused on trade. Despite legal and societal constraints, women likely exercised some degree of economic agency, but the specific impact of their relative freedom on trading activities of various scales requires further examination.¹⁰⁷ In the context of Schiedam, where merchant widows continued their husbands' businesses, this literature supports the notion that the trading environment in Schiedam provided better opportunities for widows to sustain their husband's trade, aligning with the broader trends observed in the Northern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Parts of ships

In the early modern Republic, female heirs had the same rights as their male family members, enabling women to become owners of ships and shares in ships.¹⁰⁸ It is known from literature that wealthy women in Vlaardingen owned, traded and managed ships.¹⁰⁹ Vlaardingen served as the epicentre of herring fishing for the Republic, rivalling Schiedam. There existed a co-ownership where investors owned tradable shares or 'parts' of a ship. Among the 275 owners in this period, 55 'widows' continued to oversee the organization.¹¹⁰ Mainly, they had to sustain the company due to economic reasons, often driven by the responsibility of caring for young children. They also took on the role of bookkeepers, a significant function.

In Schiedam this happened as well. For example, in a deed from 1654, a ship, along with accompanying items such as anchor ropes, was sold by Trijntgen Jans, widow of Eelbert

¹⁰⁵ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 157.

¹⁰⁶ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ Van den Heuvel, *Women and entrepreneurship*, 69-85.

¹⁰⁸ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 158.

¹⁰⁹ Alex Poldervaart, "Gij kroont de bloei der stad, Vlaardingse rederessen 1700-1850", *Holland historisch tijdschrift* 53, no. 3 (March 2021): 109-116.

¹¹⁰ Poldervaart, "Gij kroont de bloei der stad," 110-111.

Heindricxsz Verwal, for eleven hundred carolus guilders. Also Neeltje Gijssen, widow of Leendert Rochusz. Backer, authorized her son to sell on her behalf a quarter share in the herring vessel 'De Keijser' in 1697.¹¹¹ Both married women and widows regularly participated in auctions of ships and ship shares. Most records of women relate to women who sold shares, typically widows in need of money who sold ship shares of their deceased husbands. A small group of women bought shares, some as private investments, but most were bookkeepers who managed a shipping company either together with their husbands or independently. In the first half of the eighteenth century, quite a few women engaged in bookkeeping. For instance, on the herring buss 'De Draak,' the widow of Leendert van Tenteloo was a bookkeeper in 1722.¹¹² Additionally, in 1731, the herring ship "The Elijsabet," had the widow of Barent de With as bookkeeper. In the same year, the herring vessel and ship "The Jacoba" also had a female bookkeeper, the widow of Willem van Wijn.¹¹³

It was mostly widows from wealthy merchant families who owned shares in ships. Like their husbands, they diversified their assets across different branches of maritime trade. Some widows, besides being ship owners and bookkeepers, also traded in products like grain, rye, and wine. For instance, Geertje Anthonisdr., the widow of merchant Mathijs Kiesgens, mainly owned shares in ships trading to La Rochelle and was involved in wine trading. Maertge Andriesdr. and Zegjen Jacobsdr. van Burch, who were ship owners, made their fortune in the trade of rye and barley.¹¹⁴ In a testament dated around 1795, the widow Mrs. Jonelia Vos inherits a lot from her deceased husband. Jan Nolet leaves her warehouses, distilleries, and stills, as well as ship shares, including a thirty-second part of a Fluyt ship destined for Greenlandic fishing with Commander Willem Snel.¹¹⁵ This concerned the ship 'Hoop'. In 1789, this ship was still under the command of Willem Snel and set sail for Greenland for whale hunting but became trapped in the icy sea. Fortunately, they managed to escape.¹¹⁶

Another woman from an important trading family present in the records is Elisabeth Anna Marta Pielat van Bulderen (1747-1819). Elisabeth Anna Marta (Amarantha) was a widow and owned the firm Willem de Monte.¹¹⁷ In 1800, Gerrit van Velzen, a skipper, and

¹¹¹ NL-GAS-0251 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0794, folio no. 589 (13-03-1697).

¹¹² NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0819, folio no. 179 (03-03-1723).

¹¹³ NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0835, folio no. 1147-1149 (13-06-1740).

¹¹⁴ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 159.

¹¹⁵ NL-GAS-0267 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0966, folio no. 1592 (14-08-1795).

¹¹⁶ NL-GAS-0266 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0946, folio no. 1409 (05-09-1789).

¹¹⁷ For example NL-GAS-0267 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0967, folio no. 450 (25-05-1799) and NL-GAS-0269 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0993, folio no. 146 (09-03-1786).

Dingeman Groenendijk, a servant, declared that they had received eighteen loads and thirteen bags of malt in Lange Haven from the ship of Jan Kemp, which belonged to Gorinchem, named 'Johanna.' This cargo was intended for Elisabeth Amarantha Pielat, the widow of the Willem de Monte Firm; however, the seawater had come into contact with the cargo of barley, causing damage to the cargo.¹¹⁸ Elisabeth was a connected member of the Pielat van Bulderen family, who was in the shipping company and whaling business.

Whaling

Women did not work in the whale oil industry, particularly in the processing refineries. Typically, men performed the labour-intensive tasks rendering whale blubber, and processing whale oil. However, it is important to note that women might have been indirectly involved in supporting roles, such as providing meals, washing their clothes, or potentially assisting with administrative tasks in the management of the refineries, as was the case for other maritime activities. Additionally, women might have been involved in ancillary industries related to whale oil, such as candle making or soap production, where their labour was more common. In Schiedam, only male soap-makers were found; however, there were women working in the grocery stores, selling the soap like Cornelia Muijs.¹¹⁹ In the middle of the eighteenth century, there was an inn called the 'Greenlandic Fishery' (Groenlandse Visserij).¹²⁰ Willem Janse Visser was the innkeeper here, and in 1747, Susanna Blommendael, widow of Willem Janse Visser, inherited it.

Similar to other seafarers, wives of whalers were granted more rights via procurations when their husbands were at sea, and this practice continued into the eighteenth century. In 1779, Cornelis Schoenmaaker, who was sailing to Greenland, drafted a document granting his wife, Appolonia Karbos, expanded rights. On his behalf, she was authorised to conduct his affairs and manage goods during his absence, and whenever he was away, to execute and oversee purchases and sales.¹²¹ Also, Aegje Schoute, the widow of Jan van Gilst, transported a part of the Armazoen of a whaling vessel in 1724. 'Sale of an 'Armazoen' refers to the sale of a complete outfit or equipment for a ship, including all necessary materials, tools, and gear to man and operate the ship. Additionally, monthly wages were received for voyages to Greenland. Monthly wages were also received by her for voyages to the West Indies,

¹¹⁸ NL-GAS-0266 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0946, folio no. 459 (07-1785).

