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‘Nothing but Mayors and Sheriefs, and the deare yeere, and the great frost.’ A study of written historical culture in late medieval towns in the Low Countries and England

Jenneke Daniëlle Eline de Vries

This thesis explores urban historical texts from late medieval towns in England and the Counties of Holland and Flanders. The wealth of primary examples discussed in this thesis from England and the Low Countries disproves the conviction long held in the scholarly literature that medieval town chronicles only existed in Italy and Germany.

Taking a broader view through the framework of historical culture, rather than a strict definition of (urban) chronicle, many previously ignored urban historical texts are explored. The separate chapters discuss the format, authorship, contents and function of these written examples of urban historical culture. The comparative approach identifies a remarkable level of similarities in variety of format, types of author, use of national narratives and record-keeping traditions between England, Holland and Flanders. Local differences are found in the scope of these elements, but show few fundamental differences. Moreover, when compared to the manuscripts recognised as traditional German and Italian medieval town chronicles, the similarities are also noteworthy.

A main thread through the study of all aspects of these written sources is the close link there is between historical and administrative writing in towns. The main group of authors we find are town clerks or secretaries, and town registers and magistrate lists are two major categories of format that we find. The use of these texts was similarly a combination of pragmatic recording and history writing, memorialising past events as well as documents for a legal memory as much as to promote the city’s status.

‘Nothing but Mayors and Sheriefs, and the deare yeere, and the great frost.’
A study of written historical culture in late medieval towns in the Low Countries and England

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List of abbreviations

BL	British Library
BodL	Bodleian Library
CA	City Archives
EHR	*English Historical Review*
EMC	*The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*
Holland	*Holland: historisch tijdschrift*
JMG	*Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis*
JMH	*Journal of Medieval History*
MLC	*The Medieval Low Countries*
P&P	*Past and Present*
RA	Regional Archives
RL	Royal Library
RPH	*Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*
SA	State Archives
UH	*Urban History*
UL	University Library

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Introduction

'lay Chronigraphers that write of nothing but of Mayors and Sheriefs, and the deare yeere, and the great frost'[1]

This quote from Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), poet, playwright and writer, in his pamphlet *Pierce Penniless* characterised prose medieval chroniclers for him. Elizabethan writers, such as Nashe and John Stow (1525-1605), did not hold medieval chronicles, especially urban ones, in high regard, and, for a long time, neither did their successors. Frank Smith Fussner, who in his glowing description of Stow's work remembers the above quote, showed no disagreement with the sentiment in 1962. He considered Stow's *Survey of London* 'the first great history of any English town'.[2] His view was long not out of place, considering urban histories and urban chronicles to be something that was confined in the Middle Ages to the cities of Italy and Germany, and to the early modern times in other countries, such as England. In recent decades scholars have brought nuance to this idea and medieval urban history writing has been recognised and studied in other regions, particularly the Southern Low Countries. This thesis builds on this trend and will demonstrate late medieval urban historical writing in the Low Countries and England, comparing several of their key characteristics.

The traditional view on medieval history writing traces a development from world chronicles written by monks and other clerics through aristocratic vernacular chronicles towards more varied and more local chronicles written by lay people in the later Middle Ages. Institutional chronicles of monasteries were widespread from the twelfth and thirteenth and existed in large numbers into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[3] Although some of these monasteries were urban, local chronicles with a non-religious urban focus only developed later, with the earliest

[1] Thomas Nashe, Alexander Balloch Grossart (ed.), *The complete works of Thomas Nashe: in six volumes. For the first time collected and edited with memorial-introduction, notes and illustrations, etc.*, vol. 2 (London, 1883), p. 62.
[2] F. Smith Fussner, *The historical revolution: English historical writing and thought, 1580-1640* (London, 1962), p. 212.
[3] Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: the writing of history in medieval England* (London, 2004), pp. xix–xx.

examples in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, depending on the region, and picking up pace in the fifteenth and sixteenth. Especially histories of Florence, from *ricordanze* to Giovanni Villani's long prose history, are famous as typical examples of medieval chronicles.[4] Medieval town chronicles were first identified almost solely in Italy, Switzerland and Germany.[5] High levels of urbanisation and a large degree of local power were brought up as explanations for such a geographically confined occurrence.[6] Considering the Southern Low Countries had the second highest degree of urbanisation in the Middle Ages with metropoles Ghent and Bruges at its centre, the lack of urban chronicles in this and other regions has understandably been questioned in recent decades.

The entry 'Town Chronicles' in the 2010 *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* pays attention to urban history writing in regions other than Germany and Italy:

> Chronicles were written in towns stretching from northern Italy to the North Sea, throughout the German lands and the Low Countries, as well as Barcelona, London, Gdansk, and Riga, although certain urban centres - notably Paris and Rome - did not become fertile ground for such chronicles.[7]

However, the bibliography of this section consists of books on German towns, with no specific literature on the Low Countries, London or any of the non-German cities at all, showing the inheritance of decades of geographically biased studies.[8] The *EMC* and Carasso-Kok's *Repertorium,* a repository for medieval narrative sources from the Northern Low Countries, produce many names of local monastic chronicles, but

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[4] Denys Hay, *Annalists and historians: western historiography from the 8th to the 18th centuries* (London, 1977); Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981); Giovanni Ciappelli, *Memory, family, and self: Tuscan family books and other European egodocuments (14th-18th century)* (Leiden, 2014).
[5] Peter Johanek, 'Einleitung', in Peter Johanek (ed.), *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Köln, 2000), p. xiii; Vasina places the 'proper' urban history writing even only in Northern Italy: Augusto Vasina, 'Medieval urban historiography in Western Europe (1100-1500)', in Deborah M. Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 317–352; Elisabeth M.C. Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles* (Turnhout, 1995), p. 16; R.C. Van Caenegem, *Guide to the sources of medieval history*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam, 1979), p. 25; Hans-Werner Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewusstsein im hohen Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1999), p. 122; Robert Stein, 'Selbstverständnis oder Identität? Städtische Geschichtsschreibung als Quelle für die Identitätsforschung', in H. Brand, P. Monnet, and M. Staub (eds.), *Memoria, communitas, civitas: mémoire et conscience urbaines en occident à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Ostfildern, 2003), p. 183.
[6] Johanek, 'Einleitung', pp. xiii–xiv; Hay, *Annalists and historians*, p. 78.
[7] Regula Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', in Graeme Dunphy (ed.), *EMC*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 2010), p. 1432
[8] Ibid., pp. 1437–38.

few urban ones.[9] Despite the developments in the field in recent decades, the current literature and state of research in many countries still leaves questions on the amount and type of urban historiography in Western Europe.[10]

Several studies have convincingly demonstrated that urban historiography can be found in the Southern Low Countries from the fourteenth century onward. Anne-Laure Van Bruaene and Tineke Van Gassen have studied manuscripts from Ghent, Paul Trio identified a town chronicle of Ypres, and Bram Caers discussed urban historical writing in Mechelen, to name just a few.[11] A similar study extending the geographical boundaries to include the Northern Low Countries and England promises to show equally interesting results.

Due to the work on this topic already appearing in the Southern Low Countries, connected with the high degree of urbanisation in that region, I have selected the County of Flanders as an area to compare Holland and England to. Other regions in the Southern Low Countries, such as the Duchy of Brabant, are equally well-researched and interesting for such a study and I use some examples from Brabant throughout this thesis. However, the three metropoles Ghent, Bruges and Ypres gave Flanders a distinct political character and background as well as making it a particularly obvious focus for any study on urban culture.

Although medieval London matched the size of Ghent and Bruges, the other urban centres in the Kingdom of England were small provincial towns. They have received less attention than London in urban historical research, but will be the main focus in my study of England as the size and situation of London was (and is) exceptional and did not represent general urban culture in England. In the County of Holland urbanisation was very high, but individual cities were much smaller than

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[9] M. Carasso-Kok, *Repertorium van verhalende historische bronnen uit de middeleeuwen. Helligenlevens, annalen, kronieken en andere in Nederlands geschreven verhalende bronnen* (The Hague, 1981).

[10] Stein, 'Selbstverständnis', p. 188.

[11] Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, *De Gentse memorieboeken als spiegel van stedelijk historisch bewustzijn (14de tot 16de eeuw)* (Ghent, 1998); Paul Trio, 'The chronicle attributed to "Olivier van Diksmuide": a misunderstood town chronicle of Ypres from late medieval Flanders', *The Medieval Chronicle* V (2008); Stein, 'Selbstverständnis'; Bram Caers, *Vertekend verleden: geschiedenis herschrijven in vroegmodern Mechelen 1500-1650* (Hilversum, 2016); Tineke Van Gassen, 'Het documentaire geheugen van een middeleeuwse grootstad: ontwikkeling en betekenis van de Gentse archieven: te vindene tghuent dat men gheerne ghevonden hadde' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Ghent University, 2017); Lisa Demets and Jan Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing in late medieval Flanders: the case of Bruges during the Flemish Revolt of 1482–1490', *UH* 43:1 (2016).

those in Flanders and more comparable in size to English towns. This study focuses particularly on the smaller towns of England and Holland, which have often received less attention in research than London and the Flemish metropoles.

The aim of this research is not to compare individual cities, but to find the overall occurrence of sources in those three political entities, and to explore their characteristics, similarities and differences considering their political contexts. It is interesting to compare these three regions because they all present a very different political structure and degree of urbanisation in the fifteenth century. Whereas England was a strict monarchy with little political autonomy for its cities, their continental counterparts possessed much more power.[12] In Flanders, the autonomous cities were the main power structure, and negotiated directly with their ruler, the Count of Flanders, whereas in Holland the provincial structure was the major political body but urban representatives had an institutionalised position within this. The political situation would colour the relationship towns had with their royal or ducal ruler and whether and how they perceived national historical narratives to be part of their urban historical identity.

These three regions were well connected through trade relations and foreign politics. There is a growing interest for study into this shared North Sea World in which cultural transfers and immigration were commonplace, however, historical and document culture has received less attention so far.[13] This study contributes to this field in its comparison of urban historical culture in this area.

I will use the framework of historical culture in this thesis, rather than a definition of 'urban chronicle'. In Chapter 1 I will discuss how the literature shows great confusion within the subject matter about what indeed constitutes either the 'chronicle' or the 'urban' parts of such a definition. This, and a growing realisation of the limitations of typology, has led to a search for another way to talk about these sources, rather than to try and fit them into the medieval genres of *historia*, *chronica*

[12] C.D. Liddy and J. Haemers, 'Popular politics in the late medieval city: York and Bruges', *English Historical Review* 128:533 (2013), pp. 771–805.
[13] Lorna E.M. Walker and Thomas R. Liszka, *The North Sea world in the Middle Ages: studies in the cultural history of north-western Europe* (Dublin, 2001); Hanno Brand and Leos Müller, *The dynamics of economic culture in the North Sea and Baltic Region: in the late Middle Ages and early modern period* (Hilversum, 2007); David Bates and Robert Liddiard (eds.), *East Anglia and its North Sea world in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2013); Brian Ayers, *The German ocean: medieval Europe around the North Sea* (Sheffield, 2016); and with a focus on literature, the current Leverhulme project at the University of Bristol led by Professor Ad Putter: 'The literary heritage of Anglo-Dutch relations, c.1050-c.1550'.

and *annales*. Historical culture, historical consciousness and social memory studies are for instance used to broaden the discussion in Flemish research.[14] I opt for 'historical culture' as a framework, because it allows for a broad study of a wide variety of forms of historical writing and helps their understanding within other forms of expression of historical culture within medieval towns. The concept of historical culture, also discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, encompasses all expressions of ideas about the past, in writing, songs, performance, art or architecture, as well as the ideas and communications about this within a society.[15] Using this framework allows an open-minded, international and interdisciplinary perspective.

I will compare written evidence of urban historical culture in England, Holland and Flanders with special attention for the way chronicles are influenced by their political situations. The main question I seek to answer is: What written expressions of late medieval urban historical culture can be found in England and Holland and compared to Flanders, and how do they relate to each other in their format, authorship, contents and function?

To understand urban historiography in its social and political context in the late medieval Low Countries and England, I will aim to answer several sub-questions. In Chapter 1 I will first address the questions 'what is an urban chronicle?' and 'what other concepts can be used to study urban historical writing?' I will discuss the field of urban historiography in Italy and Germany as well as Flanders and discuss medieval and modern definitions of 'chronicle' and 'urban chronicle'. Some definitions focus on contents, some on form, some on authorship. These perspectives can overlap or contradict, leaving no clear workable concepts. Describing alternative broader concepts used in the study of medieval urban history writing in the last decades and a new attention for records after the recent 'archival turn', I conclude the first part of Chapter 1 discussing the concept of 'historical culture'. This broad concept captures much more than the written evidence I will

[14] See Chapter 1. In Flanders by e.g. Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*; In Germany see titles like Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*; Jelle Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet: diplomatiek, politiek en herinneringscultuur van opstandelingen in de laatmiddeleeuwse en vroegmoderne stad (casus: Gent en Brugge)', *Handelingen van de koninklijke commissie voor geschiedenis* 176 (2010) for an example on social memory.
[15] D.R. Woolf, *The social circulation of the past: English historical culture 1500-1730* (Oxford, 2003). See also Chapter 1.

study in this thesis, giving the texts the necessary context to understand them. Because of its breadth it is a useful tool to capture the context of sources, the ideology contained in them and their relationships with other urban expressions. The second part of Chapter 1 provides a short overview of the historiography and state of research on this topic in the three regions I study. Some key political events are described for context and a number of main historiographical works are mentioned as they are referred to throughout the thesis.

Chapters 2-4 study different aspects of the urban texts under investigation in this thesis. They answer the question 'What are the characteristics of the formats, authors and contents of these urban sources and how do they compare across the three regions?' This will be a large comprehensive study of urban historiography in which social and political backgrounds are connected with codicological and palaeological information and the actual contents of the manuscripts. Because this thesis has a large overarching perspective, I do not intend to name specific authors or trace traditions of individual manuscripts or texts. I will rather focus on the type of persons involved, the nature of history written and the ways historiography is used for and influenced by political and social situations across three distinct regions.

Chapter 2 discusses the textual manuscript contexts and the formats the primary sources take. In describing examples for all categories, Chapter 2 is also an introduction to the material. The chapter explores how a single name such as 'London Chronicles' can incorporate a variety of manuscript formats, before discussing other examples in six categories. The six categories are town registers, magistrate lists, personal notebooks and commonplace books, adapted regional chronicles, other chronicles and poems and songs. These categories are fluid and not exclusive, as poems might appear in otherwise narrative text or lists become almost unrecognisable as entries become longer narratives. These six categories are not exhaustive and are by no means meant to create a new typology, but they provide a useful tool to compare manuscripts and texts in their diversity. The hybridity found confirms that there is no single dominant form for history writing. However, many formats occur in all three regions, although there are differences in popularity and local features. Several common formats, such as the magistrate lists and narrative historical accounts in town registers, highlight the close connection between historical writing and urban administration, a point that will run through all aspects

of this study.

In Chapter 3 I discuss authorship. This includes both a narrowing down of people responsible for writing these texts, if not by named individual, then by social group or profession, but also a discussion of the concept of medieval authorship. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries literacy in towns grew because of, and together with, the use of writing and documentary evidence in trade, legal matters and government. Professional writers, such as town clerks and notaries, therefore played a central role in urban historical writing in towns in both the Low Countries and England. Individual citizens, such as wealthier citizens, clergymen, or members of the Flemish chambers of rhetoric are examples of other, smaller, groups of writers of urban historical texts. Urban writers were influenced by synchronic and diachronic traditions of urban history writing and pragmatic record-keeping. These traditions often determined the format authors chose for their texts, thus partly explaining the similarities in format determined in the previous chapter. The large corpus of the Ghent memory books exemplify such a tradition, where both contemporary and successive writers opted for a similar structure and contents, placing their own writing within that typical urban Ghent tradition. The collective nature of urban historical authorship, both between contemporaries and in using and copying existing traditions, is important to understand any urban manuscript.

Chapter 4 moves into the contents of the texts. The first part of the chapter discusses the urban and national elements that can be recognised in the urban texts. There was evidently no dichotomy between those perspectives on history for medieval townspeople as they are used together in many manuscripts. However, it is interesting to see how they are combined and how well-known national narratives or structures, such as king lists and regnal dating, are fitting into a manuscript which has a clear urban character. The chapter looks at geographical focus, temporal structure, and the use of national narratives to discuss this process in detail. Continuations and adaptations of national narratives were not only used because they were well-known and an integral part of medieval citizens' historical culture, they also functioned to highlight a town's status through its dynastic connections and place in national history. Another intriguing part of the contents of urban historiography is the 'prehistory' of these regions. I will pay particular attention to origin and foundation myths in the second part of Chapter 4, as they provide interesting views of urban identity forming. In Holland and England

national origin myths had a strong urban character, which made it easy for towns to use them. English towns compared themselves to London, whereas towns in Holland were more generally interested in urban events and representation within the county. In contrast, there was more rivalry between Flemish cities, which highlighted their hard-won urban rights and privileges more than any origin myths. Local differences in the degree of urbanisation and political organisation can explain these differences.

In all three regions the fifteenth century was a politically turbulent time, which influenced city life. National conflicts such as the Wars of the Roses and related political and military unrest in England, and party conflicts between pro- and anti-Burgundian factions in Flanders and Holland had an impact on urban life and ideology. These political issues also left their traces in these sources as historiography and politics are closely related. Many local historical sources reflect a particular political view, or were written in response to social and political disturbance, even if authors did not intend to write a particularly political text. The situation, status and privileges of the present were often formed by and explained with the history of people and places. How the urge to write increases in times of large political or social change will appear in Chapter 5 and the influence of the different concrete political situations is explored specifically in that chapter. In this last chapter the political context of these sources and the political ideology within them is studied, showing rivalry between Flemish towns, a stronger focus on the connections with the regnal and national from the English towns and a communal urban feeling within towns in the County of Holland.

Chapter 5 also discusses other functions of written urban historical texts, starting with an exploration of the few prologues that appear in these sources, particularly those of the Chronicle of Haarlem and the Bristol *Kalendar*. These prologues highlight the other functions that are discussed in the chapter, from enhancing status and praising the town, to practical calendars for town officers and the creation of a legal memory. The chapter also shows several examples where local conflicts were the impetus to create specific historical accounts, either demonstrating antiquity and the power that came with an ancient past in the example of Exeter, or a concrete political warning to contemporaries in the poem on the 1481 attack on Dordrecht. Remembrance, either for practical use or for the purpose of status and praise is a key word in this chapter.

Throughout the chapters, but especially in Chapter 5, it becomes clear that the written evidence of historical culture that is central to this study cannot be fully understood without taking into account other forms of urban historical culture, such as statues, ceremonies or songs. All such expressions show an existing and identifiable urban historical culture and identity, apart from other towns and national identity. Only when we see legendary figures and political messages resonate in statues, songs and place names, is it possible to appreciate how deep these local narratives are embedded in an urban society.

In all chapters, whether discussing manuscript format, social context, contents or function, there have been surprising parallels between manuscripts from the three geographical regions under investigation. The strong influence from pragmatic literacy and administrative contexts has been a constant. It expresses itself in all three regions in the format of magistrate lists and historical notes in town registers, authorship by town clerks and other professional writers, and connections in contents and function to pragmatic use. This could be writing an account of a town's ancient history to prove its authority for a specific court case, but also keeping magistrate lists and other documents as a legal and administrative document for future generations.