¹¹⁹ NL-GAS-0243 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0762, folio no. 267 (01-12-1665).

¹²⁰ NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0836, folio no. 658 (01-10-1740).

¹²¹ NL-GAS-0267 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0949, folio no. 105 (30-03-1799).

suggesting the possibility that Schouten was involved in trading these monthly wages, similar to the ‘soulsellers’.¹²² Similarly, in 1741, Jan Antonij Feters, a commander in Greenland, and his wife Jannetje made a declaration regarding the husband's absence to act on his behalf when he was away. Not only widows were granted extra rights when their husbands were at sea, but mothers as well. For instance, in 1724, Barent Koper Dejonge, a commander at sea, declared his intention to depart for Greenland and conferred rights to his mother, Lisbeth Giele, wife of Jacob Van der Spit.¹²³

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, whaling faced significant challenges as the number of whales caught decreased drastically. With insufficient whale oil production, the government stepped in to offer compensation in 1788 to support the struggling businesses. The Council of Commissioners of the Greenland and Davis Strait fisheries provided 30 guilders to each crew member of a whaling ship. Between 1775 and 1785, many whaling ships were sold to other countries, and by 1795, at the beginning of the Fifth English War, the whaling industry in Schiedam stopped completely.¹²⁴

Inns, pubs and taverns

Numerous women in Schiedam, often the wives of sailors, ran taverns, pubs, and inns. During the first half of the seventeenth century alone, there were no fewer than 33 inns.¹²⁵ For example, Commertge Willems was the innkeeper at ‘The Weapon of Holland’ in 1650. Neeltje Ariens, the widow of Pouwels Teunisz., was the innkeeper at ‘The Sailors' House’ (‘Het Schippershuis’) near the Overschie gate in Schiedam. Another example includes Willemte Jans, who was the innkeeper at the ‘Rotterdam Gate’ (‘Rotterdamsche Poort’) in 1693, and Jannetje Jans, the widow of Nicolaes Rademakers, who was a tapster and innkeeper in 1667. Theuntgen Arijens, widow of Abraham Bastiaensz. de Graaf, ran an inn outside the Overschie gate. At the request of Hendrick van der Heijme, a ruling alderman and brewer at the ‘The Black Lion’ (De Schwarte Leeuw) brewery, she declared that she had reached an agreement with Cornelis Pietersz. Swanshouck regarding the beer excise starting from 1 August 1655. This agreement likely involved negotiations over the amount of tax or duties that would be imposed on the beer produced or sold by the brewery. However, Adriaen Allertsz. Hodenpijl wanted to charge her more. Aechge Maertens, the wife of Dirck Cornelis

¹²² NL-GAS-0257 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0821, folio no. 773 (14-09-1719).

¹²³ NL-GAS-0258 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0861, folio no. 261 (04-04-1724).

¹²⁴ Jong, "Walvisvaart vanuit Schiedam," 5.

¹²⁵ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 159.

Huisman, who also lived outside the Overschie gate in the lordship of Mathenes, appeared alongside Theuntgen Arijens and provided a similar statement.¹²⁶

Inns and taverns were often listed under the names of male sailors, but it was usually the women who actually ran the establishments. In Schiedam, there were numerous small taverns, some of which operated illegally from the home. These places, where alcohol was served, often became the scenes of quarrels involving sailors and soldiers. At Maertge Claes', the wife of sailor Gerrit Coenen, conflicts frequently arose. Similarly, at 'Aeltge's residence behind the Molenstraat', sailors were constantly present. Many men who had returned from voyages to Asia stayed at her place. It is highly probable that Aeltge acted as a landlady.

Even though there was no VOC office in Schiedam, some women played a role in recruiting for the VOC. These women, who operated as “soul sellers” (they sold documents called “ceelen”; a “ceel” sounds like “soul,” hence the name), accommodated men from other cities on the hunt for work in their inns, providing them with food, drinks, and sometimes women. The debts of these men often accumulated as they stayed in the inn. Sometimes the innkeeper also provided the clothes for when they were going on board. As the men had not earned anything yet, they had to settle their debts later. The soul sellers ensured that the men reported to the VOC. Since the first months' wages they received in advance were not enough to settle the debts, the sailors signed a transport document transferring their earned wages to the soul seller, who then sold the ceels to special traders. This was less risky than keeping the ceels themselves because when the men died or deserted, the investment would be lost. Many of these traders were women, at least until 1725.¹²⁷

Teetge Pieters serves as a prominent example of another landlady in Schiedam. Her inn, named 'De Batavia', was frequented by foreign sailors, especially Germans. Some sailors gave Teetge permission to collect their wages from the VOC.¹²⁸ Teetge also traded in ceels, acquiring them from other innkeepers. She was married to a sailor in the East India Company and managed the inn both during his lifetime and after his passing. Following her husband's death, she remarried a ship's cook who was also affiliated with the Company. The VOC often relied on these women to some extent for recruitment purposes. There were at least two women involved in selling ceels in Schiedam during the latter part of the seventeenth century.

¹²⁶ NL-GAS-0258 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 759, folio no. 923 (26-11-1655).

¹²⁷ Marc van Alphen, “The Female Side of Dutch Shipping: Financial Bonds of Seamen Ashore in the 17th and 18th Century,” in *Anglo-Dutch Mercantile Marine Relations 1700-1850*, eds. J.R. Bruijn and W.F.J. Morzer Bruyns (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1991), 125-132.

¹²⁸ NL-GAS-0243 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0757, folio no. 567 (10-01-1648) Innkeeper in "Batavia", see Aechgen Arijens, housewife of Claes Lourisz., gatekeeper of the “Rotterdamse poort”, - inv.no. 0757, folio no. 611 (27-01-1648).

Even in the eighteenth century, the role of landladies remained significant, although female transport buyers, who had a business in trading ceels, faced increasing competition from men during this period.¹²⁹ As the trade became more professionalised, men gradually took over the market.¹³⁰ During the ‘professionalisation’ industries and occupations became more formalized, structured, and regulated. In the eighteenth century, this meant that many trades and businesses started to adopt more systematic approaches to management, production, and sales. As trades became more professionalised, men increasingly entered markets traditionally managed by women, leading to heightened competition and the gradual marginalisation of women from these roles.