Another recurring element was an interaction with national narratives known by a large part of the population. In all three regions continuations and adaptations of national histories, such as the *Brut* Chronicle or the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen*, with a particular urban character, are known. These national narratives and other elements, like regnal dating, established a city's relation to the dynasty and to other towns in the country. Origin myths are also a regular feature in urban texts, and especially in Holland and England, they are often borrowed from national histories. The exploration of such features clearly showed the 'urbanness' of these texts is not caught in a single feature, but could be shown through geographical detail, a political perspective or temporal framework and these manuscripts need to be discussed holistically to understand its historical culture.

Although regional differences do clearly exist in all aspects of these manuscripts there are remarkable similarities between urban texts from the Low Countries and England. Importantly, many elements found to be characteristic for urban expressions of historical culture in Holland, England and Flanders, such as the

fluidity of genres, the interconnection with administrative sources, and the collective traditions of record-keeping are also shared with medieval urban texts from Germany and Italy.

The primary sources from the County of Flanders used in this study were known through the literature, but the exploratory nature of this study meant that for Holland and England the scope and nature of sources was unclear. In England a few medieval urban chronicles have been identified in the literature; the majority of which come from the capital and are known as the London Chronicles.[16] But Bristol, York, Coventry, Colchester, and other towns in England are also occasionally mentioned as producers of urban historiography, although often not with much detail.[17] Similarly in Holland, isolated texts have received mention as urban chronicles, for example the Chronicle of Rotterdam, but no coherent picture of medieval urban history writing in either England or Holland exists.[18]

The primary sources discussed in more detail in this thesis have been selected in various ways. Through a snowball method the *EMC* and other repositories, as well as references in other literature, led to the identification of some interesting urban texts. In addition, I have explored the catalogues of many town archives, as well as the National Archives and Libraries of the three regions involved. Archive visits to the most promising looking city archives in all three regions then followed to explore potentially relevant sources in more detail. These methods have provided an interesting number of sources, but have by no means exhausted the search for urban historical writing in these regions. Availability of (digital) archive catalogues, incomplete or short catalogues descriptions or survival of these manuscripts in private hands, are just some of the elements that have influenced my search results. I am certain and excited that there are many more manuscripts in city archives in these countries that still wait for a study from the perspective of urban historical culture. However, these methods were effective for the purpose of this study, to gain

[16] Mary-Rose McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the fifteenth century: a revolution in English writing: with an annotated edition of Bradford, West Yorkshire Archives MS 32D86/42* (Cambridge, 2002) provides a wealth of information on these. Because London has been studied extensively I will prioritise primary sources outside London in my research.
[17] Stein, 'Selbstverständnis'; Christian D. Liddy, 'The rhetoric of the royal chamber in late medieval London, York and Coventry', *UH* 29:3 (2002); Ralph Flenley, *Six town chronicles of England* (Oxford, 1911).
[18] H. Ten Boom and J. Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek. Aantekeningen van Rotterdamse stadssecretarissen, 1315-1499 (1570)', *Nederlandse historische bronnen* II (1980).

an initial idea of the amount and nature of urban historical writing in medieval towns.

Some sources I refer to often in this thesis, such as the Bristol *Maire's Kalendar*, which is such a significant source, representing so many elements found across urban writing and with much context provided. Others I mention only once or twice, as examples throughout are selected based on relevance and clarity for the argument made. Overall, I tried to focus my attention on sources from Holland and England, from smaller towns, and highlight those not previously discussed in the context of urban historical writing. However, a relevant overview could not be given without also discussing and comparing more well-researched examples from Flanders, or for example the London Chronicles. There are other manuscripts that I have considered, but not studied in detail due to restrictions in access or time or that did not lend themselves well for a particular case-study. Due to the aim of an international comparative study, I have highlighted urban records that have some clear historical aspects. That is not to say that a collection of charters or laws cannot also give valuable information about the historical culture of a town, but such research would require more local in-depth study to understand legal and political contexts to a degree impossible to do well in such a large comparative study.

As urban historiography appeared in the late Middle Ages in these areas, I focus on texts from the fifteenth century. However, the scarcity of sources available to us will mean that I will consider sources from slightly outside this chronological framework. Local history writing became more common during the fourteenth century, so some early examples are included.

Similarly, this type of historical source did not suddenly stop being produced around 1500. The introduction of the printing press influenced the perception and spread of historical writing from the late fifteenth century, together with a growing literacy, especially in towns. In general the printing presses favoured national histories for their larger audiences, again giving national narratives a favoured position over local ones. Antiquarianism (for England) and humanism (for the Low Countries) are often also mentioned as explanations for changing attitudes to literature and history in the sixteenth century.[19] These terms in themselves are

[19] Bunna Ebels-Hoving, 'Johannes a Leydis en de eerste humanistische geschiedschrijving van Holland', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 100:1 (1985); Hay, *Annalists and historians*, p. 85.

vague and reactionary, but there are changes in historical writing during the sixteenth century. For instance, the number of town histories increased and more and more learned men made history their pastime and actively set out to write a history of their town favouring classical sources over medieval origin myths and spending much time on the description of buildings and characteristics of towns.[20] John Stow's *Survey of London*, mentioned at the start of this Introduction, is a famous example. These writers felt themselves distant enough from medieval authors to edit and critique their sources, as is demonstrated through Nashe's quote. Even though this got them interested in writing history themselves, their work cannot be seen anymore as a continuation of the same tradition.

However, there is of course no sudden changing point. In the first half of the sixteenth century there are many sources which are still widely considered, also by me, to be written in a medieval tradition, if there is any such thing. Worcester and King's Lynn, for example, have mayoral lists that run until the 1540s in a very similar style as some of the sources discussed in this thesis and Rotterdam similarly has such lists that continue into early modern times. The Ghent memory books tradition extended and increased significantly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and from England the Coventry Annals and Bristol *Kalender,* which are discussed in detail in this thesis, were continued and copied until later centuries.[21] However, the focus in this thesis will be on the fifteenth century for comparative purposes.

The relevance of this study, as well as its original contribution, derives from its breadth, both geographically and conceptually. The field of medieval local historiography knows very few large comparative studies, which concentrate on more than a single town or region. This international perspective will highlight urban historical sources in Holland and England and focus on smaller towns and their political relationships. The number of sources that have been or could have been included in this thesis is large, and surprisingly so, opening up new ideas regarding urban history writing in these areas. The international comparative

[20] D.R. Woolf, 'Genre into artifact: the decline of the English chronicle in the sixteenth century', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19:3 (1988); Alan Dyer, 'English town chronicles', *The Local Historian* 12:6 (1977).
[21] Diarmaid MacCulloch and Pat Hughes, 'A bailiff's list and chronicle from Worcester', *The Antiquaries Journal* 75 (1995); King's Lynn in Flenley, *Town chronicles*, pp. 84–95; 184–201; Alexandra Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory and autobiography in Reformation England', *Memory Studies* 11:1 (2018) discusses Worcester but also 17th-century ones from Chester and Shrewsbury; Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken.*

approach will let me explore many similarities in format, authorship, the influence of political and social context, and historiographical traditions of sources from different countries. Local differences will highlight variations in degrees of urbanisation, political structure and available chronicle traditions.

Additionally, the approach and theoretical framework of historical culture used allows for an analysis of diverse sources as it does not begin with a definition of what is an 'urban chronicle'. As such, engaging with administrative documents, poetry, and songs allows it to capture all sorts of written evidence, and understand them in combination with each other and with other forms of historical culture. By broadening the lens through which we study these sources, we have not only found many more records of mayors and sheriffs, dear years and great frosts, but also enhanced the understanding of urban historical culture.

Chapter 1: Background, traditions and framework

In this introductory chapter I will discuss the research focus and framework of the study of history writing in the past and trace this through more recent perspectives to the present. This chapter will start with the discussion of the definition of 'urban chronicle' and other concepts that have been used over time to replace this narrow focus. Looking at the contemporary names and titles medieval sources had will be the point of departure to discuss the several concepts used to categorise them by later historians. A lot of twentieth-century work has focused on looking at manuscripts from the starting point of a specific 'genre', which by times has restricted the number and nature of manuscripts considered urban historiography. As a broader framework in this thesis I have chosen to place my findings within the notion of 'historical culture'. Considering the scarceness of urban written historical sources, the concept of historical culture allows me to place manuscript texts within a context of non-narrative and non-written sources that equally express the town's historical culture.

The second part of the chapter will provide a short overview of the historiography of the field in Flanders, England and Holland that this thesis is built upon and mention key works that will be referred to often in the following chapters. It will also mention the political situation in the three regions, but with a focus on regional and national influences. This political background is necessary to consider because I will discuss instances where it influences urban politics and urban historical writing, and the relationship to the national and regional authorities are an important part of this research. There is no space here to delve into the history and politics of individual towns, but where context is necessary for case-studies this will be given in later chapters.

What is an (urban) chronicle?

As discussed in the Introduction, the examples of local chronicles given in reference

works, such as *EMC* and Carasso-Kok's *Repertorium* are actually largely monastic rather than urban, these local monastic chronicles have influenced the form of urban historic writing, as well as the definitions applied to them. The annalistic form used by monastic writers for the recording of lists of members and charters relating to land ownership has been an inspiration for the writers of civic chronicles. Lists of civic officials and charters were for many towns the first types of urban historical recording and these forms are still recognisable in many of the late medieval manuscripts discussed in this thesis.[22]

Carasso-Kok's repository uses the phrase 'narrative sources' in its title.[23] Another recent online repository for medieval manuscripts from the Low Countries is found at 'narrative-sources.be'. This shows an awareness of potential problems in using the term chronicle. At the same time, the Medieval Chronicle Society, founded in 1999, and the afore-mentioned *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* show that this term 'chronicle' still carries a unifying notion for many medievalist scholars. In this thesis I will not just study 'chronicles' and will very consciously move away from this concept. However, it is so interwoven with the study of history writing that an overview of definitions and past research into 'chronicles' and specifically 'urban chronicles' is very relevant.

Contemporary genres

The term 'chronicle' was contemporary to the Middle Ages and medieval genres were long used by scholars to understand medieval sources.[24] The medieval view on history writing distinguished between several genres. Chronicles, annals, histories, *gesta* (deeds, of princes or bishops) and *vitae* (saints lives) were the most common ones. The theoretical definitions of these genres have been used in the past to study and categorise medieval texts as demonstrated in titles such as Hay's *Annalists and Historians* (1977) or Green's *Chronicle into History* (1972).

Although the precise use of these and other titles has changed during the

[22] Italian city chronicles started from lists; Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*; Sarah Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy in later medieval England', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the administration of medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014), p. 220: lists were a first stage of record-keeping; and M.T. Clanchy, *From memory to written record. England, 1066-1307*, 3rd ed. (Chichester, 2013), p. 96.
[23] Carasso-Kok, *Repertorium.*
[24] Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), pp. 200–211 has been influential in supporting this view in the twentieth century.

many centuries of the Middle Ages, there was a clearly distinct form for these genres theoretically. Chronology is the most important aspect of both chronicles and annals. Where annals are short factual notes in tables of years, chronicles contain longer narrative entries connected by a certain theme, subject or geographical focus, but organised in a chronological structure. Annals are often perceived as being written contemporaneous to events, and thus often by a succession of writers, whereas chronicles were written after the events. In *historiae* the narrative is favoured and a coherent story on a subject is recorded in often more literary forms. Although it focuses on historical events, the meaning and moral of the story is more important than linear chronology. *Vitae* recorded saints lives and although they are often set in the past, they are generally studied separated from historiography, because of the very different aims and intention of the text. Deeds of non-saintly people are recorded in *gesta*, which are sometimes very similar to histories.[25]

To focus on the genres most relevant for history writing, the differences between annals and chronicles as well as chronicles and histories have caused debate. Annals, a genre that possibly originated from the margins of Easter tables, occurred in more elaborate forms, making them difficult to distinguish from chronicles. Similarly, in late medieval and early modern times the boundary between histories and chronicles also became more obscure as authors tried to combine the precision of dating of the chronicles with the more literary writing of histories.[26] In the later Middle Ages the boundaries between these genres had definitely faded so there is little evidence their definitions played any considerable role in the minds of the writers in the fifteenth century.[27] Moreover, these traditional

[25] David Dumville, 'What is a chronicle?', *The Medieval Chronicle* II (2002), pp. 1–4; Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, pp. 18, 203–07; Bunna Ebels-Hoving, 'Nederlandse geschiedschrijving 1350-1530. Een poging tot karakterisering', in B. Ebels-Hoving, C.G. Santing, and C.P.H.M. Tilmans (eds.), *Genoechlicke ende lustige historiën. Laatmiddeleeuwse geschiedschrijving in Nederland* (Hilversum, 1987), p. 219; Van Caenegem, *Guide to the sources*, p. 18–34; Deborah M. Deliyannis, 'Introduction', in Deborah M. Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, Boston, 2003); Franz J. Schmale, *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt, 1985), pp. 108–9; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. xix–xx.

[26] Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, pp. 203–06; Ebels-Hoving, 'Nederlandse geschiedschrijving', pp. 217–19; Dumville questioned any difference between chronicle and annal in the Middle Ages, Dumville, 'What is a chronicle?'

[27] Ebels-Hoving, 'Nederlandse geschiedschrijving', pp. 218–19; Edward Coleman, 'Lombard city annals and the social and cultural history of Northern Italy', in Sharon Dale, Alison Williams Lewin, and Duane J. Osheim (eds.), *Chronicling history: chroniclers and historians in medieval and renaissance Italy* (University Park, 2007), p. 3; Schmale, *Funktion und Formen*, pp. 118–119; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. xix.

medieval genres do not cover all medieval sources scholars deal with and even in the Middle Ages those genres were not exclusive or very rigid. New genres appeared in the late Middle Ages which do not fit this theoretical framework, from biographies to regional chronicles.[28]

Even though it seems relatively clear that these theoretical medieval genres did not bother most writers of fifteenth-century historiography very much, medieval chronicles have become iconic for both scholarly and the lay public and we still find ourselves having a discussion about the definition of the term 'chronicle' in the twenty-first century. The 2002 article 'What is a chronicle?' by David Dumville and the other publications mentioned in this chapter show that the question of definition is still worrying historians in the twenty-first century. The differences in genre between annals, chronicles and histories are debated time and again.

As soon as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scholars inspired by the antiquarian and humanist movements started using these categories again and, more importantly, also actively applied them to medieval sources without (or with other) titles.[29] This was then enforced by nineteenth and twentieth-century editors and scholars, who not only liberally used chronicle, annals or history to name untitled manuscripts, but also actively attempted to separate and create a clear typology of these sources.[30] Considering how alien this approach must be to medieval writers and readers, it is no surprise that any suggested typology is still very much criticised.

The problem with many of the modern definitions of these medieval genres is the lack of agreement in perspective. Recurring elements of chronicle definitions are a chronological structure and narrative entries. An overarching theme, such as a geographical area, the history of Christendom, or a group of people, is also significant in many (but not all) definitions. In modern literature there are also boundaries between universal or world chronicles, regional chronicles and local

[28] The term chronicle for example was still used, e.g. Chronicles of Holland. But many texts, especially smaller texts or those focused on a locality, used all types of names. And even when 'chronicle' was used, there is no reference to a clear medieval definition, Ebels-Hoving, 'Nederlandse geschiedschrijving', p. 220; Dumville, 'What is a chronicle?', p. 18; Schmale, *Funktion und Formen*, pp. 118–119.
[29] Ebels-Hoving, 'Nederlandse geschiedschrijving', pp. 217–19.
[30] Dumville, 'What is a chronicle?', pp. 4-5; Sjoerd Levelt, *Jan Van Naaldwijk's Chronicles of Holland: continuity and transformation in the historical tradition of Holland during the early sixteenth century* (Hilversum, 2011), pp. 23-27.

chronicles, which could be monastic or urban, to name just the most obvious subdivisions. The geographical area covered by the text is often the main indicator, although many combinations of the above are possible. This further confuses definitions, as obviously works written in monasteries can take the form of annals and chronicles can have been written in a particular city or court but still be a world chronicle in its contents. Some definitions focus on the contents, some on the layout or form, some on the chronology.[31] This means that sources can fit into a category from one perspective, but not from another, making definitions problematic and comparisons across sources, cities or countries extremely difficult.

Definitions

The study of medieval 'urban chronicles' or 'town chronicles' has seen a similar referral to medieval concepts, with comparable problems. These problems are even more obvious for urban chronicles, as the amount of primary sources is so much smaller. It has caused scholars to perceive sources using definitions that do not quite fit, causing either their exclusion from studies or a selective study of certain elements of sources.

Unsurprisingly, there is no general agreement on exact definitions of town chronicles, but we can identify common elements of definitions; two in particular stand out. A first recurring feature is a writer from, or at least based in, the town, often a town clerk or official.[32] The second is the narrow geographical focus area of the text; the contents are focused on events in the town, and 'we hear about external affairs only in so far these were directly linked to events in the town'.[33] However, other elements are mentioned by historians. For example, Regula Schmid paid much attention to audience and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene emphasised the commission of, or a writer connected to, the town government, as have several German scholars.[34]

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[31] Schmale, *Funktion und Formen*, p. 107; Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 108–133.
[32] E.g. Francis R.H. Du Boulay, 'The German town chroniclers', in R.H.C. Davis (ed.), *The writing of history in the middle ages. Essays presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981); Stein, 'Selbstverständnis', p. 182; Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 14.
[33] Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, pp. 14, 42; also e.g. Stein, 'Selbstverständnis', pp. 182–183; Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', p. 1435; Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 125.
[34] Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', p. 1432; Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, 'L'écriture de la mémoire urbaine en Flandre et Brabant', in E. Crouzet-Pavan (ed.), *Villes de Flandre et d'Italie (XIIIe-XVIe siècle): Les enseignements d'une comparaison* (Turnhout, 2008), p. 151; Wolfgang Eggert, 'Zu Fragen der städtischen Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland während des späten Mittelalters', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 9 (1985), p. 126; Klaus Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung in den wendischen Hansestädten', in Hans Patze (ed.), *Geschichtsschreibung und*

Not only origin and contents, but also function is discussed as an identifiable characteristic. Propagating civic consciousness, an identifiable typical 'civic spirit' or 'civic consciousness', is another defining element for some.[35] Hans-Werner Goetz even characterised it as 'lokaler Institutionsgeschichte', stressing the link to formal institutions in the writing of urban chronicles.[36]

Historians discussing urban chronicles face the same difficulty as those handling the definition of any medieval chronicle; many definitions exist from a variety of perspectives, making comparison or a clear typology impossible. Publications on urban chronicle definitions are generally focused on the 'urban', stressing influence from the town council or the origin of the author. However, when they apply this, the form of the contents often seems to be the reason sources are discarded, applying rules of undeclared underlying definitions of what 'chronicles' should look like. On form, a development is often assumed, and sometimes explicitly narrated, where town chronicles originate from town records in town books. Elisabeth Van Houts characterised these as follows: 'The former are historical narratives in chronological order which sometimes contain the text of documents, whereas the latter consist mainly of documents with some connecting prose.'[37] This would suggest that the change of form into a more narrative account justifies a definition of chronicle. When this transformation takes place, and how one has to identify specific manuscript texts on such a vague spectrum, is however entirely unclear.

The traditional understanding of what constitutes a 'proper' town chronicle was based on German and Italian city (state) examples and this has severely influenced the study of medieval urban history writing.[38] The conviction among scholars that

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Geschichtsbewußtsein (Sigmaringen, 1987), pp. 414–416; H. Schmidt, *Die deutschen Städtechroniken als Spiegel des bürgerlichen Selbstverständnisses im Spätmittelalter* (Göttingen, 1958), p. 18.

[35] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 15–16, 22; McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 140–146;. Stein, 'Selbstverständnis', p. 183.

[36] Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 122; Gerhart Burger, *Die südwestdeutschen Stadtschreiber im Mittelalter* (Böblingen, 1960), p. 337.

[37] Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 16. See also Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung', pp. 414–415.

[38] An exception is Dyer, 'Town chronicles', which only studies English examples. He dismisses any chronological, narrative text to be a chronicle, very remarkable for almost any historian for that is usually exactly taken as the definition of a chronicle. Instead, Dyer only considers mayoral lists with historical notes added to be 'proper' chronicles. Setting such a strict definition indeed results in a disappointing dismissal of anything written pre-sixteenth century or in another format, making his observations on 'town chronicles' mostly irrelevant.

Germany and Northern Italy are the areas that the urban chronicle belongs to is strong.[39] The sheer volume of the German *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte* series that started in 1862 and continues until the present day is just one example that there is substance to this conviction and many scholars have focused on this area. However, in most of the literature on these sources any discussion about what allows it to be called an urban chronicle and why this would be such a German or Italian feature, is lacking. This has become problematic because of the conviction that urban chronicles are in fact *exclusive* to Germany and Italy.[40] The problems this causes are clear in Robert Stein's attempt to distil a definition from the literature and selection criteria used in the field, and thus mainly based on German examples. He noted three main characteristics used for definition: a display of urban self-consciousness and an origin in the town government as well as a restricted territory of present-day Germany, Switzerland and Italy.[41] This leads to a circular argument. When texts have to appear in a certain area to be called urban chronicles, the conclusion that urban chronicles only appear in a certain area is obviously meaningless. Although Stein used this characteristic as part of a review of the urban chronicle literature and stated himself the research area should be extended, it is not the only example of self-validating definitions based on secondary rather than primary sources. Wolfgang Eggert observes that urban history writing consists of those texts where everything, content, genre, audience, is about the town.[42] This excludes any interest townsmen might have had for national, chivalric or Christian history and its influence on the town, or use of other genres; deciding what an urban chronicle should look like before examining the primary material.

Even when the idea that urban chronicles exist outside Germany and Italy is accepted, the same problems are carried forwards when new areas are studied based on the same limited scholarship and with a similar view to establishing

[39] Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', although this overview mentions other areas, the literature and examples all stem from German and Italian examples.
[40] Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 16; Van Caenegem, *Guide to the sources*, p. 25; Johanek, 'Einleitung', pp. vii–xix; Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 122; Peter Clark, 'Visions of the urban community. Antiquarians and the English city before 1800', in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), *The pursuit of urban history* (London, 1983), pp. 105–6; Vasina, 'Medieval urban historiography'.
[41] Stein argues that texts similar to the German city chronicles also occur in other regions, such as the Low Countries and England. Stein, 'Selbstverständnis', pp. 187–195.
[42] Eggert, 'Städtischen Geschichtsschreibung', pp. 124–127.

definitions.[43] Although it is clear that the amount of medieval urban historical sources from Italy and Germany exceeds the amount of sources in other Western European countries, the qualitative difference is hard to prove based on the literature. However strongly this conviction of stereotypical German or Italian urban chronicles is repeated, ambiguity about what makes an urban chronicle filters through descriptions of Italian urban chronicling in the fact that even the famous Florentine *ricordanze* are sometimes mentioned as great examples of urban chronicling and in other views considered mere sources for later urban chronicles.[44] We need to take a step back and start with the primary sources, rather than tweaking definitions that have been drawn up from a problematically limited sample of sources. More recent scholarship in Flanders, but in communication with other European countries, is taking this view, and this thesis sits within these recent developments. The proceedings of a 2015 conference on new approaches to urban historiography held in Bruges, highlights attention for less stereotypical urban history writing as well as the use of broader concepts instead of strict definitions.[45]

Contemporary titles

Discussing medieval and modern definitions of genres is a very theoretical approach. From a more empirical perspective we can start with the texts studied in this thesis to see what contemporary names and titles they carried and whether this has any bearing on the theoretical discussions on definition. Examining these concepts does not only provide evidence on how contemporaries might have perceived those texts and their function, but also in many cases how later (often nineteenth-century) scholars chose to see these works, which contributed greatly to the twentieth-century understanding of those texts. The need to scrutinise these titles is exemplified by the terms given to the chronicle attributed to Olivier van Dixmude from Ypres. The 1835 edition is titled 'Remarkable events, mainly in

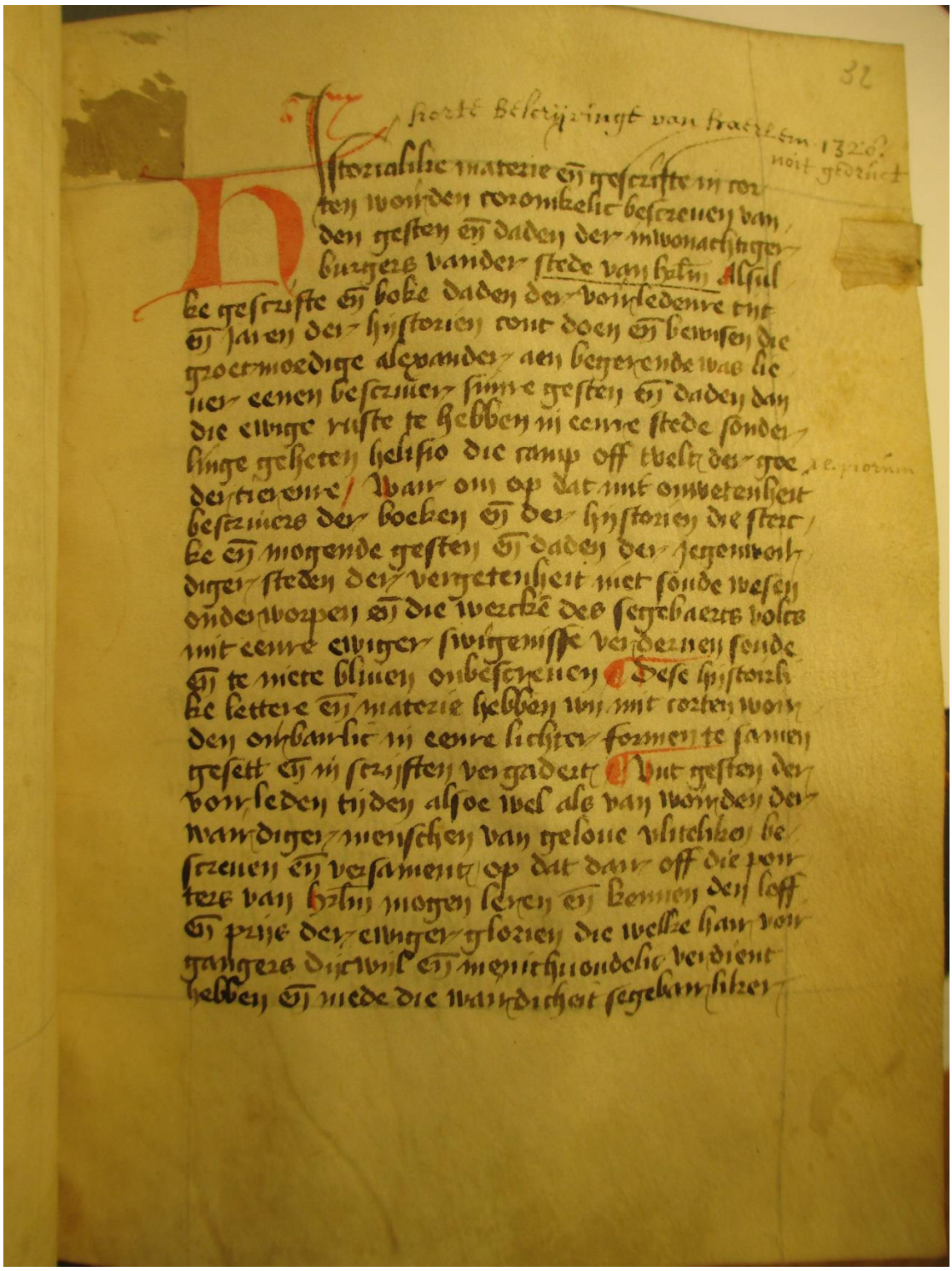
[43] See Stein, 'Selbstverständnis' for a critique; and Van Bruaene, 'L'écriture', p. 151 for an example to formulate fitting definitions for Flanders, which suffer from similar typological problems.
[44] Hay, *Annalists and historians*, p. 78; Louis Green, *Chronicle into history: an essay on the interpretation of history in Florentine fourteenth-century chronicles* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 87–89; Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, pp. 9–11; Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 49.
[45] Jan Dumolyn and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, 'Introduction', in Bram Caers, Lisa Demets, and Tineke Van Gassen (eds.), *Urban history writing in North-Western Europe (15th-16th centuries)*, (forthcoming).

Flanders and Brabant, and also in the neighbouring regions, from 1377 until 1443….'[46] Paul Trio has shown however that this came entirely from the nineteenth century editor, who was interested in the text as a regional chronicle. The contemporary title was in fact 'This is a booklet of those who have been part of the Ypres government since the year 1366', and is one of the reasons Trio has identified the text as an urban rather than a regional chronicle.[47]

On many occasions in this thesis *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar* will be an exceptional source in the amount of information it provides us with, particularly through the lengthy introductions by its self-identified writer, town clerk Robert Ricart. His writing shows that at least some fifteenth-century writers were indeed very aware of different possible titles and their implications. He specifies the title he perceives fitting for the volume that he is working on: '… this present boke for a remembratif evir hereaftir, to be called and named the Maire of Bristowe is Register, or ellis the Maire is Kalender.'[48] In the prologue he also specifies the texts of the first three parts as chronicles, the fifth part to be a 'kalendar' and the sixth, which we would now call custumal, to be a copy of 'a boke' from Henry Daarcy from London.[49] 'Book' is used here as a very neutral term, whereas 'chronicle' is used for the parts that describe history. 'The first [part] to shewe by cronicle the begynnyng and furst foundacioun of this saide worshipfull Toune of Bristowe'. And on Part Three: 'And whate actes and gestes hath happened to be donne in euery Maires yere, abregged bi cronicle vnto this present yere and tyme of this boke makinge.'[50]

The use of 'chronicle' here is mirrored in the Chronicle of Haarlem's (not its contemporary title) first sentence, which mentions the text is 'written chronically'.[51] The term seems to be reserved for a particular way of describing events in the past rather than as a noun in itself and to hold some suggestion of chronology. 'Kalendar' has a very functional administrative connotation: 'to shewe by Kalender where and in whate Bookes a man shall fynde, rede, and see many and diuerse fraunchises, libertees, aunciant vsages and customes'.[52] It is significant that the overall title Ricart

[46] Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide', p. 214 'Merkwaerdige gebeurtenissen vooral in Vlaenderen en Brabant en ook in de aengrenzende landstreken, van 1377 tot 1443,…'
[47] Ibid., p. 217, n. 15.
[48] Robert Ricart, Lucy Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar* (London, 1872), p. 3.
[49] Ibid., pp. 3–5.
[50] Ibid., p. 4.
[51] *'coronikelic bescreven',* Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Register 928, f. 32r.
[52] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 5.



Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Register 928, f. 32v, start of Chronicle of Haarlem. With the kind permission of Noord-Hollands Archief.

suggests for his book is either Register or Kalender. Although it obviously has become known by the latter, the part of the actual manuscript this refers to is very minor. Either the term chronicle was too limited to historical information to apply or the administrative function of the volume was more significant to the town clerk than the substantive chronicle content of the book.

Two further groups of urban historical texts that I will use frequently in this thesis are the *memorieboeken* (memory books) from Ghent and the corpus known as the London Chronicles. Contemporaries used neither the term 'memory book' nor 'chronicle' to describe the Ghent manuscripts, but merely 'book' or 'register' if anything. Most of these manuscripts have no contemporary title, but start with a short introductory sentence such as 'Here after follow the aldermen of both benches of the city of Ghent in the years 1301-…'[53] The term *memorieboek* that later came into use and is now the accepted name for this genre of Ghent manuscripts could originate from Ghent UL MS3813, which is a late sixteenth-century manuscript and MS2553, a nineteenth-century copy.[54] These manuscripts start stating 'This what here follows is memory in short of how and in what way the city of Ghent was governed'.[55]

Later archivists or binders had no problem seeing the *memorieboeken* as chronicles. Although some manuscripts also contain small world chronicles (UL Ghent MS3792) or chronicles of Flanders (Ghent UL MS2489) in addition to the lists of aldermen, not all of them do (e.g. Ghent UL MS2337 '*Chronycke van Ghendt MS (tot 1585)*') and this does not explain the use of the word chronicle. But there was no clear consensus over a genre, as Ghent UL MS159, written in a late sixteenth-century hand, and MS G6142 use '*Gensche geschiedenissen*' [Ghent histories] on the spine,

[53] See Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 50–51. See the appendix for a list of more detailed descriptions of all the *memorieboeken* she studied. This paragraph is based on this publication for those manuscripts I have not been able to see myself.
[54] Although memory books were a known medieval genre. Many monasteries and urban guilds had memory books in which they kept their customs and their lists of members. A connection to the lists of Ghent aldermen is therefore not farfetched. The memory book of the guild of the furriers [*peltiers*] from Bruges is just one example of this. Any link with these registers as chronicles is from a later date, e.g. A. Schouteet, 'Kroniekachtige aantekeningen uit het gildeboek van de Brugse droogscheerders 1519-1598', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor geschiedenis, gesticht onder de benaming 'Société d'émulation' te Brugge* XCIV (1957) calls some of the entries in the book 'chronicle-like notes'.
[55] *'Dit naervolghende es memorie int curte hoe ende in wat manieren de stede van Ghent ghegouvernert..'* Ghent, UL, MS3813, f. 1r; and Ghent, UL, MS2553, f. 2r. MS 3813's parchment binding also has the title *'Bouch van Memorien der stadt Ghendt'* [Book of Memories of the city of Ghent] on the spine.

and Annals and Year Books were also used. [56]

Similar to the Ghent memory books, the London Chronicles were referred to by a variety of terms. 'Chronicle' has been used both for the corpus of manuscripts, as well as in later (mostly print) common names, for example, 'The Newe Cronycles', 'The Great Chronicle', 'Gregory's Chronicle' and 'Arnold's Chronicle'.[57] But studied in more detail, the latter's full title in print was 'In this booke is conteyned the names of ye baylifs custos mairs and sherefs of the cite of london from the tyme of king richard the furst &c' suggesting the term 'chronicle' was, again, an editor's attribution.[58]

The London Chronicles have often been named as an exceptional body of urban chronicles outside Germany or Italy.[59] Much of this status is purely based on the accepted use of the term 'chronicle' for this group. Mary-Rose McLaren, who studied the London Chronicles extensively, is very conscious in her use of language on, for example, scribes, writers or compilers, but does never define the term chronicle. Although she acknowledges that different formats exist within the London Chronicles ('The text in *Letter Book F* is also primarily a list, …, but has some chronicle-like aspects'), she uses the term chronicle to describe all London Chronicles, as well as some of their sources.[60] When McLaren describes 'chronicle-like aspects' this seems to imply they have longer narrative entries. In reality, the title 'chronicle' is almost never contemporaneous for texts now considered London Chronicles, and the format within this group of manuscripts differs dramatically, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. The international acceptance that London had a tradition of urban chronicles demonstrates the major influence editors and historians have had on our perception of urban historical writing.

Most medieval manuscripts I will study have no titles as such, but some have headings stating the content of the text to follow. For example, the text generally referred to as the 'Chronicle of Colchester' has a Latin heading *De Colocestria et Coele* [About Colchester and Coel].[61] The text known in the literature by the descriptive

[56] Seventeenth-century Brussels, RL, MS16878-80: *'Annalen'*; and nineteenth-century Ghent, CA, Series 101 no. 4: *'jaerboeken van Gend'.*
[57] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 15–29.
[58] Ibid., pp. 25–26. Interestingly, an 1811 reprint was called 'The Customs of London', ibid., p. 115.
[59] E.g. Hay, *Annalists and historians*; Stein, 'Selbstverständnis'.
[60] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 22.
[61] Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, D/B 5 R1.

title '*Het boeck van al 't gene datter geschiedt is binnen Brugghe*' [The book of all that happened within Bruges] obviously got its title from the heading: 'This here following is all that happened in the city of Bruges since Anno Domini 1477, the 14th day of February'.[62] The manuscript containing the so-called Chronicle of Rotterdam has no title. The first section with historical notes starts with a simple 'Nota' and other sections have contemporary subheadings giving a short summary of the content, such as 'On the storm on St Marten's day' and 'More on the Duke of Guelders'.[63] These headings give us no indication how contemporaries categorised the texts, if they did so at all, although a focus on the urban context for Colchester and Bruges is very interesting to note.

Where we have contemporary references to these texts they rarely refer to history writing and are neutral and descriptive, such as 'book' (The Black Book, The Oath Book) or 'register'.[64] Whereas 'book' seems to be a very neutral term (Ricart used it for the entire volume he worked on), which is only given meaning through an adjective, such as a *Liber Custumarum*, the title 'register' does have certain administrative implications. In Middle Dutch and Middle English 'register' has a decidedly administrative or documentary connotation and is used for volumes containing legal documents or customs. Although in Middle French 'register' can also be a book containing history, the emphasis in its occurrence is on the documentary use as well.[65] This means we need to consider a link to legal, administrative use or origin of many of the manuscripts as well as studying them as historical writing.

This overview of contemporary titles in these urban manuscripts shows that the application of the term 'town chronicle' in twentieth-century scholarly literature, whether following medieval or modern definitions, is not a helpful tool for researching these texts as it was not a concept many of the writers had in mind. The use of the label 'chronicle' through the ages is indicative of how sensitive to trends

[62] Brussels, RL, MS13167-69, f. 23r.
[63] Rotterdam, CA, no. 690, fols. 254r, 259v, 260v. The manuscript is known as *oud memoriaal van schepenen* (old memory book of the aldermen), but it is unclear when this title became common. It is not now to be found in the original manuscript and although it has been rebound at least once, there is no sign pages have been lost.
[64] Schmale, *Funktion und Formen*, p. 115: *'liber'* as *'allgemein Bezeichnung'*, general term.
[65] Robert E. Lewis, ed., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, 2001); Frédéric Godefroy, ed., *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du 9e au 15e siècle...* (Paris, 1881); J. Verdam and C.H. Ebbinge Wubben, eds., *Middelnederlandsch handwoordenboek* (The Hague, 1932).

the definitions of these terms can be. The specific application of town chronicles to the regions of Germany and Italy based on strict definitions is something reasonably recent and artificially created. Interestingly, many texts considered Italian urban chronicles also lack such a title and have descriptive headings similar to the Chronicle of Rotterdam.[66] The recognition of the London Chronicles or other texts as possible town chronicles is entirely based on the traditional use of a later name rather than any medieval definition or commonality in form.