Canal transportation

There was at least one mention of a widow in the guild regulations involved in canal transportation in Schiedam, indicating there were women in this sector. In the regulations, the widow van der Spuy was somehow excluded from a rule with two other men: *‘All the outer Skippers, being Ferry Drivers, are required to strictly adhere to their Instructions and to sail on their designated days, under penalty of three Guilders, provisionally exempting Jonas de Rover, Maarten van Hoeven, and the Widow van der Spuy, as well as those who, by the foresight or on the order of the Deken and Headmen, will be exempted by the Burgomasters; however, those who engage in drunkenness, neglect to meet their appointed time due to adverse weather conditions, or fail in their duties towards the Merchants, will be fined six guilders, and may also be corrected according to the exigencies of the situation’.*¹³¹

Unfortunately, detailed information about women on board on vessels in Schiedam remains scarce and the guild membership registers have been lost.

In literature, there is also not much to be found about these women. Interestingly, archaeological discoveries suggested that from around 1700, it was common for skippers to take their families with them on board their canal boats. Among the artefacts found were items specifically associated with women, such as a decorated knitting sheath, often given as a wedding gift, a brass iron, and women's shoes. These findings provided clues about the presence of women on these boats. Additionally, evidence like small-sized children's shoes, a child's ice skate, and toys indicated that children were also part of life on these vessels. The

¹²⁹ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 160-161.

¹³⁰ De Wit, “Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk,” 77.

¹³¹ NL-GAS OAA, Schippersgilde, 1606-1798, inv. no. 303, Article 37.

use of space on board further supported the idea that entire families lived on these boats. The accommodations and belongings found suggested a domestic environment where everyday family life occurred, even while travelling on the canals.¹³² This practice of taking families on board reflected the close-knit nature of life in the canal transportation industry during the eighteenth century, and suggests these families lived and worked together, meaning women informally worked alongside their skipper husbands.

Jenever

While the above has proven women historically participated in the maritime industries of Schiedam, the male-dominated nature of the jenever industry likely altered the dynamics, potentially limiting opportunities for female labour participation. In the list of captains and deans of the Schiedam distillers' guild, appointed by the mayor at the time, there are no women's names.¹³³ However, there are many mentions of 'guild sisters', often referring to the widows of men who had been members of the guild. This was notable because, in other guilds, there were usually references only to 'guild brothers' and men. For example, in 1697, the guild charter was amended to include a provision that no servant could leave the service of their master or mistress without giving at least 14 days' notice. In case of violation, the captains would prohibit them from working with another guild brother or sister.¹³⁴ There were several mentions where mistresses and sisters were listed alongside masters and brothers, suggesting that they held similar positions. However, in the distillers' guild, women's access to full membership was limited. The rules and conditions for female membership in guilds varied according to specific regulations. Some women in Schiedam's distillers' guild became members because they were married to guild members, while others were authorised by their male relatives to act on their behalf. Overall, women had restricted access to guild membership and frequently needed to be represented indirectly by male family members. This pattern aligns with existing research about European guilds suggesting that, despite overarching patriarchal and excluding guild regulations, there was considerable scope for local and regional differences. Girls, women, and their families often navigated through the gaps in the system and informal permissions in the system to access training, secure jobs, form

¹³² André Frederik Lambertus van Holk, *Archeologie van de binnenvaart: wonen en werken aan boord van binnenvaartschepen (1600 - 1900)*, Flevovericht 410 (Lelystad: 1996) 205-220.

¹³³ Riemsdijk van, *Het Brandersbedrijf*, 13-19.

¹³⁴ Riemsdijk van, *Het Brandersbedrijf*, 20.

partnerships, and, in some cases, gain independent guild membership. Over time, small areas of female work grew to be remarkably significant.¹³⁵

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Netherlands experienced significant political upheaval during the Batavian-French period (1795-1813), when French revolutionary forces occupied the country and established the Batavian Republic. In the years before this period, between 1788 and 1794, seven guild sisters authorised their sons or brothers to act on their behalf.¹³⁶ Perhaps the political instability of the era led them to authorize their sons or brothers to manage their business affairs, as these guild sisters likely sought to secure their social and economic positions through family relations. This delegation could have been a pragmatic response to the challenges posed by the occupation, as it allowed their businesses to continue operating under male representation in a time of great uncertainty.

Examples include: in 1788, Neeltje Verboon, a widow, granted her son Simon Verboon the authority to act for her in the guild; similarly, in 1788, Trijntje van Krombrugge, widow of Joannes Spieringshoek, empowered her son Cornelis Spieringshoek; in 1793, Johanna Wuijsten, wife of Jan Rijnbe, a sea captain, authorised her son Sijmon Rijnbende to represent her in the guild; and in 1793, Katharina Prins, wife of Engelbertus Lucas, also a sea captain, authorised her son Arij Prins, a shipping agent in Schiedam. In 1792, Mrs. Catharina van den Schalk, of legal age and unmarried, granted Isaac Penning Junior, a notary and lawyer in Schiedam, the authority to act on her behalf as the heir of her deceased sister, Jannetje van der Schalk. Mrs. Neeltje van Erpecum, widow of Mr. Abraham van der Schalk Jansz., authorised her father, the Noble Lord Carel van Erpecum, councillor and sitting alderman of Schiedam. Her husband was probably related to the captains and headmen of the distillers' guild, where the name Schalk appeared frequently. Prominent gin families often intermarried, creating closely related and intertwined networks.

Mrs. Johanna Geerting-Vu Vlissinger, the wife of Reverend Dionasius Brau, a minister in the Reformed congregation of Slu, Flanders, was accompanied by her husband and had his permission to sign the deed on October 16, 1794.¹³⁷ She declared that she authorised her brother-in-law, Mr. Daniel Visser, a merchant and grain wine distiller in Schiedam, to act on her behalf. This was necessary because she had recently purchased a house and distillery in Schiedam and wished to become a member of the city's grain wine distillers' guild. She wanted him to sign the necessary documents and handle the formalities for her. Furthermore,

¹³⁵ Clare Crowston, "Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research", *International Review of Social History* 53, no. S16 (December 2008): 44.

¹³⁶ See appendix II.

¹³⁷ NL-GAS-0267 (ONA) Schiedam, inv.no. 0962, folio no. 1678 (16-10-1794).

she promised under oath, as a trader in distilled beverages, to comply with the tax laws as set forth in the ordinances and to refrain from committing tax fraud when paying taxes on alcoholic beverages. She also authorised her brother-in-law to represent her in business transactions related to her involvement in the grain wine distillery. Her responsibilities in the firm included making purchases and sales, collecting and disbursing funds, taking legal action in case of non-payment, choosing an address for legal correspondence, requesting judgments and appealing them, attending judicial and collegiate meetings, and representing stakeholders in grain windmills in which she held shares. This example of Geerting-Vu Vlissinger shows that some women exercised a large degree of freedom in economic participation, albeit aided or mediated by their male family members.

Numerous women involved in distilling, brewing, and trading in spirits are mentioned in sources from the years 1733 to 1792.¹³⁸ Most of the time, these were widows, but not all of them worked in distilling only because their husband died. There was also one unmarried woman who was above 25, and one wife whose husband was still alive. Another noticeable aspect is that there were legally separated women mentioned in the deeds. In this era, divorces were not as rare as previously believed, and a study from Alkmaar suggests that they didn't necessarily result in financial hardship. Married women, post-divorce, were allowed to manage their own assets and independently run their businesses, much like the widows. These were legal rights that were not available to them before divorce. However, it appears that these opportunities for separated women may have diminished in practice by the end of the eighteenth century.¹³⁹

The sack bearers were integral in helping the jenever trade in Schiedam. However, the profession was male-dominated in Schiedam and there were officially no women allowed in the guild. In Amsterdam, corn meters and corn setters, responsible for determining weight and volume, had their own guild and included the people who were tasked with periodically stirring the grains in the warehouse to prevent spoilage. This task, known as 'shuffling,' was typically carried out by women. Grain brokers then traded the grain on the grain exchange. In Schiedam, I could not find any mentions of women shuffling grain. Interestingly, in the Sack Bearers Guild name list, two women's names appear during this period: Neeltje Jans, who lived in 1718 and served as a commissioner of the bag carrier's house, and Meesje Gis Quast,

¹³⁸ See appendix I.

¹³⁹ Johan Joor and Petra Kalkman, "Echtscheiding en scheiding van tafel en bed in Alkmaar in de periode 1700-1810," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 11, no. 3 (August 1985): 197-230.

who lived in 1725. Neeltje's role as a commissioner suggests that she was not involved in the heavy lifting but was in charge of managing the house.

Conclusion

While specific documentation of women's occupations was scarce, archival sources revealed their involvement in several maritime industries. Women were integral to the fishing industry, primarily engaged in manufacturing nets, ropes, and supplying fishing gear. They were also prominent in managing spinning and rope-making facilities, as seen in the sale transactions of spinning lanes by widows like Jacomijntje Coernelis and Ariaantgen Jansdr. Similarities can be drawn with other maritime communities such as Scheveningen, where women similarly supported fishing economies through selling fish and making nets.

In trade, women like Grietge Cornelisdr. and Geltje Leenderts engaged in herring and other commerce, sustaining their late husbands' businesses amidst a competitive market. Similarly, in ship ownership, widows such as Trijntgen Jans and Neeltje Gijsen managed vessels and shares. The role of women in innkeeping and ceel trading showcased their adaptability in business. Women like Teetge Pieters managed inns frequented by seafarers, leveraging connections within the East India Company to facilitate trade. Women's involvement in canal transportation was scarce, however there was at least one woman in this business who officially appeared in the guild papers. Further archaeological findings of family life on boats, could provide more insight in women's role in this occupation. In all these occupations however, as trades professionalized in the eighteenth century, men in Schiedam increasingly dominated roles like netmaking and innkeeping, possibly due to cultural expectations and educational inequalities.

These occupations contrasted with sectors described in chapter 1, like whaling, the processing of whale oil, fishing, sailing with the VOC/WIC, the work in the distilleries producing jenever and carrying the sacks from the boats, where no direct female participation was found. Women did not work in the whale oil industry, however, some women were indirectly involved in supporting roles like selling equipment for the whalers or running an inn frequented by whalers. The heads of the distillers in Schiedam remained predominantly male, however, there were many mentions of 'guild sisters' in the notarial sources. Women involved in distilling and trading spirits were predominantly widows, though some unmarried and legally separated women also operated independently. These women managed their assets and businesses, benefiting from legal changes that granted them economic autonomy. Guild

sisters, however, could have limited involvement but rarely achieved full membership status. Instead, they often relied on male relatives to represent them officially. It also appears that during periods of uncertainty, such as the women transferred their guild membership to male relatives.

Overall, while women in Schiedam made contributions to the industries, their roles were often circumscribed by societal norms and legal restrictions. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women in Schiedam played significant roles in various maritime economic activities. In the seventeenth century they played a big role in supplying for the fishing boats and this role seemed to disappear as this occupation slowly disappears in the eighteenth century.

Economic historians often viewed the Dutch Golden Age (1600-1670) as the peak of female entrepreneurship. During this period, women in the Netherlands might have been more engaged in economic activities compared to neighbouring countries. However, their participation further increased with innovations in the Dutch business sector from the late seventeenth century onwards, as evidenced by data on female entrepreneurship in Enkhuizen.¹⁴⁰ In the eighteenth century in Schiedam, women were increasingly involved in bookkeeping and as members of the guilds in the jenever industry. While they did not engage in heavy manual labour, they participated as guild sisters. This shift suggests that women in the eighteenth century may have held higher-paying jobs, reflecting a period that was favourable to female entrepreneurship, similar to what was observed in Enkhuizen.

¹⁴⁰ Van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship*, 277.

3 Which factors determined the women's participation?

Building upon the groundwork laid by the previous chapters, this chapter will concentrate on the third, and perhaps the most challenging sub-question to answer: 'Which factors determined the women's participation?' The population of Schiedam experienced consistent growth throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This count excluded non-resident foreigners, sailors, and soldiers stationed in the Asia, beggars, and prison inmates. However, it included detainees in correctional facilities and residents of charitable institutions. In the city's taverns, there was a group of 'foreigners' who were not officially considered part of the Schiedammers. They had come to the city looking for jobs, usually in maritime work. While births contributed significantly to population growth in the early seventeenth century, migration also played a vital role, with marriage records reflecting a substantial number of newcomers, including foreigners from various regions. Population growth was not entirely consistent, with temporary declines due to plague outbreaks.¹⁴¹ Because an estimated one-third of the male workforce had a maritime profession in the first half of the seventeenth century, Schiedam, like other port cities during this period, had a surplus of women. Many sailors who headed for Asia also did not return, as they settled in other countries, spent many years at sea, or suffered shipwrecks. This surplus of women could be one of the explanations why women had to undertake work or find ways to make ends meet. Simply because they were the heads of households and had to provide for the family income.