In this thesis I do study all these texts as examples of written evidence of urban historical culture, and given the above discussion I do not feel the need to apply specific definitions. However, I will use names that are most common in the literature, whether they derive from the later edition or the original manuscript. Not only will this be less confusing when referring to the established literature, the majority of these sources do not offer a contemporary title as alternative. As long as it is explicitly acknowledged that these names are no typological aide and bear no meaning to their format or function, the use of titles including 'Chronicle' or 'Annal' does not hamper the discussion.[67]

There is no need to limit this study to a genre based on specific forms or contents. Heinrich Schmidt's discussion of the relationship between the German *Stadtbuch* and *Stadtchronik* is an example of a different approach to these two related genres of historical texts than the linear development described above. Schmidt saw charters and administrative documents as part of history writing: 'Wo man sie eninfügt, sind sie die Chronik selbst.'[68] Because the function, a demonstration of civic consciousness, is similar, he regarded both as examples of urban history writing. Schmidt's 'only the form is different' portrays a perspective where function and origin are central, leaving the difference in form almost irrelevant.[69] Not only is and will there be no coherent generally accepted definition of (town) chronicle, this typological discussion also ignores many other forms of medieval sources of urban writing, such as personal notebooks, diaries, songs and

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[66] Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, p. 12. Chronicles were exclusively chronological in organisation. The lack of continuity often exemplified by title headings such as 'How the Duke of Milan died' above each paragraph.
[67] Anne-Laure Van Bruaene discusses the nineteenth-century origin of *'memorieboek'*, but decides to use it in her studies because the term is established in the literature, but also because it suits their form. Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 50–51. Similarly, I do not have a problem per se with McLaren using the term London Chronicle, but a definition and discussion of its use should be part of her study.
[68] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 21.
[69] Ibid., pp. 18–22.

many other forms of memory and record-keeping that do not fit traditional medieval genres. However, all of these forms reveal to us how medieval writers thought about, appropriated and recorded the past. Alternative, broader concepts have thus been sought by historians in recent decades to discuss all relevant sources, especially 'historical consciousness', 'social memory' and 'historical culture' are concepts used in this context. I will prefer the latter in this thesis.

Theoretical frameworks

For this study on urban history writing, social history, urban culture and local history are all equally essential. Lately urban history has moved away from focus on historical and institutional data and more and more information appears on social and cultural history of the towns. This trend can for example be seen in how historians see the definition of a town. A century ago this was simply a matter of an official royal grant or a charter of urban liberties, but in recent years the legal status has become less important and more attention has been given to the complexity of the society and social and economic constructions that are in place, to determine whether to speak of an urban centre or not. One example is Gervase Rosser's 1984 article *The essence of medieval urban communities: the vill of Westminster 1200-1540*, in which he states that '[m]ore than any institutional feature, it is the sense of community reflected in these various activities which distinguishes successful town life.'[70] Consequently, the last decades have seen a significant rise in publications on the rituals and ceremonies in medieval towns, social organisation and urban topography. However, urban economy and urban administration are still essential topics in medieval urban history today.

'Historical consciousness' is one of the concepts used to discuss meaning, function and reception of historical writing without the need to classify the format. Especially in German literature *Geschichtsbewusstsein* is a recurring theme. Many do not go into detail, but Goetz specifies three elements: consciousness of history and historicality;

[70] A. G. Rosser, 'The essence of medieval urban communities: the vill of Westminster 1200-1540: The Alexander Prize Essay', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 34 (1984); and in Richard Holt and Gervase Rosser, eds., *The English medieval town: a reader in English urban history, 1200-1540* (London, 1990), pp. 216–237.

a view of history; historical interest/interpretation.[71] Although vague when used as requirement of a medieval chronicle definition, for who decides when enough urban historical consciousness is portrayed, this concept has brought interesting results when used to broaden the debate.

One of the limitations of using the concept historical consciousness, is the tendency to focus on texts that very consciously use history. Van Bruaene's use of this 'conscience historique', for example, describes self-conscious use of history by socio-political groups. The danger is that by focussing on texts that contain a historical interpretation or portray a specific historical perspective, we exclude texts where history is referred to or used in a non-deliberate way, for example in diaries, as well as those parts of history that are not politically useful to the selective memory of urban institutions or individuals.[72]

The use of historical consciousness to discuss urban history writing has been very helpful in broadening the scope of research and reflects developments in historiographical study throughout the twentieth century. More emphasis has been given to the author, audience and reception of the works as well as to a wider range of sources historical consciousness can be preserved in.[73] The attention for other than traditional historiographical sources in the study of medieval history writing was increased due to the so-called 'linguistic turn' in historical research from the 1960s and 70s, giving more attention to the literary aspects of written sources.[74] It opened up new categories of sources to consider for historiographical research, such as autobiographies and diaries. The focus on linguistics also brought interest in the difference between reading and listening to sources, orality and literacy, and the question of audience groups.[75]

This attention to audience and use of texts were counteracted with an urge

[71] Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 21–23.
[72] Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, 'S'imaginer le passé et le présent: conscience historique et identité en Flandre à la fin du Moyen Âge', in H. Brand, P. Monnet, and M. Staub (eds.), *Memoria, communitas, civitas: mémoire et conscience urbaines en occident à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Ostfildern, 2003); Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 15.
[73] E.g. Van Bruaene, 'S'imaginer le passé'; Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 26, 38.
[74] Brian Stock, *The implications of literacy: written language and models of interpretation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Princeton, 1983); Hayden V. White, *The content of the form. Narrative discourse and historical representation* (Baltimore ; London, 1987).
[75] Stanley Fish, *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities* (Cambridge, 1980); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The past as text: the theory and practice of medieval historiography* (Baltimore, 1997); Clanchy, *From memory.*

to not lose sight of the physical text itself. The influence of New Philology and this 'material turn' from the 1990s placed a lot of emphasis on the material aspects of manuscript texts, such as material, decoration and layout, searching for traces of owners and users as well as writers.[76] New Philology advocates a holistic approach to a text, considering it not a version or copy of a work, a view common in medieval history writing, but being an object in itself, communicating through its contents, social context and materiality. I will keep to this approach in this thesis and consider political ideology, use, authorship, layout and indeed form and materiality. A disinterest in definitions for traditional genres should not make us discard the importance format can carry in showing authorship, intended audience or the message contained in layout.

Current attention is now more on the reception and the social context the manuscript originated and was used in. Authorship, audience and reception have been central themes of research of urban sources in many ways. Recently, Lisa Demets and Jan Dumolyn list these, together with evidence of an 'urban ideology' as defining aspects of the urbanity of a textual source.[77] The social context was also essential as the influential perspective of collective and social memory studies.

Social memory studies is several decades old yet still very influential and important to discuss here because of its explicit use by many who study historical writing in medieval towns. The modern use of collective memory was introduced in publications of Maurice Halbwachs and his colleague Marc Bloch in the first half of the twentieth century.[78] Collective memory conveys the idea that an individual's memory is shaped by the larger social groups they are part of. The memory each society creates of its past influences its identity, ideology and actions. Although

[76] Alexandra Walsham, 'The social history of the archive: record-keeping in early modern Europe', *P&P,* 233: Supplement 11 (2016), pp. 9–48, esp. pp. 11, 12, 29; Tjamke Snijders, 'Work, version, text and scriptum: high medieval manuscript terminology in the aftermath of the New Philology', *Digital Philology: a journal of medieval cultures* 2:2 (2013); Jan Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles in an urban environment: the Middle Dutch "Excellent Chronicle of Flanders" tradition', *Lias - Journal of early modern intellectual culture and its sources* 41:2 (2014).

[77] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', pp. 30–34; see also Schmid, 'Town Chronicles'.

[78] For an overview and development of the field of social memory studies see Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social memory studies: from "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998); Jelle Haemers, 'Social memory and rebellion in fifteenth-century Ghent', *Social History* 36:4 (2011); Kimberley Rivers, 'Memory and history in the Middle Ages', in Stefan Berger and Bill Niven (eds.), *Writing the history of memory* (London, 2014).

Halbwach characterised collective memory as plural, later scholars, most famously Fentress & Wickham, found its collective overtones too strong and several alternative concepts were introduced, such as cultural memory and social memory.[79] Social memory studies is more aware of the individual creating memories, even though still acknowledging that what and how one remembers is formed by social groups and social forces. There is also a great awareness in social memory studies of there being a multitude of social memories in any given society, being formed by social, cultural and political groups, and a constant change in this social process.

Social memory studies has been used widely in medieval studies, and is for the purposes of this thesis particularly recognised in the study of Flemish sources. Most evidently, Jelle Haemers has discussed many urban sources from a perspective of social memory of groups of city residents and Anne-Laure van Bruaene's work is an example of the application of the related phrase 'urban memory'.[80] Not to say memory studies did not also influence medieval studies in other countries.[81] Although the focus of this research is not on social memory, I use insights from this valuable perspective, which is particularly useful when discussing the social context and reception of texts. Focussing on the ideas a society or group in society holds about the past, is an essential part of all the historical aspects that are studied within the urban historical culture.

These influences have not only had an effect on the study of historiography, but also on the closely related field of archival studies. Since the nineteenth century, administrative documents were studied in a very different framework than history writing, with a strong focus on extracting relevant bureaucratic or institutional information.

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[79] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social memory: new perspectives on the past* (Oxford, 1992); Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and memory* (Manchester, 2007); Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young, *Cultural memory studies: an international and interdisciplinary handbook* (Berlin, 2008); Aleida Assmann, *Cultural memory and Western civilization: functions, media, archives* (Cambridge, 2011); Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of remembrance: memory and oblivion at the end of the first millenium* (Princeton, 1996).

[80] E.g. Haemers, 'Social memory'; Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet'; Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, 'Political poems and subversive songs: the circulation of "public poetry" in the later medieval Low Countries', *Journal of Dutch Literature* 4 (2015); Van Bruaene, 'S'imaginer le passé'; Van Bruaene, 'L'écriture'.

[81] Robert Tittler, 'Reformation, civic culture and collective memory in English provincial towns', *UH* 24:3 (1997); Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory and autobiography'; Judith Pollmann, *Memory in early modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Oxford, 2017).

As a logical consequence to what we can refer to simplistically as the linguistic and material turns, more recently there has been an 'archival turn' in the study of medieval sources. After broadening the scope of historians to include literary and biographical sources, and an increased attention for the material manuscript, the archives and administrative sources have been fully embraced as useful sources for historical research. An historical interest in archival sources is not new, but was often limited to study by archivists rather than historians, or only employed for institutional or judicial historical research. Seeing archival sources as equally telling for social and cultural history and studying the logic and formation of medieval and early modern archives is a recent development breaking through the traditional divide of historical and archival studies.[82] The concepts of record-keeping, documentary culture and pragmatic literacy and their practice and significance have been incorporated into medieval studies. Interconnections between administrative record-keeping and literary creativity have been identified, especially in the circles of medieval professional writers such as notaries and town clerks.

In the study of urban history writing, these developments have had great influence, shifting a lot of focus to the contents of the archival chests in medieval towns next to and in connection to more traditional narrative history writing. The recent publications of a special supplement of *Past and Present* on the Social History of the Archive and a *European History Quarterly* special issue Archival Transformations in Early Modern Europe publicise the need to see records and archives in a new light taking into account the social, religious and political context, and material approach.[83] Scholars now see those boundaries as much more fluid and transparent and the historicity of administrative records has become a very interesting field of study. There is now a widely spread realisation that records in all formats, from personal notebooks to official civic administrative documents can shed light on the political, social and historical culture of the time.

[82] Terry Cook, 'The archive(s) is a foreign country: historians, archivists, and the changing archival landscape', *The American Archivist* 74:2 (2011); Walsham, 'Social history of the archive'. All other contributions in the special *Past & Present* Supplement 11 are very useful. See also Elizabeth Yale, 'The history of archives: the state of the discipline', *Book History* 18:1 (2015).

[83] See *P&P* 233: Supplement 11 (2016) and Filippo De Vivo, Andrea Guidi, and Alessandro Silvestri, 'Archival transformations in early modern European history', *European History Quarterly* 46:3 (2016).

The field of study of medieval history writing has thus changed and many, although not by any means all, medieval historians see aspects of history writing in a broad range of written sources.[84] In this thesis I am very conscious that the manuscript texts I study are of a wide variety of formats, and that they are influenced by documentary traditions of both literary and administrative nature, as the developments in the field have urged historians to understand. One of the main threads through this thesis is the close link with the town administration in form and contents of sources as well as authorship. Moreover, I also want to stress the point that understanding these examples of urban history writing, especially as they are so few and far between, can only be attempted in as wide as possible a framework. This means I do adhere to the ideas of New Philology and study the texts holistically, including their materiality and layout. It also means I do study its authorship, audience and reception, though more in a way copying Demets & Dumolyn's pragmatic discussion of these, than by using an explicit social memory studies framework.

Historical culture

I use the framework of historical culture in my thesis because it encompasses both the medieval ideas of the past and historical consciousness, as well as the communications about this and any physical trace and object in which it is expressed. Daniel Woolf describes the term 'historical culture' as a 'convenient shorthand' and an 'umbrella term'.[85] His, as my, use of this term is not to capture one specific idea, movement or notion, but purposefully choose a framework broad enough to encompass many interrelated ideas, expressions and objects. Such a broad concept suits this study, as it does not limit the scope of primary sources that can be included. It also allows for an all-round study of the physical source, meaning and use, for which comparisons with other types of sources from similar urban backgrounds, an understanding of socio-political ideas and communications of the past are essential.

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[84] Elodie Lecuppre-Dejardin states very strongly that urban history writing does not exist in Flanders and surrounding counties, although she does say that urban space shows urban consciousness and urban identity. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies : essai sur la communication politique dans les anciens Pays-Bas bourguignons* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 71–76.

[85] Woolf, *Social circulation*, p. 9.

Historical culture has been applied successfully by Bernard Guenée and others in their study of medieval history writing. Guenée's influential book *Histoire et culture historuque dans l'occident médieval* encouraged historians to look further than (formal) historical writing. He placed medieval historians and their writing very clearly in a context of their specific time, place and circumstances, and paid attention to audience, expectations, available sources and socio-political movements. He recognised there was no single medieval historical culture but different times and places and groups in society had a different sense and record of the past.[86] Histories do not stand by themselves in a society, but are fundamentally intertwined with the social context they come from. Therefore, to study history writing includes automatically the study of the social background of its author and its audience as well. This concept has subsequently been used by other historians studying historiography. Goetz already paved the way for the use of historical culture even for the traditional birth places of 'thé' medieval urban chronicle as much more eclectic manner of studying Italian and German town chronicles has become common. An example is Michele Campopiano's discussion of the traditions of town chronicling in Italy in conjunction with the appearances of epigraphs, monuments, literature and poetry.[87] Graeme Small used it to describe the connections between history writing and socio-political events in medieval Hainault, for example how ideas of ancestry changed depending on the time and place and political leadership.[88] Although Guenée and others refer to other types of sources, such as stone engravings and literary works, the focus is still very much on historians and (historical) writing as main contributions and expressions of historical culture.

However, history writing is just one form of a sense and understanding of the past that is communicated within a society. Another development that the concept of historical consciousness already engaged and was reiterated through the so-called linguistic, archival and material 'turns' in medieval studies scholarship, is the link between studying written and material or visual sources. Goetz, in his publication on the concept of historical consciousness, describes how historical

[86] Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*; Graeme Small, 'Chroniqueurs et culture historique au bas Moyen Âge', in L. Nys and A. Salamagne (eds.), *Valenciennes au Moyen Âge* (Valenciennes, 1996), pp. 300–301, 328.
[87] Michele Campopiano, 'The problem of origins in early communal historiography: Pisa, Genoa and Milan compared', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Uses of the written word in medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy II* (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 227–250.
[88] Small, 'Chroniqueurs', pp. 271–296.

consciousness expresses itself in many ways, in historical scholarship, and also in a 'historischen Kultur':

> In der Rezeption ihrer literarischen Erzeugnisse (also sowohl in der Zahl wie vor allem auch in der auflage von "Geschichtsbüchern"), im kulturellen Wert und in den Besucherszahlen historischer Ausstellungen und Museen, im Eindringen historischer Betrachtungsweisen und Motive in nichtfachliche Produkte: in historische Romane, bildliche Kunst, Medien, Reden und Alltagsgespräche.[89]

Under 'historical culture' I thus understand not only writing, and definitely not just traditional chronicles or history books. The written sources that I study are just one example of a historical culture that can equally be perceived in ceremonies, performances, architecture, art, material objects or oral communication. My use of historical culture is close to Daniel Woolf's understanding of it, because he very explicitly widens the scope to not only include written (historical) sources, ceremonies, monuments, arts and architecture, but also political ideas and uses of the past, and all the ways ideas of the past were communicated: 'A historical culture consists of habits of thought, languages, and media of communication, and patterns of social convention that embrace elite and popular, narrative and non-narrative modes of discourse.'[90] The idea of historical culture encompasses all historical knowledge and historical objects plus the way they are communicated within a society.

> The defining characteristics of a historical culture are subject to material, social, and circumstantial forces that, as much as the traditionally studied intellectual influences, condition the way in which the mind thinks, reads, writes, and speaks of the past. Above all, the notions of the past developed within any historical culture are not simply abstract ideas, recorded for the benefit of subsequent generations (and early third-millennium cultural historians). Rather, they are part of the mental and verbal specie of the society that uses them, passing among contemporaries through speech, writing, and other means of communication.[91]

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[89] [In the reception of their literary products (that is both the number and especially the circulation of "history books"), in the cultural value and in the visitor numbers of historical exhibitions and museum, in historical views and motives entering non-specialist products: in historical novels, visual art, media, speeches and everyday speech.] Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 25.
[90] Woolf, *Social circulation*, p. 9.
[91] Ibid., p. 10.

This is for me the value of historical culture: to incorporate social memory, material objects and the immaterial behaviour related to it in a single concept. Medieval citizens after all experienced all of them together and interlinked. Understanding the primary sources in this study as part of a much larger and more comprehensive historical culture allows me to study in-depth aspects of them in some chapters, such as the format in Chapter 2, while relating them to ideology and socio-political circumstances in for instance Chapter 5. Throughout the examples, and as much as the scope of a single study allows, I will refer to ceremonies, such as ducal entries; art, such as statutes of mythical kings; architecture, such as city halls; literature; poetry; songs and oral communication; and other expressions of historical culture. This is in order to further illuminate and understand the broader historical culture in which the written sources, which are my primary research object, sit. In addition the collective traditions in recording that will be a central point in Chapter 3 and influence of national legends that play a part in Chapter 4 can also be understood within the concept as they are all more or less conscious ideas of the past and the treatment of that past. The framework of historical culture gives coherence to this large-scale international comparative study and allows us to compare diverse types of sources from different regions to each other from different angles.

Goetz has remarked that historiography is the most pure and explicit expression of historical consciousness and thus most ideal for research into a society's historical culture.[92] I follow his line of argument, focusing in this thesis on the written evidence of historical culture in late medieval towns in Flanders, Holland and England, areas where historical culture has been mostly applied to later periods in historical scholarship.[93] Not to dismiss other expressions of historical culture as their existence next to and simultaneously with written sources is invaluable in understanding any written historiography correctly, but to focus this study within the limitations of its scope and to make the comparable nature of it possible.