Additionally, the insufficient income of husbands was a reason behind women entering the maritime workforce. They had to work for the economic survival of the family. Financial difficulties were common, with many families of sailors owing money to local shops. The way money was shared within these families, especially in poorer ones, illustrates how crucial both husbands and wives were in keeping the household running. Changes in the fishing industry during the 1600s influenced the types of jobs women pursued, with some transitioning from making nets at home to selling goods in markets. Despite these changes, women in seafaring communities found ways to make ends meet by combining different kinds of work.¹⁴²

Research in the Netherlands has primarily focused on the wives of East Indiamen sailors, particularly those associated with the VOC. Studies conducted in cities like Enkhuizen, Amsterdam, Delft, and Rotterdam have revealed that some of these women

¹⁴¹ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 39.

¹⁴² De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 39-41.

engaged in activities like brothel-keeping and soul-selling, while girlfriends and wives of migrants joining the VOC often resorted to prostitution. Wives of VOC sailors in Enkhuizen, who did not receive enough salary sent home from their husbands' travels, also had to work to sustain their families and survive. However, they demonstrated self-sufficiency and even acted as equal trading partners to men. Almost seventy percent of the wives exhibited self-sufficiency, not relying on poor relief.¹⁴³ The situation of the wives of sailors in other Dutch cities parallels the experiences of women in Schiedam in several key ways, reflecting broader patterns of economic adaptation and resilience among women tied to maritime industries in the Netherlands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Women in Schiedam, particularly those associated with the maritime sector, exhibited similar traits of economic independence, like widows and the wives of sailors, who participated in various trades and several business activities.

Marital status played a significant role in shaping a woman's position in the labour market, while factors such as marital partner and family background often dictated the type of employment she pursued. Additionally, all women in society were dependent on local economic conditions. I often found accounts of widows who continued the business of their husbands. For them, it becomes clear what occupation they had at the moment they took over the business. This is the moment they appear on paper; however, it is plausible that their role in the business was much bigger, or equal to their spouses, even when the husbands were still alive. Often women are only mentioned as the 'wife of ...' who was, for example, a fisherman, and the female occupation is not mentioned. However, from the context, I can deduce in which occupation they were active.

Investigations have indicated that these maritime women enjoyed certain benefits in terms of employment opportunities. For instance, VOC wives worked as servants, a role typically reserved for unmarried women, and were granted permission by their husbands to engage in trade.¹⁴⁴ By the procurations, it becomes apparent that women in the maritime community were granted the right to handle affairs, buy, sell, and manage things when their husbands were at sea. Wives of fishing/seafaring men seemed to have a big advantage over other married women in maritime communities; through their husbands' profession, they were part of a socio-economic network in which they could more easily find work. The work that sea-women did in Schiedam, was usually directly related to the branch of maritime activity in

¹⁴³ Ingrid Vlis and Danielle van den Heuvel, "'Bij uijtlandigheijt van haar man'. Echtgenotes van VOC-zeelieden, aangemonsterd voor de kamer Enkhuizen (1700-1750)," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 5, no. 1 (March 2008): 155.

¹⁴⁴ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 149-150.

which their husbands worked. This trend continued into the eighteenth century with the wives of distillers and merchants in jenever. So, the family business played a part, and this continued to be beneficial for women's opportunities to join the workforce. In the jenever industry, many wealthy families maintained control and kept operations within their family circles. Notably, there is an overlap between the names of these families and those of notaries and guild heads.

Guild in Schiedam

In early modern society, women were not allowed to participate in all branches of the economy. Sea work was often reserved for men, though there were a few exceptions, like widow van der Spuy, who continued as inland skipper. Furthermore, women were excluded from certain professions by guild regulations. To determine why women chose to work in certain places and why not, it is important to establish whether women could become members of guilds, and if so, under what circumstances. The guilds of that time did not wield political power. Those who initiated a new business were usually incorporated into a guild by the city government. The Deacon and Elders were in charge, while guild brothers had little influence. The Deacon was appointed by the Vroedschap and the Elders by the mayor. The Deacon and Heads of the distillers' guild nominated new Elders, making the guild's administration a reflection of the urban government.

Some guilds excluded women from membership, but women could still be found in the workforce. It is known that guilds in the western part of the Republic were generally more inclusive than guilds in the eastern part of the Republic and in Germany.¹⁴⁵ Possibly because of the maritime activities and more job opportunities that arose from that. In theory, women could join some guilds in the Republic, but not all guilds were willing to admit them as members. For instance, in Dordrecht, women were not allowed to become members of the merchants' guild. However, they could benefit from widow's rights, enabling them to continue their deceased husband's craft until their son was capable of taking it over. This right was applicable only during the widowhood period; if they chose to remarry, the right would stop.

In some guilds, women were not officially allowed as members; however, in practice, they performed the same work. This was evident in the Shipowners' Guild: While only men were officially recognized as members, many women managed the shipowning business while

¹⁴⁵ Ariadne Schmidt, "Gilden en de toegang van vrouwen tot de arbeidsmarkt in Holland in de vroegmoderne tijd," *De zeventiende eeuw* 23 (2007): 177.

their husbands were at sea. After the death of their husbands, the widows were allowed to continue the business.¹⁴⁶ Their guild regulations even mention the term ‘guild sister’ in their regulations.¹⁴⁷ When a brother or sister was to leave the guild, or passed away, their heirs were obligated to pay the guild a debt of twenty ‘stuijvers’ as a departing fee. Essentially, this rule outlines a financial obligation that members or their heirs had to fulfil in case they decided to leave the guild or in the event of their death. It served as a form of financial security for the guild, ensuring that it received compensation for the loss of a member. In the ‘opreedersgild’ there were lots of women in the workforce, possibly because much of the work done by guild members had traditionally been carried out by women. In other communities, such as Noordwijk, and Scheveningen, the workforce for making and mending nets also consisted of women. Also in Maassluis and Vlaardingen, the making and repairing nets was a typical women’s job. Additionally, women in these communities supplied other essential ship necessities. For example, in Ter Heijde, the responsibility of provisioning herring boats fell to the wives of ship officers. They ensured that there was enough food on board and were also responsible for supplying the ship’s beer.¹⁴⁸ Knitting and mending nets were traditionally seen as women’s work for several reasons rooted in the social and economic structures of the past. These tasks were central to the household’s role in supporting the fishing industry.¹⁴⁹ Women performed this work at home, which allowed them to balance their domestic responsibilities with contributions to the family’s economic activities. Young girls learned to knit and mend nets from around the age of eight and would assist with these tasks. Over time, as the fishing industry grew and the demand for professionally made and repaired nets increased, women’s roles in net-making became more specialized and were recognized as a professional skill within the community. This evolution highlighted the crucial role that women played in supporting and advancing the maritime economy.