Regional Context

Studies using a broader framework of historical consciousness or historical culture, open up the possibility of finding urban history writing outside the Italian and

[92] Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 25.
[93] Ibid., p. 72; Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory and autobiography'; Pollmann, *Memory.*

German city states. In recent years the Southern Low Countries in particular have seen an increase in studies into urban historical culture, including urban historical writing. I will introduce the current research from Flanders as a background for my further comparative research into Holland and England in this thesis. The historiography of these regions will be introduced as a necessary background and basis to my own writing. I also introduce key political issues and some major national chronicles from Holland and England in this introductory chapter, so they do not interrupt the line of argument when referred to in the chapters to follow.

The political situation in Flanders

The city states of Italy and Germany are seen as the cradle for the genre of medieval urban chronicles, but the exclusiveness of this genre to this geographical area has been questioned in recent decades. In medieval Europe Italy and Germany were not the only highly urbanised regions, in fact the Southern Low Countries were the second highest urbanised region in Europe, after Northern Italy.[94] Estimates for number of inhabitants in Ghent and Bruges around 1400 are in the range of 50,000 and 45,000 respectively, and this had been even higher a century before.[95] Next to the metropolises Ghent and Bruges, Ypres, Saint-Omer, Douai and other cities made the region stand out in Europe, with a third of Flemish people living in cities.[96] Although their economic peak had been in the fourteenth century, these cities were still significant centres of international trade throughout the fifteenth century.

As massive economic and social centres Ghent, Bruges, and other Flemish towns in their wake, had gained privileges and developed forms of urban representation from the twelfth century.[97] The region was famous for its urban

[94] Wim Blockmans, 'Urbanisation in the European Middle Ages: phases of openness and occlusion', in L. A. C. J. Lucassen and W. H. Willems (eds.), *Living in the city: urban institutions in the Low Countries, 1200–2010* (New York, 2011).
[95] Walter Prevenier, 'La démographie des villes du comté de Flandre aux XIIIe et XVe siècles. Etat de la question. Essai d'interprétation', *Revue du Nord* 65:257 (1983), pp. 255–275; Jan Dumolyn, 'Population et structures professionnelles à Bruges aux XIVe et XVe siècles', *Revue du Nord* 91:329 (1999), pp. 43–64. Although others show much higher numbers, see Hendrik Spruyt, *The sovereign state and its competitors: an analysis of systems change* (Princeton, 1996).
[96] Blockmans, 'Urbanisation', pp. 9–11.
[97] Walter Prevenier, 'De leden en de staten van Vlaanderen (1384-1405)', *RPH* 42:1 (1964); W.P. Blockmans, 'De volksvertegenwoordiging in Vlaanderen in de overgang van middeleeuwen naar nieuwe tijden (1384-1506)', *RPH* 60:4 (1982); Jan Dumolyn, *Staatsvorming en vorstelijke ambtenaren in het graafschap Vlaanderen (1419-1477)* (Antwerpen, 2003); Marc Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen ca. 1384 - ca. 1453: een sociaal-politieke studie van een staatsvormingsproces* (Brussels, 1990).

rebellions and revolts driven by craft guilds' ambitions and forces of urban economic and political independence against the Count. Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers have described the precise circumstances and social causes and consequences of Flemish urban rebellions. Both Ghent and Bruges knew intense times of unrest and civil war, although Flemish towns did not always support each other in disagreements with the Flemish Counts or Burgundian Dukes.[98]

The craft guilds claimed a part of the representative power in urban governments, the benches of aldermen (*schepenen*), in the fourteenth century, which enhanced the urban (rather than noble) character of representation. The power of the Flemish towns was also formally acknowledged through the institution of the Four Members (the major cities Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, and the Franc of Bruges, the rural area around Bruges). This representative body met almost continuously to discuss urban, county-wide and international issues and negotiate with the count on behalf of all of Flanders.

The political situation changed when Flanders became part of the Burgundian lands in 1384 after the death of Louis of Male, Count of Flanders. His heiress Margaretha had married Philip the Bold, whose collection of territories became united under Burgundian rule. In the next century tensions between Burgundian centralising powers and the independent towns often found expression in urban rebellions. Most of these revolts were unsuccessful from an urban point of view, as neither Bruges nor Ghent in all their prosperity could successfully compete with the Burgundian Dukes and their allies. In the fifteenth century urban revolt flared up in Bruges and Ghent in the 1470s and 1480s especially, when troubled dynastic successions created a vacuum in centralised power. Neither Ghent nor Bruges fought at any time to become autonomous or to reject its position as subject to the Count of Flanders; conflicts were about the rightful person to claim this title and about his power in urban political and economic life. Philip the Good in 1437 and Maximilian of Austria in 1488 were personally involved in these riots, demonstrating the power and self-confidence of the towns.[99] However, the ultimate

[98] Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, 'Patterns of urban rebellion in medieval Flanders', *JMH* 31:4 (2005) and many of their other publications; see also Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *Promised lands: The Low Countries under Burgundian rule, 1369-1530* (Philadelphia, 1999); Jan Dumolyn, 'De Brugse opstand van 1436-1438', *RPH* 77:4 (1999); Jelle Haemers, *For the common good: state power and urban revolts in the reign of Mary of Burgundy, 1477-1482* (Turnhout, 2009); Jelle Haemers, *De strijd om het regentschap over Filips de Schone: opstand, facties en geweld in Brugge, Gent en Ieper (1482-1488)* (Ghent, 2015).
[99] Dumolyn, 'De Brugse opstand'; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'.

legitimacy of the duke and urban factionalism seldom made these urban revolts a success.

The Flemish historiographical tradition

It is no surprise considering the highly urbanised region, that historians' attention has moved first to the Southern Low Countries when considering that urban historiography that might have existed outside Germany and Italy in the later Middle Ages. Consequently, the Southern Low Countries has seen a surge in medievalists' research on urban history writing in the last few years, driven as well by a general increase in interest for the urban expressions of all aspects of medieval historical culture.[100] Detailed studies of urban sources, such as Anne-Laure Van Bruaene's extensive study of the Ghent memory books (*memorieboeken)* and the reconsideration of the Diary of Ghent (*Dagboek van Gent*) by Tineke van Gassen are some examples.[101] Similarly, works previously understood as regional histories (and their editions) are now reconsidered and studied in an urban context. Paul Trio's redefinition of the chronicle of Olivier van Dixmude as a town chronicle introduced this, and many manuscripts of the *Excellent Chronicle of Flanders,* are also now seen in this way.[102] This is not a development unique to the County of Flanders, but all of the Southern Low Countries, as Bram Caers' study of Mechelen's urban writing, the work on Tournai's historiographical texts and the extensive study of the Chronicle by Peter of Oss of the city of 's-Hertogenbosch in Brabant demonstrate.[103]

This has created an atmosphere where many similar studies are now being

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[100] E.g. Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies.*

[101] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*; Tineke Van Gassen, 'The *Diary of Ghent*: between urban politics and late medieval historiography', in Bram Caers, Lisa Demets, and Tineke Van Gassen (eds.), *Urban history writing in North-Western Europe (15th–16th centuries)*, (forthcoming).

[102] Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide'; Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles'; Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing'.

[103] Caers, *Vertekend verleden*; Pieter-Jan De Grieck, 'L'historiographie à Tournai à la fin du Moyen Âge: le manuscrit-recueil de Mathieu Grenet (1452-1503) et ses sources', *RPH* 84:2 (2006); Graeme Small, 'Les origines de la ville de Tournai dans les chroniques légendaires du bas Moyen Âge', in Albert Chatelet, Jan Dumolyn, and Jean-Claude Ghislain (eds.), *Les grands siècles de Tournai (12e-15e siècles)* (Tournai, 1993); Peter Van Os, A.M. van Lith-Droogleever Fortuijn, J.G.M. Sanders, and G.A.M. Van Synghel (eds.), *Kroniek van Peter van Os : geschiedenis van 's-Hertogenbosch en Brabant van Adam tot 1523* (The Hague, 1997); Stein, 'Selbstverständnis'; Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, 'The household as a site of civic and religious instruction: two household books from late medieval Brabant', in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (eds.), *Household, women, and Christianities in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005); Small, 'Chroniqueurs'.

done and the urban history aspect of different chronicles and other sources, such as songs or political tracts receives much attention.[104] There is similar renewed attention for other areas of historical culture, such as the study of urban ceremonies and the chambers of rhetoric.[105] This is not to say that there is any sort of conclusion reached about the nature and extent of historical writing in Flemish towns in the Middle Ages, but it has become a topical research subject and created renewed attention for many editions and manuscripts.[106]

In addition to the monastic chronicle traditions, Flemish dynastic genealogies gained popularity from the twelfth century, first produced by monastic and later also by court writers.[107] From this twelfth-century so-called *Flandria Generosa A* developed a popular late medieval *Flandria Generosa C* tradition. Several national and dynastic chronicles have developed from this in Latin, Dutch and French, including the Dutch *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* (Excellent Chronicle of Flanders) tradition, which will be discussed in more detail in this thesis.[108] This popular chronicle (Demets identifies nineteen manuscripts and one printed version between 1480 and 1550) started with Flanders' origin myths of the forestiers and generally followed a dynastic storyline.[109]

The growing influence of the Burgundians is often said to have left its mark in the development of history writing in the fifteenth-century Low Countries. The extent of this influence has been subject of debate, reflecting the discussion about

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[104] Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems'; Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet'.
[105] Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies*; Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, '"Let each man carry on with his trade and remain silent": middle-class ideology in the urban literature of the late medieval Low Countries', *Cultural and Social History* 10:2 (2013). Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille: Rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1400-1650)* (Amsterdam, 2008).
[106] Lecuppre-Desjardin does not agree with this image of urban chronicles, seeking civic consciousness more in ceremonies and architecture than written sources, Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies*; Van Bruaene, 'L'écriture'.
[107] Steven Vanderputten, *Sociale perceptie en maatschappelijke positionering in de middeleeuwse monastieke historiografie (8ste-15de eeuw)* (Brussels, 2001); Ann Kelders, 'De geschiedenis van Vlaanderen herzien en aangevuld. Recyclage en tekstuele innovatie in de laatmiddeleeuwse *Flandria Generosa*-kronieken', *Millennium: tijdschrift voor middeleeuwse studies* 19:2 (2005), pp. 151–161.
[108] Véronique Lambert, *Chronicles of Flanders 1200-1500 : chronicles written independently from* Flandria Generosa (Ghent, 1993).
[109] Lisa Demets, 'The late medieval manuscript transmission of the "Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen" in urban Flanders', *MLC* 3 (2016), p. 131; Ann Kelders, 'Laverend tussen de hof der historie en de warande der literatuur. Kroniekschrijving in het graafschap Vlaanderen.', in Ria Jansen-Sieben and Frank Willaert (eds.), *Medioneerlandistiek. Een inleiding tot de Middelnederlandse letterkunde* (Hilversum, 2000).

the strength of Burgundian centralisation powers in other aspects. In the last decades attention has been given primarily to the unification within the Burgundian realm and the homogeneity in the lands gathered under the Burgundian Duke and their historiography. This was popular to study in the context of modern Belgium where state-building was such an important topic. As Yvon Lacaze stated, the Burgundian state was shown to be the natural outcome of the provinces.[110] This meant that the late medieval regional histories that survived were seen as works commissioned by the dukes to provide every new county under their rule with an appropriate past, present and Burgundian future. Translations made from existing regional chronicles for the court were seen as examples of creating this national Burgundian history.[111]

Now local and bottom-up aspects of history writing in the Low Countries are studied as well. In recent years Graeme Small and Robert Stein have shown that the incentive to produce regional chronicles came from the local elites rather than from the court.[112] Holland, Flanders and the surrounding counties saw the need to emphasise their own history and authority. The urban networks and messages that are now being studied in what we long considered regional (or national) chronicles also highlight this local autonomy over medieval Flemish history writing.

English towns and politics

The fifteenth century was not a period of urban greatness in England. After the outbreak of the Black Death in the mid fourteenth century, the population in England declined and urbanisation stagnated until well into the sixteenth century, although urban centres remained economically, socially and politically significant.[113] Urbanisation in late medieval England can be summarised as a landscape with many

[110] Graeme Small, 'Local elites and "national" mythologies in the Burgundian dominions in the fifteenth century', in Rudolf Suntrup and Jan R. Veenstra (eds.), *Building the past: Konstruktion der eigenen Vergangenheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), p. 229; Yvon Lacaze, 'Le rôle des traditions dans la genèse d'un sentiment national au XVe siècle. La Bourgogne de Philippe Le Bon', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 129:2 (1971), pp. 303–385.
[111] Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies*, pp. 66–75.
[112] Small, 'Local elites'; Robert Stein, 'Regional chronicles in a composite monarchy', *Publications du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes (XIVe-XVIe s.)* 54 (2014).
[113] Heather Swanson, *Medieval British towns* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 15–21.

small towns, with the obvious exception of the capital.[114] Only London was comparable to continental cities in Flanders or Italy. Provincial towns were however scattered through the whole of England, but stayed small and were mainly concerned with the local economy.[115] The larger urban centres in England were mostly harbour towns, shaped by international trade in wool and cloth.[116] Susan Reynolds has suggested that the powerful national government, which kept relatively good law and order in the country, decreased the need for large towns with big defences of their own and that national control minimised competition between towns.[117] In the field of trade the right to have a market and to control tolls and taxes within the city and in relation to neighbouring towns, were however often causes of conflict in English urban politics.

The political situation of towns was automatically tied up with the national politics. Political interaction between towns and the crown usually revolved around improving relations and coming into the king's favour, rather than gaining more autonomy.[118] Most English towns were indeed officially created by royal charter, and the crown used towns for financial and military support and had a say in trade and administrative regulations throughout the centuries. However, the towns were not entirely dependent on the crown and wanted privileges and liberties in return for their loans, their money spent on royal visits and other costs for the greater nation. Much has been written about crown – town relations. Christian Liddy showed in his 2005 book that these relations are more complicated than the simple 'quid pro quo': loans and obedience from the town grants them liberties from the crown.[119] Scholars now see medieval town politics as built up around an ideology of shared responsibility and co-operation, rather than aspiring autonomy, moving away from a paradigm of merely royal charters, grants and privileges. Through the granting of liberties and privileges to towns, the local community was also strengthened in its sense of social and economic community and, perhaps helped by the recognition for

[114] Susan Reynolds, *An introduction to the history of English medieval towns* (Oxford, 1977), p. 56.
[115] Reynolds, *Introduction*; Colin Platt, *The English medieval town* (London, 1976).
[116] Reynolds, *Introduction*, pp. 142–146; Swanson, *British towns*, p. 18.
[117] Reynolds, *Introduction*, pp. 64–65.
[118] Liddy, 'Rhetoric of the royal chamber'.
[119] Christian D. Liddy, *War, politics and finance in late medieval English Towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350-1400* (London, 2005); Lorraine C. Attreed, *The king's towns: identity and survival in late medieval English boroughs* (New York, 2001).

the community as an entity by the crown, towns became very strong cultural and social centres of community.[120] So much so that these localities could afford to sometimes question the king or force their own preferences upon the central government, as we will see in the example of York's and Bristol's requests at royal entries in the fifteenth century in Chapter 5.

The years of civil wars and factional turmoil now known as the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487) had its influence on towns as well.[121] This period in English history, named after the heraldic symbols of the two main factions, the red rose of the House of Lancaster and the white rose of the House of York, was characterised by large political and occasionally violent unrest. Both branches of the House of Plantagenet, with a wide and varying group of noble allies, they fought over the right to the English throne. Although influenced by intrigue and fighting in the decades before, the Battle of St Albans in 1455, where the Lancastrian King Henry VI fought the Duke of York and his allies for the first time (and lost), is seen as the start of the Wars of the Roses. The Earl of Warwick, a York supporter, invaded England from Calais in 1460 and captured Henry VI. Richard, Duke of York became Protector of the throne, but was killed at the Battle of Wakefield, and it was his son who took the throne as Yorkist King Edward IV in 1461. His reign lasted until his death in 1483, but was interrupted by the reinstalment to the throne of Henry VI (1470-1471). Although the throne remained in Yorkist hands for most of these years, a continuation of open battles, skirmishes and political scheming among the nobility characterised these decades. Richard III, Edward IV's brother, took the throne after deposing his nephew, but was killed in the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 by the Lancastrian heir Henry Tudor. Crowned as Henry VII (r. 1485-1509), Tudor married Elizabeth of York, reconciling the two houses, although rebellions would flare up occasionally in the years after. Although battles in this period were fought in the open field, rather than towns besieged, English towns would have felt the consequences of the politically and economically turbulent period. Many towns were also forced to play

[120] Peter Fleming, 'Sir Thomas Cheyne, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, 1536-1558: central authority and the defence of local privilege', in Peter Fleming, Anthony Gross, and J.R. Lander (eds.), *Regionalism and revision: the crown and its provinces in England 1200-1650* (London, 1998), pp. 123–144; Anthony Gross, 'Regionalism and revision', in Fleming, Peter, Anthony Gross, and J. R. Lander (eds.), *Regionalism and revision: the crown and its provinces in England 1200-1650* (London, 1998), pp. 1–13.

[121] A selection of overview works: John Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 2001); A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses* (Houndmills, 2000); Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (New Haven, 2010); Dan Jones, *The Wars of the Roses: the fall of the Plantagenets and the rise of the Tudors* (New York, 2015).

a role in this conflict through contributions in taxes and men, or by granting accommodation to passing armies. This means they were forced to take sides in the conflict and could face serious financial punishment and loss of privileges when the other faction won the throne.[122] We will see examples of towns reconsidering the consequences of their help to either party in case studies of Bristol and Coventry in Chapter 5.

England's historiographical tradition

English urban history is very much intertwined with, and even dominated by, English national history. Urban developments are described within a context of reigns of monarchs and national and international wars and conflicts. Where local history writing has been discussed, it is done in a national framework. Attention is given to the relation with the monarch and the town's role in national wars and conflicts. A good starting point for the history of English historiography is Antonia Gransden's impressive two-volume *Historical writing in England*. This study provides a great overview of the types of records written throughout the English Middle Ages. It is, however, organised by monarchs and civil wars. Although later chapters give space to less political concepts like antiquarianism, the contents, meanings and developments of history writing are explained very much from a regnal point of view. Repeatedly, local chronicles, for instance the London Chronicles and John Rous' work, are foremost placed in a national political setting through a discussion whether they show Yorkist or Lancastrian views. This national and regnal framework does not allow a lot of thought about urban history writing not connected with national affairs or regnal politics. Gransden thus discusses all chronicle writings from other towns than London in a single footnote.[123] Recent works, such as *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* still follow the trend of describing the national historiographical tradition, including few sources from town record offices. The national framework that is so clear in urban studies is also evident in the urban historical texts, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, although that should not be a reason to forgo a study of them as urban sources.