In the guild regulations from the Sack Bearers' guild, there is no mention of excluding women; the only mention of women is again about the insurance for widows. As with many guilds, there was a fund set aside as insurance for when a guild member died (the widow would receive f30, and when the woman died, the man would receive f20). This way, the guild members took care of the families.¹⁵⁰ So the women were, in a way, guild members too, and their income and occupation were considered deserving of compensation if they died.

¹⁴⁶ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 152.

¹⁴⁷ NL-GAS OAA Schippersgilde, 1606-1798, inv. no. 30, Article 4.

¹⁴⁸ De Wit, “Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk,” 73.

¹⁴⁹ De Wit, “Zeemansvrouwen aan het werk,” 72.

¹⁵⁰ NL-GAS-0317, Schiedam, Gildebrieven, alteratiën, ampliatiën, 1557-1777, Statuten Huishoudelijk Reglement van de Vereeniging van Zakkendragers gevestigd te Schiedam, article 8.

A similar trend is observed in the distillers' guild. Women were not employed in distilleries or breweries due to the physical strain involved, although the reasons for this exclusion remain unclear. It is uncertain whether they were prohibited from working there, if men perceived them as lacking strength, height, or muscle to perform the tasks efficiently, or if the nature of the work was deemed unsuitable for women and they were better off doing more refined jobs. The term 'guild sister' frequently appears in the guild regulations, mentioned alongside the guild brothers. Guild sisters are often relatives of deceased guild members. After all, this was an important aspect of the organisation existence: taking care of each other and, therefore, also widows. The regulations also mention brewers and brewsters, and masters and mistresses, as if it was quite normal for there to be women in the business.¹⁵¹ Occasionally, women had a role as the head of a company, but that was rare. An example is Maria Wencker, who sold her businesses to Van der Tuyn around 1900, later than the period of this research. The guild of distillers was not doing badly given the remarkable expenses for food and the occasional outing on the 'jagt,' where the women sometimes also participated. For example, in 1792, a total of f360.12 was spent, including f36.8 for oysters and f44 for riding in three carriages through the Westland. I dare to say that the women were better off than most professions. This was mainly due to the enormous sums of money earned in the gin industry and the fact that they were not expected to work in a distillery but were seen in higher positions, brewing, trading, and selling distilleries. Women often ensured that the capital of the gin family was not only spent on the business or the family but also used for charitable purposes. Donations to churches or charities were usually initiatives of the women, who acted as the moral compass of the businesses. Women may have played a significant role in the ancillary industries (cooperages, glass factories, cork factories, mills, maltings, etc.) that were essential for supporting the gin industry.

The question of the role guilds played in women's participation in the early modern labour market has long intrigued historians. Alice Clark addressed the topic in her classic work 'Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century' from 1919. Clark acknowledged that women typically gained access to guilds through marriage. However, she also viewed guilds as symbols of the pre-capitalist period, during which women could still participate in labour processes based on household work.¹⁵² Over time, this optimistic view has been replaced by a more pessimistic interpretation, emphasising that guilds primarily restricted

¹⁵¹ Riemsdijk van, *Het Brandersbedrijf*, 11-20.

¹⁵² Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* [1919], 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1992), 154-197.

women's labour participation. Women were excluded from formal training within guilds and generally could not become independent members of professional organisations. In recent years, the perception of guilds has changed. Craft guilds are no longer seen as traditional organizations or obstacles to innovation that hindered economic modernization. Recent research shows that guilds should be viewed as flexible institutions capable of adapting to changing economic conditions. Several historians have pointed out variations in the status of women within guilds and the restrictions guilds imposed on women. Guilds also adjusted their policies regarding the admission of women to economic circumstances. The inclusion or exclusion of women varied from place to place.¹⁵³

It has been suggested that guilds in the Netherlands lost their power from the fifteenth century onwards, and in England in the sixteenth century. As guilds weakened, women gained more economic freedom, ultimately stimulating economic development. Ogilvie suggests that it is no coincidence that England and the Netherlands experienced significant economic development early on.¹⁵⁴ The power of guilds in England and the Republic was weak. Despite serious limitations, English and Dutch women could participate in the labour market on a larger scale than women in other areas of Europe, which would have stimulated economic development.¹⁵⁵ It is possible that gender norms in Holland were less rigid than in other European countries. Most guilds excluded women from full membership, and virtually all guilds excluded women from positions of power. Women often owed their position in guilds to that of a male relative. The status of the guild member was largely based on the position of the head of the household. According to norms, this head was the representative of the family, ideally the breadwinner and in many cases, male. The acceptance of widows as guild members should also be seen in this light: they assumed the responsibilities as long as they were heads of the household. The guilds did not have very strict gender norms. There were mixed guilds that accepted women as members. In guild-organized (export) industries with a high demand for labour, women's labour was extensively utilised. Gender norms were not insurmountable barriers to women's labour participation, especially when the demand for labour was high, as in the thriving economy of the Dutch Republic.

¹⁵³ Schmidt, "Gilden en de toegang van vrouwen," 161.

¹⁵⁴ Sheilagh Catheren Ogilvie, "How Does Social Capital Affect Women? Guilds and Communities in Early Modern Germany," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 2 (2004): 325–359.

¹⁵⁵ Schmidt, "Gilden en de toegang van vrouwen," 161.

Big changes: Turn of the century

As observed in previous chapters, a significant portion of Schiedam's population in the seventeenth century was directly or indirectly engaged in the fishing industry. In examining the sources, I discovered a higher representation of women in related occupations during the seventeenth century compared to the eighteenth century. However, this does not necessarily imply a decrease in their workforce participation; rather, it correlates with the overall decline in fishing activity in Schiedam. By the end of the seventeenth century, only about a quarter of the population worked in a maritime profession.¹⁵⁶ This decline in fishing was evident not only in Schiedam but also across the Dutch Republic during the eighteenth century, coinciding with a downturn in labour-intensive and capital goods manufacturing within the urban industrial sector of the Republic during this period.¹⁵⁷

These findings, combined with the evident decline in job opportunities in herring fishing and the Baltic Sea trade, indicate a process of 'demaritimization,' meaning the gradual reduction or disengagement of a community or economy from maritime activities and reliance on the sea, leading to a shift towards other forms of livelihood and economic focus. This process was associated with the rise of distillation in the second half of the seventeenth century. Schiedam merchants traded their shares in herring fishing for investments in distillation. In 1690, a distillers' guild was established, and from the early eighteenth century, herring vessels were converted into freighters for importing raw materials for the distillation industry and for exporting spirits.

Maritime employment did not disappear entirely, but there was a reshaping of the labour market. Some of the workforce displaced from herring fishing found jobs in the merchant navy related to the distillation industry, while others migrated to Vlaardingen and Brielle. Schiedam continued to supply sailors to the VOC and navy. By 1756, shipping was no longer considered the primary economic activity. The mayors then referred to 'the traffic of the distilleries and distillation as the main traffic of this city and the principal source of its prosperity and existence.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 66-67.

¹⁵⁷ De Vries and Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, 782.

¹⁵⁸ De Wit, *Leven, werken en geloven*, 66-67.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the factors that influenced women's participation in maritime occupations in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Schiedam. The first chapter examined the various economic maritime activities prevalent in Schiedam during these centuries, including herring fishing, whaling, trade, canal transportation, and employment connected to the VOC and WIC. Women were generally absent from these maritime occupations. Several factors contributed to this absence, such as societal norms, legal constraints, economic barriers, and the inherent risks and physical dangers associated with these roles. For instance, whaling required long voyages to icy waters, which were deemed unsuitable for women by the standards of that time. Similarly, the heavy manual labour involved in distilleries and carrying sacks was also considered inappropriate for women.

However, women played essential roles in shore-based activities. This research revealed that despite being excluded from certain sectors, there were still significant numbers of women active in various occupations from the age of 8 up to 80 years old. With many men away at sea, women frequently took over and managed various business operations, contributing to the economic landscape, particularly in the fishing industry. They were deeply involved in manufacturing nets and ropes, and were responsible for supplying fishing gear and supplies on board. Women also managed spinning lanes for rope production. In other communities, such as Noordwijk, and Scheveningen, the workforce for making and mending nets also consisted of women. Also in Maassluis and Vlaardingen, this was a typical women's job. Additionally, women in these communities supplied other essential ship necessities. For example, in Ter Heijde, the responsibility of provisioning herring boats fell to the wives of ship officers.

In commerce, women in Schiedam continued their late husbands' businesses, trading herring and other goods. Widows managed ships and shares and also showed versatility in managing inns frequented by seafarers, sometimes trading in ceels. Although women's involvement in canal transportation was rare, there were records of at least one woman participating officially in this sector. Despite these contributions, women's direct roles in tasks like net making declined as industries professionalised and men increasingly dominated these sectors. This shift was likely influenced by cultural expectations and educational inequalities.

The social, economic and juridical status of women significantly influenced their participation in the workforce. This explains why many widows, divorced, and unmarried women were active in businesses. A similar trend was observed among women in other

seafaring communities in the Dutch Republic, such as Vlaardingen, Ter Heijde, Scheveningen, and Maassluis. In many maritime communities undergoing economic growth, opportunities for women to work expanded. Another reason women had more work opportunities, was because during the pre-modern era, women frequently outnumbered men in these communities, as many men were away at sea. This circumstance led women to step into leadership roles, often taking over as head of the household and independently managing businesses. Women's participation in these professions often stemmed from economic necessity. They entered these roles either due to financial pressures within their families or to sustain their husbands' businesses after their deaths. While guilds typically excluded women from full membership, some women found ways to engage in maritime work, particularly in roles related to their husbands' professions. Also, they could find work in jobs without guilds. The stereotypical image of women in the Dutch Republic as merely homemakers does not hold up. Despite challenges and restrictions, women in Schiedam played significant roles in supporting maritime activities and contributing to the city's prosperity.

The evolving economic landscape of Schiedam, with a shift from fishing to distillation industries, influenced the labour market dynamics for both men and women. The transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century saw a shift in women's economic roles from hands-on tasks to more management and bookkeeping activities. In the jenever industry they became more active in bookkeeping and as guild members, known as 'guild sisters,' rather than in heavy manual labour in the distilleries, from which they were excluded. This differs from Amsterdam, where the women played a part in shuffling the grains. The guild sisters and brewsters in Schiedam were often widows and, in some cases, unmarried or legally separated women who managed their businesses independently. Despite this, their involvement in guilds was frequently limited, as they relied on male relatives for official representation. The roles of brewsters and guild sisters, however, remain underexplored and warrant further investigation to better understand their contributions and challenges in the economic and social landscape of the time.

Research into other maritime communities from the early modern period has revealed that women had a defined role in the maritime economy throughout Europe and North America.¹⁵⁹ Women were especially crucial in the fisheries sector, where they took on

¹⁵⁹ For example: Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, Gender Relations in the American Experience (Baltimore London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Lorentz (1997); Fury (2001) and Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women & the Whaleshery, 1720 - 1870*, Gender & American Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000).

prominent roles while remaining onshore. In northern Portugal, during this time, women were engaged in various activities such as funding fishing voyages, trading fish, and owning ships. They were also responsible for managing their households, taking care of daily necessities, and overseeing all business transactions while their husbands were away at sea.¹⁶⁰ This overlaps with the maritime community of Schiedam. However, in Schiedam, women did not participate in actual fishing during these centuries; it was considered men's work. Although the economic frameworks of fishing communities across early modern Europe were likely somewhat similar, it would be misleading to consider the maritime sector as homogenous. Cultural differences, distinct legal systems, and varying demographic, social, and economic patterns shaped the roles and positions of women in these societies. According to Alice Clark, English women were mainly involved in the local trade and sale of fish. In contrast, Dutch women played a more expansive role in commerce, often acting as merchants and engaging in long-distance trade.

While this research provides insights into the participation of women in early modern Schiedam, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The primary sources consulted were largely official documents, which may present a narrow perspective. There is a possibility that many occupations and activities undertaken by women were not thoroughly documented. Additional evidence, such as personal diaries or archaeological findings from boats or the maritime community, could offer a more comprehensive view of women's contributions during these centuries. Furthermore, the focus of this study was primarily on maritime professions where women's involvement was visible. Consequently, other sectors where women may have been active remain less explored and understood. It is also important to note that the findings are specific to Schiedam and may not reflect the broader experiences of women in other regions. This regional specificity challenges the ability to generalise about the role of women across the entire country during the early modern period. To better understand the roles and contributions of women across the Netherlands during this time, more research is needed that looks at different regions and other types of work. Given the critical role women played in sustaining maritime industries, it is imperative that future historical research continues to uncover and honour these contributions, ensuring that the stories of these women are woven into the broader narrative of economic history.

¹⁶⁰ Louis Sicking, ed., *Beyond the Catch: Fisheries of the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic, 900 - 1850*, *The Northern World* 41 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 365.