A second aspect of English historical research is the strong focus on political and

[122] Peter Fleming, *Coventry and the Wars of the Roses* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2011).
[123] Antonia Gransden, *Historical writing in England: c.1307 to the early sixteenth century*, vol. 2 (London, 1982), p. 227, nt. 47.

institutional history. There are an incredible number of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century editions of English local sources available, mostly in local record societies' series. Additionally, the Historical Manuscript Commission has produced over a hundred volumes in which local archives and libraries are catalogued and extracts are published. The great majority of these volumes are dedicated to archives of nobility or national institutions, but several 'borough' archives are included as well. In recent years urban history has become increasingly popular again, and, very importantly, it comprises a broader scope now than a century ago. Information concentrated on in urban history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was very clearly directed to the administrative and institutional history of the towns. Comments on published urban sources stressed time and time again the 'useful' information to be extracted from them about the number of men in the local councils; election procedure of mayor, bailiffs and other officials; charters; privileges; gild regulations; court procedures and so on. Another side of this focus on political urban history is the attention for the connections with the monarch. This political focus has caused a very limited view of urban sources, urban social history and urban identity.

Still one of the most thorough books on English town chronicles is Ralph Flenley's 1911 *Six town chronicles of England,* which is also written from a national framework. Five of his six town chronicles are from London, which is unremarkable given his view on provincial town sources:

> They [town chronicles] have all the defects of the London chronicles, the narrow range, the limitation of form and poverty of expression, without the fullness, the participation in and knowledge of events of national interest, and the comparatively clear field which go to make the London chronicles of value for English history.[124]

He dismisses the 'entries of a purely local character' as completely useless.[125] Fortunately Flenley still took the effort to mention many urban historiographical texts, although often without references. These archival manuscripts are now studied as sources for urban history and urban identity and not just in search of 'new' historic and institutional data. Steele O'Brien's 1999 thesis considering civic

[124] Flenley, *Town chronicles*, p. 27.
[125] Ibid.

registers from York and London in a holistic fashion treating them as elements of urban culture and literature in their own right, is an early example of this.[126] Fleming's new *Bristol Kalendar* edition, not wanting to replace, but providing essential additional material, to Toulmin Smith's 1871 edition is another expression of this new wave of interest.[127] This thesis is placed within a growing interest for written evidence of medieval urban historical culture, although where it comes to seeing archival sources as such there is still a focus on early modern rather than medieval England.[128]

Description of English sources

To study urban historiography in England, two types of sources will be taken into account. Firstly, more traditional history writing often found in archives and libraries, which are usually national chronicles. An exception are the London Chronicles. This large group of urban historical sources from the English capital has been studied extensively and acknowledged and referred to widely as 'urban chronicles'.[129] Secondly, there are the many sources extant in city Record Offices all over the country. This mostly concerns semi-official histories and records, written by town officials or clerks. Due to the nature of these sources, they were rarely known outside the town and, when they survive, they usually do so in a single copy among the documents of the town record office.

England was one of the European countries without an official court chronicler as both the French and Burgundian courts knew.[130] But even though the English king did not commission the works himself, the tradition of history writing in England revolved entirely around the monarchy. English historiographical accounts contain numerous lives of Edward II, Henry V and other kings. Chris Given-Wilson clearly shows how chronicles from the twelfth century onwards, after the well-known and

[126] Deborah Jean Steele O'Brien, '"The Veray Registre of All Trouthe": the content, function and character of the civic registers of London and York c.1274-c.1482' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2009).
[127] Peter Fleming, ed., *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, Bristol Record Society's publications 67 (Bristol, 2015).
[128] Walsham, 'Social history of the archive'; Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory and autobiography'; Woolf, *Social circulation*; Woolf, 'Genre into artifact'.
[129] C.L. Kingsford, *Chronicles of London* (Dursley, 1977); McLaren, *London Chronicles.*
[130] Graeme Small, *George Chastelain and the shaping of Valois Burgundy: political and historical culture at court in the fifteenth century* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 65–66.

influential examples of Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, providing decisive histories of the English kingdom, were not only king-centered, but also provided a model for English history writing: 'it should focus upon kings, and upon the achievement of them and their people in creating and sustaining a unified English kingdom.'[131] This vision is followed for centuries, also for instance by the authors of the *Polychronicon* and the *Brut* chronicles, both of which influenced fifteenth-century history writing enormously.

The *Brut* Chronicle is a national chronicle of Britain which tracked its history from a Trojan founder Brutus to, in the original Anglo-Norman version, the death of Henry III in 1272. It was then continued to 1307 and 1333 in Anglo-Norman and translated and continued to various dates in Latin and English. The most common version is an English translation of the Anglo-Norman text up to 1333 with continuations into the fifteenth century, usually to the year 1419. Over 240 manuscripts with a *Brut* text survived, giving an idea of the immense popularity of the chronicle.[132] The national history recounts the discovery of the island by Trojan Brutus and his comrades, who slay the indigenous giants and found cities, starting with New Troy (London). A history of British kings, descendants from Brutus, who colonise the island and found many cities follows, leading to the Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet dynasties. The *Brut* chronicle has a strong etymological component: Britain received its name from Brutus himself and Wales and Scotland from his sons; whereas a list of city names is explained by their royal founders' names, such as Lewe who founded Leicester 'and called it aftre his name'.[133] The narrative of the *Brut* was based on popular earlier chronicles, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*, and itself became a major influence in British history writing, both local and national, in the late Middle Ages. In this thesis we will see many references to it and its popularity is attested by the fact it became the first chronicle ever printed in Britain in 1480 and saw twelve reprints before 1528.[134]

In line with developments in the rest of Europe, history writing in the late Middle Ages shifted from monasteries to towns and courts. Monks lost their role of 'professional historians' to laymen; clerks, heralds, antiquaries and burghers who

[131] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 165.
[132] Lister M. Matheson, *The prose Brut: the development of a Middle English chronicle* (Tempe, 1998), pp. 1–8.
[133] Bristol Archives, CC/2/7, f. 4r. The urban aspect of this chronicle gets attention in Chapter 4.
[134] Matheson, *The prose Brut*, p. 14.

became increasingly interested in the questions of genealogy, history and politics.[135] Fifteenth-century lay writers tended to write short chronicles, such as the *Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire,* sometimes barely more than diaries or tracts, in which they paid most attention to parliaments, wars, revolts and revolutions. Even though this entails a shift in the sort of history written, the focus in these chronicles was equally strong on the deeds and decisions of the king and the national cause of the kingdom.[136] Because of the strong national kingdom England has always been, it did not know politically significant courts of dukes or earls as the Count of Holland or the Duke of Brabant used to run; not because of a lack of nobility, but because English political and social life revolved around the royal court. Regional historiography as we find in the Low Countries is therefore almost entirely lacking in England.

Many interesting texts are known under their practical names such as 'Little Red Book' or 'Mayor's Accounts' and in the literature they are usually grouped under town records or muniments and studied for administrative purposes. Bristol is one of the towns where a number of interesting late medieval records have been preserved in the local Record Office. Most importantly, the *Maire's Kalendar* of Bristol contains a town chronicle by the town clerk Robert Ricart from the second half of the fifteenth century, which will feature heavily in this thesis.[137] Several other calendars were produced in Bristol after Ricart's, and in addition both a Little and a Great Red Book of Bristol survive as well as the Great White Book.[138] The *Red Paper Book* and the *Oath Book* (or *Red Parchment Book*), are two surviving records from Colchester, both started in the second half of the fourteenth century, which is relatively early for English town records.[139] The *Oath Book* was probably used to record documents and events of extra importance and for later reference, rather

[135] See Chris Given-Wilson, 'Official and semi-official history in the later Middle Ages: the English evidence in context', *The Medieval Chronicle* V (2008), pp. 1–16.
[136] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 153–165, 202–207; Gransden, *Historical writing*, pp. 252 ff.
[137] Flenley, *Town chronicles*, p. 29; Ricart, *Kalendar.*
[138] Francis B. Bickley, ed., *The Little Red Book of Bristol*, 2 vols (Bristol, 1900); E.W.W. Veale, ed., *The Great Red Book of Bristol* (Bristol, 1931); Elizabeth Ralph, ed., *The Great White Book of Bristol* (Bristol, 1979).
[139] Britnell says the Red Paper Book was more important than the Oath Book, R.H. Britnell, 'The Oath Book of Colchester and the Borough Constitution, 1372-1404', *Essex Archaeology and History: Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* xiv (1982); R.H. Britnell, *Growth and decline in Colchester, 1300-1525* (Cambridge, 1986); W.Gurney Benham, ed., *The Oath Book or Red Parchment Book of Colchester* (Colchester, 1907).

than day to day ordinances and documents. In addition to this and of great value for this research on urban history writing, are the list of the Christian kings of England and some information given 'De Colocestria et Coele'.[140] This little chronicle is just one folio long, but will be a very valuable source to research for the urban identity and history writing in Colchester. Valuable for a view on fifteenth-century York are the *Memorandum Books* and *House Books*, which offer wills, deeds, quitclaims and other administrative documents described from the fifteenth century.[141] The *House Books* of just the thirty years between 1460 and 1491 are published in two volumes, to give an idea of the amount of material there is and there is a wealth of municipal records on top of this.

The above is just a start of the extensive list that can be made of town records in late medieval English cities. 'In town after town the last years of the fourteenth century or the first half of the fifteenth saw the mayor or his clerk, the sheriff or the chamberlain, or their equivalents, commencing to keep some sort of record': Flenley mentions examples from Chester, Salisbury, Lincoln, Reading, Coventry and many others.[142] Most town records were never more than the collection of charters or the minutes of the courts, but some urban writers added more extensive narratives to the customs and minutes of their cities.

Other local historical sources were produced by men not involved in town government. This generally meant men with a university degree, who entered the service of some nobleman or wealthy layman as secretary or cleric. Their work has usually survived in more than one manuscript and will be found in libraries or archives rather than town record offices. Examples of this are the works of John Benet and John Hardyng, as well as William Worcester and John Rous.[143] Some of their local works focused on noble families or military events. Others, so-called commonplace books, were a collection of interesting information collected by the

[140] Benham, *Oath Book*, pp. 25–28.
[141] *York memorandum book, lettered A/Y in the Guildhall monument room (Part I: 1376-1491),* ed. Maud Sellers (Durham, 1912); *York memorandum book, lettered A/Y in the Guildhall monument room (Part 2: 1388-1493),* ed. Maud Sellers (Durham, 1915); *York memorandum book (Part 3: 1371-1596),* ed. Joyce W. Percy (Gateshead, 1973). See also *The York House Books 1461-1490* 2 vols. ed. Lorraine Attreed (Stroud, 1991). Laws, Heather, *A new set of civic records: exploring emergence, function and content of the York House Books c. 1460-1490* (York, 2010). Sarah Rees Jones, 'Emotions, speech, and the art of politics in fifteenth-century York: House Books, mystery plays and Richard duke of Gloucester', *UH* 44:4 (2017), pp. 586-603.
[142] Flenley, *Town chronicles*, pp. 11–13, 27–37.
[143] Gransden, *Historical writing*, pp. 309 ff.; Alison Hanham, ed., *John Benet's Chronicle, 1399-1462. An English translation with new introduction* (Basingstoke, 2015).

writer ranging from romances, poems and genealogies to recipes, lists of names, dates or topographical landmarks. These commonplace books frequently also included (fragments of) urban chronicles or annals, sometimes continued by the compiler. There were thus many types of local narrative sources of historical culture and in calendars, oath books, leet books, annals, rolls, commonplace books and records we also find history writing in medieval English towns.

The political situation in Holland

The political situation in the County of Holland in the fifteenth century was complex and characterised by internal and external tensions. Within Holland there were tensions between the *Hoeken* and *Kabeljauwen*, Hooks and Cods, two factions with political and social agendas who clashed, sometimes violently, throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[144] The conflict originated over the question who should rightfully carry the title of Count of Holland and loyalties connected to these candidates. Originally, the Hooks party contained many conservative noblemen, whereas generally more progressive townspeople identified with the Cod faction, although the exact identity of these groups changed significantly over time and familial, political and noble allegiances as well as career perspectives all influenced personal and cities' loyalties.[145] The factions were formed in the mid fourteenth century when, after the death of Count William IV of Holland, a conflict arose between his sister Margaret (Hooks) and her son William (Cods) and their supporters about who should rightfully inherit the title. Many noble families who play an important part in the Hooks vs Cods wars in the late fifteenth century were already involved here. Jan I van Egmont and Jan IV van Arkel were among the early leaders of the Cod faction and the Brederode and Wassenaer families fought on the side of the Hooks. These tensions later flared up again in the early fifteenth century

[144] See for this section: M.J. Van Gent, *'Pertijelike saken'. Hoeken en Kabeljauwen in het Bourgondisch-Oostenrijkse tijdperk* (The Hague, 1994); Serge Ter Braake, 'Parties and factions in the late Middle Ages: the case of the Hoeken and Kabeljauwen in The Hague (1483–1515)', *JMH* 35:1 (2009); Hans Michiel Brokken, *Het ontstaan van de Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten* (Zutphen, 1982); H.P.H. Jansen, *Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten* (Bussum, 1966); Antheun Janse, *Oorlog en partijstrijd. De sprong van Jan van Schaffelaar* (Hilversum, 2003); J.W. Marsilje, 'Ordeverstoring en partijstrijd in laat-middeleeuws Holland', in J.W. Marsilje (ed.), *Bloedwraak, partijstrijd en pacificatie in laat-middeleeuws Holland* (Hilversum, 1990).
[145] P. C. M. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Meentocht, maagschap en partij. Stedelijk oproer in laatmiddeleeuws Holland', *Holland* 39 (2007); Ter Braake, 'Parties and factions'.

in a similar succession conflict after Count William VI's death, when his daughter Jacqueline and his brother John of Bavaria both claimed the title. The Hooks supported Jacqueline, the Cods were on the side of John and after his death supported the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good. The Counties of Holland, Zeeland and Hainault definitively fell to Burgundy in 1433 ending open conflict for two decades although tensions and sympathies continued under the surface.

There were further violent outbursts of the Cods Hooks wars in the second half of the fifteenth century. These were related to the growing influence of the Burgundian Duke. Philip the Good's growing influence in the Bishopric of Utrecht through the ordination of his natural son as bishop of Utrecht over the Hooks candidate sparked a first Utrecht Civil War in the 1450s and a second one in the 1480s. Both were eventually won by the Cods with support of the Burgundian Dukes. With Mary of Burgundy's unexpected death in 1482 yet another questionable succession created unrest in Holland. Although clear that the county would stay part of her son's lands when he came of age, the Hooks objected to Maximilian of Austria's reign as regent and instead appointed Frans van Brederode. The ensuing conflict, called the *Jonker Fransenoorlog* (the esquire Frans war), took place mainly in the area of Rotterdam, which was captured by Hooks in 1488 and left by a defeated minority of Hooks in 1490.

Not only Rotterdam, but many cities and towns in Holland were involved in these struggles. Occasionally this was through major armed sieges, but throughout the decades towns switched sides many times after local power struggles, which played out both politically and by show of arms. Changes in city governments would shift loyalties and many cities were supporters of both sides at some point throughout the fifteenth century. This was rarely without bloodshed as the example of the 1481 attack on Dordrecht, that will feature in this thesis, shows. After having been ruled by a Hooks city government for the last year, the Cods took the city through a trick, capturing dozens of men and executing the Hooks leaders. Several attempts to recapture Dordrecht by the Hooks in the next decade failed. The fifteenth-century Burgundian and Austrian-Habsburg Dukes actively interfered at many occasions. Measures to end the party strife ranged from sending armies and imposing harsh punishments, to reducing urban autonomy and appointing neutral or pro-Burgundian city governments and a ban on the use of the 'party names' Cods

and Hooks from the peace deal of 1428.[146] Supporting Hooks or Cods in the fifteenth century became more and more an anti- or pro-Burgundian stand point and thus extended over the borders of the County of Holland in many instances of political and military unrest, as the above mentioned Utrecht Civil Wars exemplify. Most regional historiography (Chronicles of Holland) has a Hook perspective when describing the battles and skirmishes between the two groups.[147] This is linked to a general change, discussed below, in Holland's historiography in the fifteenth century, which shifts the focus away from the Burgundian Dukes to the land of Holland. Smaller historical sources are known from both sides, exemplified by the poem on the attack on Dordecht in 1481 from a Cod perspective.

The County of Holland included no cities comparable in size and power to Ghent, Bruges or London, as Amsterdam and other cities in Holland only grew to considerable sizes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when trade shifted north from Flanders.[148] However, it was also a highly urbanised region.[149] It counted six larger cities (Dordrecht, Haarlem, Delft, Leiden, Amsterdam and Gouda), which each counted ca. 6,000-8,000 inhabitants at the start of the fifteenth century, as well as over a dozen small ones.[150] The towns of Holland also had an institutionalised role in the representation of the county as part of the Estates in the fifteenth century and negotiations with the duke regarding taxes and privileges were common, either as an individual or collective of cities.[151] Although Burgundian Dukes rarely visited Holland they had the right to appoint certain civic officers and were occasionally involved in armed or political struggles between factions and towns through their

[146] Marsilje, 'Factietwist', pp. 53–55.
[147] J.W.J. Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland in de middeleeuwen: een historiografische traditie en haar vernieuwing in de 15e eeuw', *TijdING* (2008), p. 7; Mathijs Timmermans, 'Het auteurschap van het Nederlands Beke-Vervolg: historiografie en identiteit in laat-middeleeuws Utrecht' (Unpublished MPhil thesis, Leiden University, 2014); Antheun Janse, 'Een Haagse kroniek over de Bourgondische tijd', *Jaarboek geschiedkundige vereniging Die Haghe* (2003), pp. 24–26.
[148] Blockmans, 'Urbanisation'.
[149] Ibid., pp. 9–11.
[150] J.A.M.Y. Bos-Rops, 'Noblesse oblige. Haarlem als tweede stad van Holland', in Hans Michiel Brokken (ed.), *Hart voor Haarlem. Liber amicorum voor Jaap Temminck* (Haarlem, 1996); J.C. Visser, 'Dichtheid van de bevolking in de laat-middeleeuwse stad', *Historisch-geografisch Tijdschrift* 3 (1985), pp. 10–21.
[151] Peter Hoppenbrouwers, 'Middeleeuwse medezeggenschap: een stand van zaken over standen en Staten', in Eef Dijkhof and Michel Van Gent (eds.), *Uit diverse bronnen gelicht: opstellen aangeboden aan Hans Smit ter gelegenheid van zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag* (The Hague, 2007).

representatives in the Hague. The Burgundian Dukes also continued the tradition to visit several of the larger cities to be sworn in as Counts of Holland.[152]

Holland's historiographical tradition

In Holland history writing experienced a significant increase from the late fourteenth century onwards, both in number and scope of manuscripts.[153] Despite more diversity in the late medieval history writing, regional chronicles dominated. This was the case for most of the Low Countries: Flanders had the tradition of the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaanderen*, Brabant the *Alderexcellente Chronike* and the *Brabantse Yeesten,* to name just a few examples. The key text for Holland's historiography in the fifteenth century was Beke's *Chronographia.* Johannes de Beke was a cleric at the Benedictine abbey of Egmond. He was part of a regional historiographical tradition which originated at the abbey of Egmond and centred both in purpose and contents on the comital dynasty of Holland. The *Chronicles of the Bishopric of Utrecht and of Holland* was initially written in Latin by Beke around 1346, but became much more popular after it was continued and translated into Middle Dutch, presumably by Utrecht town clerk Jan Tolnaer Jr, in 1393.[154] The 'Dutch Beke' was subsequently continued in many versions in the first four decades of the fifteenth century, and more importantly, the Beke chronicle was used as a basis for almost all major historical works in Holland during that century.[155]

The anonymous Chronicle of Gouda (*Gouds Kroniekje*) originates from around 1440 and, although based on Beke, gave a new impetus to the

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[152] Mario Damen, 'Het Hof van Holland in de late middeleeuwen', *Holland* 35:1 (2003), p. 1.
[153] Overview is given by Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland'.
[154] Justine Smithuis, 'Urban historiography and politics in fourteenth-century Utrecht. New findings on the Dutch Beke (c. 1393)', *MLC* 4 (2017); Antheun Janse, 'De Nederlandse Beke opnieuw bekeken', *JMG* 9 (2006). The medieval historiography from Holland and Utrecht has a close connection, as many writers chose to describe both areas because of their proximity and relation in history and politics. Secularly Utrecht was a separate region not reigned by the Count of Holland, but Holland fell under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Diocese of Utrecht and the history of the diocese and the bishops of Utrecht were therefore of great interest to the inhabitants of Holland. Beke's *Chronographia* combined these two peoples and described one history for both of them, but later authors separated their histories and told their stories as if they were two separate peoples. However, late fifteenth-century authors, such as the anonymous author of the *Kattendijke-Kroniek*, and Johannes a Leydis, reintroduced the combined history writing of the two areas. Antheun Janse, 'Van Utrechts naar Hollands. Het Nederlandse Beke-Vervolg (ca. 1432) en zijn bewerking', in E. Dijkhof and M. Van Gent (eds.), *Uit diverse bronnen gelicht: opstellen aangeboden aan Hans Smit ter gelegenheid van zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag* (The Hague, 2007).
[155] For the Beke Continuations: Janse, 'Utrechts naar Hollands'; Janse, 'Haagse kroniek'.

historiographical tradition.[156] The name of this Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht derives not from the contents, but from the town where it was printed in 1478; although the urban focus apparent in this chronicle will be discussed below. The late fifteenth century saw another new group of history writers appear. This group of Johannes A Leydis, Theodoricus Pauli and Willem Berchen to name the most prominent ones, wrote several closely interrelated regional chronicles of the county of Holland.[157] They were still based very much on the same tradition but also showed an interest in the nobility and returned to writing (partly) in Latin. These authors, although from clerical backgrounds, lived in towns and wrote in a variety of styles. Another large late-fifteenth century Chronicle of Holland is known under the name *Kattendijke-Kroniek*, after the family in whose possession it has been since the early seventeenth century.[158] In the early sixteenth century appeared the Chronicle of Holland and Zeeland by Jan van Naaldwijk (he wrote two versions, 1514 and 1524) and the *Divisiekroniek* (Division Chronicle, after its chapters or divisions) by Cornelius Aurelius in 1517.[159] This line of substantial regional chronicles extended the tradition based on Beke's *Chronographia* well across the entire fifteenth century.

Research into medieval history writing in Holland in the late Middle Ages has only picked up recently. Editions and studies of earlier works are more available.[160] For the fifteenth century and for urban historiography scholars mostly referred to reference works. Müller's (1880) and Romein's (1932) lists of chronicles from Holland and the much more comprehensive repertory of Marijke Carasso-Kok (1981).[161] Antheun Janse, based in the centre of the old County of Holland at Leiden

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[156] More on this below. See Antheun Janse, 'De Historie van Hollant. Een nieuw begin in de Hollandse geschiedschrijving in de vijftiende eeuw', *Millennium: tijdschrift voor middeleeuwse studies* 21:1 (2007); Janse, 'Haagse kroniek'.

[157] Rombert Stapel and Jenine De Vries, 'Leydis, Pauli, and Berchen revisited. Collective history writing in the Low Countries in the late fifteenth century', *MLC* 1 (2014).

[158] Antheun Janse and Ingrid Biesheuvel, eds., *Johan Huyssen van Kattendijke-Kroniek: die historie of die cronicke van Hollant, van Zeelant ende van Vrieslant ende van den Stichte van Utrecht* (The Hague, 2005).

[159] Levelt, *Jan Van Naaldwijk's Chronicles*; Karin Tilmans, *Aurelius en de Divisiekroniek van 1517: Historiografie en humanisme in Holland in de tijd van Erasmus* (Hilversum, 1988).

[160] J.W.J Burgers, *De Rijmkroniek van Holland en zijn auteurs: Historiografie in Holland door de Anonymus (1280-1282) en de grafelijke klerk Melis Stoke (begin veertiende eeuw)* (Hilversum, 1999); Willem Procurator, Marijke Gumbert and J.P. Gumbert (eds.), *Kroniek* (Hilversum, 2001); Marijke Gumbert-Hepp, J. P. Gumbert, and J. W. J. Burgers, eds., *Annalen van Egmond* (Hilversum, 2007); J.M.C. Verbij-Schillings, 'Heraut Beyeren en de clerc uten laghen landen. Hollandse kroniekschrijvers ca 1410', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 107 (1991); Jeanne Verbij-Schillings, *Beeldvorming in Holland: Heraut Beyeren en de historiografie omstreeks 1400* (Amsterdam, 1995).

[161] S. Muller, *Lijst van Noord-Nederlandsche kronijken: met opgave van bestaande handschriften en litteratuur* (Utrecht, 1880), pp. 72–75 contains a list of urban chronicles; J. M Romein,

University, has been one of very few conducting new research into Holland's late medieval historiography. Janse put Beke's Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht back on the research agenda, which had been frequently used but not studied in itself since Bruch's editions of the Latin version in 1973 and the Dutch one in 1982, as well as doing research into and preparing an edition of the *Gouds Kroniekje*, which is eagerly awaited and well overdue in the field. In the last decade Sjoerd Levelt published on the work of Jan van Naaldwijk, Rombert Stapel and myself looked at the group of writers of A Leydis, Pauli and Berchen in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and Justine Smithuis has continued Janse's work on the anonymous author of the Beke Continuation.[162] Through all this work characteristics of Holland's historical sources in the fifteenth century become more visible.

Changes in fifteenth-century history writing in Holland

Continuity in the written evidence of historical culture in fifteenth-century Holland was found in the tradition most obviously characterised by Johannes de Beke's work, but several changes also shaped the sources.[163] Next to a continued production of regional chronicles, other forms of sources increased. 'Relatively new' according to Janse for the 1490s *Kattendijke-Kroniek*, was the trend to combine regional and world historiography. The combination of the two themes, but as two different books, is first seen clearly in the work of Claes Heynenzoon around 1400.[164] Known by his work title Bavarian Herald, he worked at the court of the Count of Holland and wrote a World Chronicle and a Chronicle of Holland; two separate works, but meant to complement each other. The *Gouds Kroniekje* then was the first to add an early history of the known world, featuring Troy, Rome and events in France and England, to a chronicle of the counts of Holland. There was also a surge in more local works, such as chronicles of the nobility as well as hagiographical stories, influenced

Geschiedenis van de Noord-Nederlandsche geschiedschrijving in de middeleeuwen: bijdrage tot de beschavingsgeschiedenis (Haarlem, 1932); Carasso-Kok, *Repertorium.*

[162] Levelt, *Jan Van Naaldwijk's Chronicles*; Stapel and De Vries, 'Leydis, Pauli, and Berchen revisited'; Smithuis, 'Urban historiography and politics'.

[163] Antheun Janse, 'De Kattendijke-kroniek als historiografische bron', in Antheun Janse and Ingrid Biesheuvel (eds.), *Johan Huyssen van Kattendijke-Kroniek: die historie of die cronicke van Hollant, van Zeelant ende van Vrieslant ende van den Stichte van Utrecht* (The Hague, 2005); Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland'; Jenine De Vries, 'Local histories of Holland. Historiography in the County of Holland in the time of Johannes a Leydis', *Publications du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes (XIVe-XVIe s.)* 54 (2014).

[164] Janse, 'Historiografische bron', pp. cxxxvii–cxxxciii; Verbij-Schillings, *Beeldvorming in Holland.*

by increased attention for monastic living and the Modern Devotion movement. Burgers suggested the interest for noble genealogies and stories originated from a class of lower nobility in power in towns as well as rural estates, but most authors including myself do see a separate urban population interested in civic writing.[165]

The *Kattendijke-Kroniek* continues this tradition. Fitting into this development is also the growing attention for Troy in the late medieval chronicles. Obviously the theme of Troy is not new in medieval writing. But for these stories, mostly known through romances, to be used in history writing, is becoming more common in Holland in the fifteenth century.

Most importantly, there is a noticeable change in history writing in late medieval Holland where the structure of the text becomes less focused on the comital dynasty. Janse describes this as medieval 'annalistic' writing.[166] The 'years of our Lord' or 'Anno Domini' become the main structure of the text rather than the succession of continuous counts. This reflects the focus of the text, and through that, the structure the author tried to give to the history. This has to do with the changing political situation of the fifteenth century. For the *Kattendijke-Kroniek* Janse notes that this annalistic way of recording is found in the last fifty folios, which describe the years under Burgundian rule. The county of Flanders and the Burgundian lands in the North of France were inherited by the Burgundian Dukes in the fourteenth century. Philip the Good spread his territory into the Northern Low Countries in the fifteenth century. He inherited the duchy of Brabant in 1430 and concluded a long conflict with Jacqueline of Bavaria in 1433 by seizing Hainault, Zeeland and Holland. Luxembourg was added to his territory in 1441 and his son annexed Guelders in 1473. So, from the 1430s and 1440s the political situation in the Low Countries changed significantly, by having to adapt to a new ruler and his centralisation policies. The Burgundian Dukes held the title of Count of Holland, Zeeland and Friesland as one of their many titles and were in a legal way the direct successors of the previous comital dynasty. However, as they were no direct relatives to the last countess of Holland, Jacqueline of Bavaria, who was forced to hand over the rule over Holland to Philip the Good, their legitimacy to rule was felt less clearly. The House of Valois and from 1482 the House of Habsburg then reigned the county as one part of a much larger personal union. On top of this, the Burgundian Dukes

[165] Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland'.
[166] Janse, 'Historiografische bron', p. cxxxviii.

barely visited the county of Holland and were evidently a lot more distant to the inhabitants of Holland than the counts and countesses in the previous centuries used to be.[167] We see in this time that history writing on the county of Holland is no longer structured and focused on the dynasty, but instead pays much more attention to the land and inhabitants of Holland.[168]

The *Gouds Kroniekje* introduced a lot more information on the 'prehistory' of the county, as did other chronicles afterwards, spending a significant amount of the work on the history of Holland before arriving at Theodoric I, the first Count of Holland, and even then the structure remains chronological, not dynastic.[169] The history of the people of Holland and people of Utrecht are separated into two distinct histories, giving a clearer county identity to both. Central in the history of early Holland and taking some of the spotlight previously reserved for the comital dynasty are the towns. Foundation stories of towns, such as Haarlem and Leiden, are central to the early history, and much of the later annotations are urban events or involve urban players.[170] Without the count as unifying principle, Holland, as other regions in the Low Countries, used a long and ancient history of county and people to strengthen identity. The historiography developed into the history of the region and its inhabitants rather than the history of the dynasty and many local works appeared, with a focus on the seat of a noble family, a local saint or a town.

Conclusions

Late medieval writers did know and use the genre of 'chronicle' for large, formal, narrative and often national or monastic texts. The name 'chronicle' was used for some of the traditional national chronicles in late medieval England and the Low Countries that I refer to in this thesis. '*Dits die Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*' [This is the Excellent Chronicle of Flanders] appears on the title page of the 1531

[167] Small, 'Local elites', p. 241.
[168] De Vries, 'Local histories'; Janse, 'Historie van Hollant'; Wilma Keesman, 'De Hollandse oudheid in het *Gouds kroniekje*. Over drukpers en geschiedschrijving', *Spiegel der Letteren* 49:2 (2007); Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland'.
[169] See Janse, 'Historie van Hollant'; Antheun Janse, 'De gelaagdheid van een laatmiddeleeuse kroniek. De ontstaansgeschiedenis van het zogenaamde *Goudse kroniekje*.', *Queeste: tijdschrift over middeleeuwse letterkunde in de Nederlanden* 8:1 (2001); De Vries, 'Local histories'; Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland', pp. 3–4.
[170] I will come back to this in Chapter 4. Keesman, 'Hollandse oudheid'; Karin Tilmans, '"Autentijck ende warachtig". Stedenstichtingen in de Hollandse geschiedschrijving: van Beke tot Aurelius', *Holland* 21:2 (1989); De Vries, 'Local histories', pp. 27–34.

print edition of the chronicle. The Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht by Johannes Beke, named *Chronographia* by its editor Bruch, is referred to as *cronica* by its contemporaries.[171] It is clear from the description above, though, that in the seventeenth till nineteenth centuries the ideas on the concept and use of the term chronicle had changed and it was applied much more widely. However, many modern-day scholars would again struggle to classify many of these texts as (urban) chronicles when looked at in detail, their unease becoming apparent through the use of terms such as 'chronicle-like'.[172] The many different definitions of urban chronicles provided in the modern literature are impossible to compare through their very different perspectives, with some authors looking at form and others at contents or authorship.

This strict adherence to typology was done with a reference to the German and Italian town chronicles that are considered stereotypical for the genre. However, none of these genres are as strict as some scholars make them out to be. Even in the stereotypical case of Italy the idea of chronicle is fluid.[173] Italy shows in fact a wide range of forms of town chronicling. At one end of the scale there are the purpose-written town histories of the major city (states). This type of history writing was popular from the fourteenth until the sixteenth centuries. They take the form of long historical narrative accounts, sometimes starting with the origin of the town. They were written in Latin, but were written for publication and clear in their support of the faction or family ruling the town. The examples from Florence are particularly famous, but Venice, Milan, the papal state and other city states were very active in the writing and commissioning of similar works of history. These literary histories were concerned with public events and urban political history as well as the origins of the city and they vary in scope. They used administrative documents as well as earlier histories as sources.[174] At the other end of the Italian spectrum lies the format of Florentine town chronicles called *ricordanze.*[175] These are sometimes

[171] Johannes de Beke, H. Bruch (ed.), *Croniken van den stichte van Utrecht ende van Hollant* (The Hague, 1982), p. viii; Johannes de Beke, H. Bruch (ed.), *Chronographia* (The Hague, 1973), p. viii.
[172] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 22; Schouteet, 'Kroniekachtige aantekeningen'.
[173] Louis Green, 'Historical interpretation in fourteenth-century Florentine chronicles', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28:2 (1967), p. 161; Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 16.
[174] Hay, *Annalists and historians*; Gary Ianziti, *Humanist historiography under the Sforzas. Politics and propaganda in fifteenth-century Milan* (Oxford, 1988).
[175] Hay, *Annalists and historians*; Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*; Ciappelli, *Tuscan family books.*

characterised as family chronicles because they contain personal and family information, and could be continued by sons and grandsons. They were smaller and more private records than the propagandistic narrative town histories. They usually originated as diaries of businessmen combining price lists and other mercantile information with family genealogies and notes on family events. *Ricordanze* were written by citizens from a merchant and political urban elite and some of these texts grew to incorporate notes on more general events of political, economic or social nature happening in the town, state or wider known world. We can thus conclude that even the famous urban chronicles from Italian cities appear in several different shapes and forms.

In 1911 Flenley rightfully stated at the end of his chapter on chronicles of English towns outside London that 'we could continue almost indefinitely, did we but make our definition of town 'chronicle' wide – and shallow – enough.'[176] To search for 'proper' medieval chronicles, however we define these, will indeed present few helpful results, either focusing entirely on typology or making the definition unusably shallow. Other, broader, concepts need to be used to see medieval urban writing and culture in Europe in a new perspective.

Recent medieval studies have provided many examples of excellent applications of historical consciousness, a sense of the past and social memory into urban sources. Medievalists' interest in urban studies has provided research into urban architecture, monuments, paintings and material objects, as well as rituals and ceremonies, giving the study of urban culture and urban historical consciousness a much broader scope. Historical culture is another way of encompassing the texts, objects and social behaviour related to a society's sense of the past (or of a group in society). Referring to Daniel Woolf's work on early modern England using this concept, and previous application of this term specifically to historical writing, I use historical culture to be able to link the manuscripts I study to the ideology within them, the material and layout of them and the social context they are produced and used in.[177] This broad concept means I will discuss the manuscripts in this thesis from different perspectives, sometimes to compare them nationally or internationally, sometimes to highlight local particulars or to draw out

[176] Flenley, *Town chronicles*, p. 35.
[177] Woolf, *Social circulation.*

traditional continuities. Where possible I will refer to other non-narrative and non-written sources from the same towns to place the manuscripts in context.

In the Southern Low Countries much research has been done in the last decades into urban historical writing from social memory, historical consciousness and other perspectives. Similar developments have taken place in medieval studies in the Northern Low Countries and England, where interest in all aspects of urban history and urban identity in the Middle Ages has increased with similar inspiration from the 'material' and 'archival' turn in historical study. However, Holland and England have so far produced fewer publications on medieval urban history writing. An understanding that medieval Flanders does show urban history writing, as seems only logical considering the size and power of Flemish cities in the time, has been established in the last decades. Although individual sources have been discussed in England and Holland, the general state of research still reflects a lack of interest in and evidence from these regions. Because much more work has been done and published on Flanders, I will use this region as a comparison in my thesis for a closer look at Holland and England.

Chapter 2: Forms and textual context

To recognise and research late medieval urban history writing in Holland and England, an important step is to recognise the extent of the forms in which urban historical writing might appear. This chapter will provide an overview and discussion of several types of history writing in English, Dutch and Flemish towns demonstrating the many formats of writing which can be considered to be written evidence of urban historical culture. Following on from the ideas set out in the last chapter, 'form' here does not mean a genre, such as a chronicle or vita, but rather describes the materiality of the source. This includes codicological and physical characteristics, most significantly layout, but also material, decoration and language, as well as type of contents and structure of the text. As much work has been done in Flanders in recent years on medieval urban historical writing, some common shapes and forms have been discussed in a Flemish context. This research suggests that there was no single dominant form for urban history writing in the late Middle Ages.[178] Aspects of different German and Italian sources will also demonstrate this. Similarly, there are many different types of documents I have found to be common in towns in England and Holland that are to a certain extent historicised, carrying aspects of urban historical culture.

Through the discussion of forms of historicised urban writing in six categories this chapter will demonstrate the wealth of sources in late medieval England, Holland and Flanders. I will explore the variety of structures behind some of the names in the literature through the example of the London Chronicles, before discussing six recurrent formats. I will start with manuscripts with a strong administrative connotation, such as town registers and magistrate lists. Some of these lists also existed in a private context, and personal notebooks, and more traditional narrative historical texts will be discussed as well either as stand-alone texts or in the shape of adapted regional chronicles. The last category I discuss is that of poems and songs. In providing examples for the different formats this chapter will also function as an introduction to many of the sources that feature in this thesis.

[178] Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles', pp. 96–97; Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', pp. 30–32; G.P. Small, 'When indiciaires meet rederijkers: a contribution to the history of the Burgundian "theatre state"', in J. Oosterman (ed.), *Stad van koopmanschap en vrede: literatuur in Brugge tussen middeleeuwen en rederijkerstijd* (Leuven, 2005), pp. 133–161 shows the overlap in writing in certain formats of texts of urban and court writers.