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Appendix I: List of brewsters/distillers

Year deed	Brewsters
1733	Cathrijna Kreethuijze Laest (widow Willem Markus)
1744	Susannetje Corsse van de Theek (widow Bartolomeus Daelhuijsen)
1744	Neeltje Smeer (widow Pieter Burgerhout)
1744	Jannetje Verkade (widow Lambregt Verboom)
1748	Alides van den Willigen (separated housewife of Cornelis Penning)
1749	Catharina Anget
1749	Margrietia van der Plaets (widow Adriaan van den Eelaart)
1750	Maria Magdalena Pesser (widow Johan Hendrik van Bulderen)
1750	Elisabeth (widow Francois)

1750	Catharina Anget
1750	Margreta Pesser (widow Dominitus Doomhoore)
1750	Neeltje Holerhoek (housewife of Pieter Amoureus)
1753	Catharina Anget
1753	Maartje Metselaar (widow Abraham van Pelt)
1754	Maartje Claas Schouten (widow van Pieterz. Schieveen)
1755	Margrieta van den Bergh (widow Dominus Ruijs)
1757	Dorathe van der Polder (widow Harmen Edel)
1761	Magteld van Boses (widow Coenraat Ruijhert)
1762	Dina de Wolff (widow Adriaan Doom council and old mayer)
1768	Geertruyde de Witt (widow Gysbert van der Most)
1768	Quirina Vosmaer (widow Willem an Waalwijk)
1768	Alida van der Willigen (separated housewife Sr Cornelis Penning)
1771	Widow of Pieter van den Eelaard
1772	Adriana de Jonge (widow Job Buysen)
1775	Anna van Hammelen (widow Leendert de Munnik)
1777	Anna van Lammelen
1778	Christina Leer (widow Frans Bredero Junior)
1778	Elisabeth van Ca (widow Hendrik van Essen)
1779	Johanna Clasina de Hojer (unmarried of age dochter)
1780	Catharina Vermaat (widow Cornelis van Leeuwen)
1780	Cornelia de Vos (widow Jan Nolet)
1785	Margaretha van den Berg (widow)
1790	Yda de Groot
1792	Anna Polderman (widow Karl van Especum)

Appendix II: Guild sisters who authorised their sons or brothers

Year	Name guild sister
1788	Neeltje Verboon
1788	Trijntje van Krombrugge
1792	Catharina van den Schalk
1793	Johanna Wuijsten

1793	Katharina Prins
1793	Neeltje van Erpecum
1794	Johanna Geerting-Vu Vlissinger

Appendix III: Some of the search words used

aan boord	kapitein	reder(ij)
binnenschippers	kleding	rouwstoker
binnenschippers	kleermaakster	scheepma(a)k(st)er
binnenvaarschipper	kleermaker	scheepstimmer
bootsgezel	kok	schipper
bootzman/vrouw	kokmaat	schipper
bottelen	kolenmeter	speksnijder
bottelier	koopvrouw	spinbaan
brander	koopvrouwe	spinnen
branderij	koorenwijn	spinner
brandersknecht	koorenwijn branders gilde	stokerij
branderye	koornwijnbranders	stuurman
brandewijn	koornwijnbrandersgilde	stuurman
brandster	koornwyn	tapper
breien	korenmeter	teer
breyen	korenwijn	teller
brouwers	kuipers	telster
brouwsters	kuipster	timmerman
cagenaers	kurkenfabrieken	timmervrouw
commandeur	kustvisser	toesiender
commisaris	kwakzalver	tonster
coopvrouw	leurders	tonster
coopvrouwe	leuren	touw
coperslager	leursters	touwmaken
courtisane	lichte vrouw	touwslager
cruijdenierster	lichte zede	troubadour
cruydenierster	lichtekooi	turf lossen
dame van plezier	lijn draijers	turfbelasting
distillateur	lijnbaan	turftonster
draagster	luyren	uitlandigheid/uytlandig
draggersgilde	mannenkleren	vercoopster
etiketteerder	mansklederen	verkleed
etiketten	manskleren	verkoopster
garnalen	marktschuijtvoeders	vermomd

garnalen peller/pelster	marktvrouw	verstekeling
gedestilleerde wateren	matroos	visafslag
genever	molenaar	visafslag
gezworen telster	molenaarster	vishandel
gildebroeder	molens	viskoper
gilderzuster	mouterijen	visverkoopster
gistkoper	mouters	visverkoopster
glasfabrieken	moutersknecht	visverkoper
graanwijn	moutwijn	viswijven/viswijf
haring	netten	wijn
haringverkoopster	nettenboetser	wijncoopster
harpoenier	nettenmaker	zakken(dra(a)g(st)er)
havenwerkster	ommeloopster	zalm(visser/verkoper)
hennep(kwijler)	onderstuurman	zedenmeid
herberg	ontdekt	zeepsieder
herbergierster	ontuchtige vrouw	zeepzieder
hoer	openbare coopvrouw	zeevaardster
huisvrouw	opreder	zeilen maker
huysvrouw	portierster	zeilmaker
jenever	prostitutee	zeylmaker
kaarsenmaakster	prucuratie	zeylmaakster
kannewijn branders gilde	publieke vrouw	zyelen

Appendix IV: Example soul-seller in Schiedam

One example of a soul-seller in Schiedam is:

Year: 1647

Inventory number/ name notary: 0243_0757_209_Kouwenhoven

Name wife: Teetge Pieters/ Tietge Pietersz

Marital status: Weduwe

Occupation: herbergierster

Name husband: Joris Juriaensz Varentgesel van Hamburen

Granted rights:

machtich gemaect om:

omme inden name ende van wegen hem consituant te heften ende ontfangen van Schipper

Huijberecht van Thee, dese alsulcke verdiende ofte maenrgelden hage als hij Comparant als

nog ten goede is, hebbende ende hem Competerende sijn over Vijf maenden ende negenthien dagen bedragende te soo veel min ofte hondert ende eene gulden meer als de heeren burgemeesteren de stadt van verte Rotterdam aende welcke dese saecke is gerenvoijeert.

This example tells us that Teetge's husband was granted the authority (machtich gemaect) to collect earned wages or rewards on behalf of a ship's captain named Huijberecht van Thee. The document specified the amount due to Teetge's husband, which was stated to be over a period of five months and nineteen days, totaling a sum slightly over one hundred and one guilders. Teetge Pieters ran a tavern named 'De Batavia' and regularly hosted foreign sailors. Some sailors authorized Teetge to collect their wages from the VOC. Additionally, Teetge traded in "celen," purchasing them from other publicans. She was married to an East Indiaman sailor. Even during his lifetime, she managed the tavern, continuing after his death. Teetge's life, with the numerous connections she maintained both personally and professionally with the Company, was typical of many VOC women. The Company partly relied on these women for recruiting manpower.