The overview and comparison in this chapter will show more than anything the hybridity of forms used. Part of this heterogeneity can be explained by a close link to administrative urban writing. In the past documents in town archives were often examined for political and institutional data rather than historiographical ideas.[179] However, more recent scholarship has combined study of these spheres of town administration and historical writing, as a realisation grows that they were similarly combined in the time of writing.[180] In this chapter we will see a multiplicity of institutional and archival sources that are historicised to different degrees, providing examples of written evidence of historical culture in their own ways. Other formats also show a fluidity of the categories here discussed: poems occur within narrative forms, lists can become almost unrecognisable in longer narratives, and national chronicles are changed to portray urban historical culture. Following a discussion of the six categories, regional comparison will show how all formats appear to a greater or lesser extent in all three regions. Some differences in popularity and local features seem to appear in this intial study.

This chapter will show a collection of different formats of late medieval urban history writing, some of which, especially those connected to an administrative context, are used internationally and in several contexts. This exercise to distinguish, compare and complement our image of used forms is not to draw typological conclusions based on these types. The connection between form and historical consciousness of the writer is not simple or singular, nor is that between form and genre.[181] Official urban historiography by German city clerks, for example, took several forms and these forms could also be used by different types of authors, for example annals are found in an urban but also in monastic context. However, the form remains an important aspect in understanding the manuscript in its totality. It is, for instance, not a coincidence that the group of manuscripts from Ghent known

[179] E.g. the English Historical Manuscripts Commission series.
[180] Walsham, 'Social history of the archive'; Tineke Van Gassen, 'City cartularies in late medieval Ghent: a sign of urban identity?', in E. Dijkhof et al. (eds.), *Medieval documents as artefacts. Interdisciplinary perspectives on codicology, palaeography and diplomatics*, (forthcoming); Van Gassen, 'Documentaire geheugen'.
[181] Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 124–125, it is tempting to see genres as fixed expressions of connected historical consciousness, e.g. a world chronicle as expression of a universal, a monastic chronicle as the expression of a monastic historical consciousness, but genres do develop, and where the intention and contents show the historical culture of the author, the form mostly shows tradition and connection to certain institutions. Genres can appear in multiple forms depending on intentions and literary aims. Tzvetan Todorov and Richard M. Berrong, 'The origin of genres', *New Literary History* 8:1 (1976).

as memory books all have the same layout.[182] Consciously or unconsciously, the writers made their work fit within that tradition by adapting to a structure. The layout can also give away a focus and intention of the writer, and material aspects such as decoration give us clues to the use of the manuscript. Function, social context and ideological contents are omitted from this initial categorisation and will be discussed in later chapters.

The example of London Chronicles

The London Chronicles, a large group of documents from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is the only corpus of texts generally accepted as medieval urban history writing in England by historians.[183] The very identification of the London Chronicles as a group is based on their form according to Mary-Rose McLaren in her 2002 study on the manuscripts:

> Although they are diverse, the manuscripts are classed together as London chronicles because they share a structural form. It is usual for the manuscripts to begin at 1189 and to date by mayoral years, giving accounts of events under the names of the mayors and sheriffs in any given year.[184]

Despite this definition, the London Chronicles really are not as homogeneous as McLaren suggests.[185] At one extreme, there are London Chronicles that are barely more than lists of names of the town magistrates, with minimal narrative elements and show of historical consciousness. On the other end of the scale we find much more historicised London Chronicles that incorporate large narrative parts from national chronicles. Hybrid forms in between these extremes are common. Regardless of these differences they have been accepted widely as urban history

[182] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 51–52.
[183] Gransden discusses London Chronicles, but mentions all other town chronicles in a footnote, Gransden, *Historical writing*, vol. 1, pp. 508-17; vol. 2, pp. 227-43. Flenley, *Town chronicles* discusses London Chronicles separate from a short chapter on 'other towns'; Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*; McLaren, *London Chronicles*; for an earlier example: Ian Stone, 'Arnold Fitz Thedmar: identity, politics and the City of London in the thirteenth century', *The London Journal* 40:2 (2015).
[184] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 4.
[185] Although McLaren mentions the differences between individual sources and distinguishes three categories in her conclusions, she considers them a coherent group throughout her studies, McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 140.

writing, signified by the use of 'chonicle' in their name.[186]

At one end of the scale, some manuscripts known as London Chronicles contain significant amounts of narrative prose text. They start with copies of *Brut* chronicles and continue, usually when the chronicle reaches the fifteenth century, with a more local history. The continuations tend to be in a narrative prose style similar to the preceding *Brut* chronicle, although mayors' and sheriffs' names are often listed specifically. An example is Oxford, BodL, Rawlinson B173. This substantial manuscript contains a *Brut* chronicle which stops incompletely in the text covering the landing of English armies in France in 1419 on f. 221v.[187] The catchwords on the bottom of the folio are not found on the next page, as f. 222 starts on a new quire (and seemingly in the middle of another chronicle text) describing the coronation feast in London of Queen Catherine in 1421. Fols. 221r-227v is known as a London Chronicle. The layout of the text is at first glance very similar to the *Brut* chronicle. Both contain narrative text in a single column in black ink with rubricated initials. On closer inspection the London Chronicle's narrative text for every year is built up of smaller comments starting with 'and in that yere..' rather than being a single continuous text. Although the London Chronicle is written in a different hand, it is very similar in style and date to that of the first part of the manuscript. The only difference between the texts is that the *Brut* contains topic headings in red ink, whereas the London Chronicle has the names of a mayor and two sheriffs at the start of every year. However, as these are in black ink, with rubrication of the initials in red and blue, they do not stand out much in the text. The incomplete ending of the *Brut* chronicle, as well as the beginning of the London Chronicle on a new quire, suggest they were not bound in this way originally. There was a common *Brut* version that ended in 1419, so despite the incomplete ending, this, and the beginning of the continuation on a new quire with an almost continuous year, and in a similar layout, suggest the London Chronicle of Rawlinson B173 was written as a *Brut* continuation. This hypothesis is supported by other such examples among the so-called London Chronicles.[188] These texts are chronologically structured by year, with the headings of the mayor and sheriffs a minor part of the

[186] Hay, *Annalists and historians*, p. 72; Stein, 'Selbstverständnis', pp. 193–194; Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 40–41; Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 26; Vasina, 'Medieval urban historiography', p. 351; Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', p. 1432.
[187] This ending is imperfect, but 1419 was a common year to end *Brut* Chronicles. Matheson, *The prose Brut*, pp. 101–102; Oxford, BodL, Rawlinson B173.
[188] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 123; Matheson, *The prose Brut*, p. 13.

chronicle and serving as simply another type of heading rather than the main focus on the page.

Other texts also known as London Chronicles contain very little narrative text and have therefore a very different layout. This category comprises of lists of the London mayors and sheriffs which contain occasional notes added later in the margins next to some of the years. A good example would be manuscript Rawlinson B359, described by McLaren as 'primarily a list'.[189] It has two sections. The first is the London Chronicle, in the form of a list of mayors and sheriffs of London with a few short notes in the margins. The second part contains lists of the mayors and officials of the Grocers Company of London from 1345-1498. From the layout it is clear that this London Chronicle was first written as a mere list, and Latin and English annotations are added in the margins only at a later stage, rather than being part of the main page layout. However, other London Chronicle manuscripts which are in structure a list of names of London's civic officials, do have historical entries incorporated in the layout of the page. MS Gough London 10 is an example. The chronicle starts on f. 19v with a short introduction specifying the day and year of Richard I's coronation and introducing the text: 'Heere followen the names of all those persones that hath been custofes [mayors] and baylyfs of the Cyte of London'.[190] The names of London's civic officials for every year from 1189 are listed next to an indication of the regnal year. Where historical annotations occur they are in the same hand, clearly written simultaneously and part of the original layout. Even for years where the narrative annotations cover several pages, the layout still clearly highlights the names of civic officials as structure, emphasised through red underlining and red line fillers. The main structure of these manuscripts is evidently the lists of names and years, and the narrative information is secondary to the format and structure of the text.

Seeing the single name of London Chronicle applied to this variety of formats leads me to reiterate the point that genre labels have restricted the understanding of urban historiography. Although there is some coherence in the use of the London mayor's names, there are also many distinguishing features within these examples. This single 'genre' of London Chronicles very clearly demonstrates the

[189] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 129; Oxford, BodL, Rawlinson B359.
[190] Oxford, BodL, MS Gough London 10, f. 19r; McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 18.

heterogeneity of urban historicised texts and represents all the themes in this chapter. Administrative registers, lists of civic officials, commonplace books and continuations of regional and national chronicles can all be recognised in the London Chronicles and will all be discussed with examples from other English and European cities below. Also the amount of composite manuscripts, both as administrative composite registers and private commonplace books will be an important feature in this chapter, as the public or private context of the urban sources is essential in understanding its nature. The above examples from the Bodleian Library have demonstrated their composite nature. The first part of MS Gough London 10 for instance contains a calendar to ordinance books of several guilds as well as some summarised ordinances, a short list of mayors and bailiffs of the years 1399-1408 and several oaths. The London Chronicles might be less exceptional than Antionia Gransden and others have taken them to be as the only urban type of English history writing, but their many points of comparison with sources from English and continental towns makes them no less significant.

Town registers

A genre dominant in German urban historiography is that of city registers which also contain historical notes. These *Ratsbücher* or *Stadtbücher* formed part of the official documents of the town administration. They are registers in which the author, usually a town secretary, clerk or civic official recorded the highlights of civic political and juridical life in an administrative way.[191] They contained all sorts of administrative texts, such as charters, ordinances, laws, and court records. In some instances historical notes were also included, providing an urban chronicle for future generations of administrators.[192]

The city books of Basel form an example of how types of information were mixed in these registers. During the fourteenth century the city had a Red Book (named after its cover) until 1356 and two other registers, one from 1357 and one begun in 1390. Early in the fifteenth century the town clerk started a *Rufbuch* (the 'call book' in which the regulations were recorded that were read publicly from the steps of the city hall) and a book referred to as *Liber diversarum rerum* [book of

[191] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 16–18; Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 190–191.
[192] See also Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, p. 37, nt 21 for further reference; some examples: Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 17.

diverse matters] and similar registers were kept throughout the rest of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Although all the above-mentioned books had a slightly different focus, they all contained a mix of administrative information in the form of lists of freemen, charters, laws or letters, as well as historical remarks.[193] The abundance of examples of these *Stadtbücher* show this was not the result of a single city clerk with a particular interest in history, but that in German towns legal and historical remarks were understood, remembered and kept together. Some cities went on to produce separate town chronicles, but these hybrid forms were common both before and alongside such official history writing.[194] The distinctly historical part of *Stadtbücher* could be anything from a coherent urban chronicle copied into the manuscript to short historical entries spread throughout the document, mentioning major events such as an earthquake in Basel in 1356.[195]

This format is crucial in the understanding of urban historical writing in England and the Low Countries for several reasons. Firstly, the actual format of these town registers is one of the main forms in which historical writing is found in Holland and England, although many of these texts have not been recognised as such due to the administrative nature of the manuscripts. As they are studied in the context of historical writing in Germany, despite assumptions of a stereotypical form of urban chronicle, they should definitely also be included in the study of historical culture in other countries. Secondly, it is essential for this thesis to realise the high level of interconnectedness between urban administration and urban written evidence of historical culture, and this will come up again in every chapter, from every perspective on these sources.

These registers are known as custumals or registers in English literature and as town books, registers or *keurboeken* in the Low Countries.[196] These town registers are edited collections of key administrative documents copied into one volume to be easily accessible for the clerk and the town government.[197] Oaths and election

[193] Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 190–191, 227, for many more examples from German towns see pp. 191-202.
[194] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 18–22; Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung'.
[195] Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 226–229; Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 16–18.
[196] Cartularies also used to be called registers, but the registers discussed here include more than charters or title deeds. Van Caenegem, *Guide to the sources*, pp. 76–82; Clanchy, *From memory*, pp. 103–106.
[197] Clanchy, *From memory*, p. 105; Christian D. Liddy, *Contesting the city: the politics of citizenship in English towns, 1250-1530* (Oxford, 2017), p. 168. This separates the genre from other government documents, such as council minutes etc. which were copied continuously and concurrently; see Lorraine C. Attreed, ed., *The York House Books 1461-1490*, 2 vols (Stroud,

processes of civic officials, as well as some town charters, were regularly included as they represented the very core of civic government and were needed on a yearly basis. The name and exact contents of the register varied per city and over time. Such books were often known by their appearance; we know of Oak or Parchment Books, and many Black, White or Red Books. It was also not uncommon for towns to have several of these in use at the same time. Bristol's town administration kept a Great White Book, Great Red Book and Little Red Book, next to the *Kalendar* that will be studied in this thesis. This genre existed equally in England, the Low Countries, France and Germany.[198] The Ghent Archives for example contain many registers such as White and Green Books.

The large majority of entries in this type of urban document are of an administrative nature. Some have a juridical function, such as the charters explaining liberties received from the king or local landlord, deeds or royal decrees. Through these sorts of items custumals function as evidence and precedent books that can show and defend the town's rights. Custumals function at the same time as an *aide-mémoire* for all the civic rules, such as the processes for election of civic officers, oaths to be taken, and rentals of local properties. Only some registers contain some narrative accounts on events in the more or less distant past. The Sandwich Custumal, for example, is a well-known text, extant in several copies from the fourteenth century onwards, but it is a purely administrative text without references to the past, or any given dates.[199] Even registers that contain no separate texts of particular historical interest, can hint at the urban historical culture behind the writing. Thomas Grantham, former mayor of Lincoln, took the effort in the mid-fifteenth century to write up and translate from French into English 'the customare of the cite of Lincolne of old ancient tyme acustomyd and usyd'.[200] The focus on 'ancient customs' suggests that those urban administrative records were deeply

1991), vol. I, pp. xii-xiv; and Graeme Small, 'Municipal registers of deliberations in the late Middle Ages: cross-Channel comparisons', in J.P. Genet (ed.), *Les idées passent-elles La Manche?* (Paris, 2007), pp. 50–51.

[198] Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska, 'Introduction', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the administration of medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014) and other essays in this publication.

[199] Kent History and Library Centre, Ref. Sa/LC.

[200] Northamption's *Liber Custumarum*, described as 'the book of the ancient usuages and cutoms of the towne' was drawn up in the same time, Flenley, *Town chronicles*, p. 14. Great Yarmouth can boast the example of 'A booke of the Foundacion and Antiquitys of the Toune of Great Yarmouth', although this was probably written down in the sixteenth century, HMC Report IX, appendix I, p. 299.

embedded in the history and the historical culture of their town.

The historical writing in these registers can take various forms. The so-called Chronicle of Rotterdam is an accumulation of notes from a town register in that city.[201] This register contains many administrative texts surrounding the historical notes. The appearance of the manuscript is simple and that of a well-used notebook, with different hands and layouts throughout the manuscript and no decoration except for some pages with rubrication. The pages do not have any ruling, and wine, water and ink stains and corrections in the text strengthen the appearance of a manuscript very much in use throughout the generations. The simple parchment cover only displays the modern title of 'memorial'. The paper of the register features several different watermarks, suggesting it was added to while in use rather than bought as a volume for a designated purpose. The contents of the register show a town clerk at work. It starts with useful recipes for ink and green wax and a list of who possesses the great seal of the town. F. 1v-2r then shows a short family chronicle, before administrative entries start. The majority of the contents is of an administrative nature, including copies of deeds and privileges, lists of nobles and bishops with their correct titles, and entries about wills and annuities. There are many drafts of letters to be written, for example to the bishop of Utrecht, and about tolls regarding the staple of Dordrecht, signed with 'the city of Rotterdam'.

In between these business-related notes there are some short poems or phrases and a few groups of pages with chronicle entries - these have been collectively named the 'Chronicle of Rotterdam'. Jan Allertsz, Rotterdam's city clerk, wrote some six pages that covered events chronologically between 1315 and 1427 as well as forty-two pages of more contemporary history (1462-1488).[202] His son and successor as town clerk, Cornelis Jansz, continued this tradition and included historical notes of events between 1494 and 1499, during his own lifetime, on fols. 311v-314r. Two later clerks, who used this same register in the sixteenth century added some historical entries relating to the sixteenth century to the earlier writing throughout the manuscript. Allertsz' notes on fols. 254r-256v are short and all start

[201] Rotterdam, CA, no. 690, *'oud-memoriaal van de schepenen'*; Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', pp. 7–84.
[202] Rotterdam, CA, no. 690, fols. 254r-278v, 258r-271v are also in the hand of Cornelis Jansz as he copied his father's notes, probably because of the water or wine damage that is still visible in the book. Fols. 272r-278v continue in Jan Allertsz's hand.

with 'In the year of our Lord …'. The first initial is rubricated in red, the section is headed by a simple 'Nota' at the top of f. 254r. These entries are clearly copied from a previous source and are mostly about matters in Holland or international matters related to the Counts of Holland and other overlords, such as the Count of Flanders and the English King. From f. 258, where the notes continue from the mid fifteenth century, many entries are longer narratives with a heading, such as 'About the day the Duke of Burgundy died'.[203] Although sources were consulted for some of these, the mundane contents, such as prices of foodstuffs, and the detail make it likely to have been written by a contemporary from his own experience.[204] Old folio numbers indicate that the manuscript has been rebound and we cannot be entirely certain about the original order, but the three different parts of the historical notes in addition to the family chronicle at the very beginning of the manuscript suggest that these notes were dispersed throughout the register in the past as they are today. The seamless transition from historical into administrative writing is shown for instance on f. 314 which has historical notes on the recto and a formal letter on the verso side in the same handwriting.

Town registers can be historicised to different degrees, as two examples from Colchester illustrate. The Red Paper Book and Oath Book, originally called Red Parchment Book, from the English city of Colchester both contain a little 'chronicle' according to Richard Britnell, who studied Colchester extensively. However, although both sources contain interesting historical parts, the two texts he describes as chronicles are extremely different and demonstrate again that written evidence of historical culture appears in a multiplicity of formats.

The Colchester Oath Book is an example of an English custumal where the historical information appears in a more concentrated way as opposed to being distributed throughout the volume.[205] Thanks to the work of William Gurney Benham in the early twentieth century, there is a coherent edition of the Oath Book, and the extensive work of Richard Britnell has provided much information about

[203] It is possible notes on events between 1427 and 1462 existed, but were not copied by Cornelis Jansz. There is nothing to suggest f. 256v was the end of that section. A poem about 1456 and a note on 1449 before settling in to a fuller account from 1463 suggest there might have been more information. The pages of the manuscript have been rebound, as is obvious from the order of old folio numbers, so it is possible some pages of the chronicle entries have been lost.

[204] E.g. Rotterdam, CA, no. 690, fols. 258v-259v for several comments on prices and availability of food and drink, and a comment on a fire that roared 'until Harper Geertszoon's house', as well as a note on the birth of the writer's son.

[205] Chelmsford, D/B 5 R1.

the circumstances of its use.[206] The register is composite with several medieval sections and 43 leaves added in the seventeenth century. Fols. 3-84 and 147-177 formed the original fourteenth-century Red Parchment Book with a table of contents on fols. 3-4. Fols. 85-146 were added in the fifteenth century and cover the years 1430-1564. The register contains a variety of administrative documents. The oaths and election procedures for civic officials as well as the New Constitution of 1372 feature at the start. A large part is taken up by a summary of the court rolls, and it contains rentals, lists of freemen, copies of writs and proclamations, and some mnemonics on dates and Saxon words for the use of the town clerk. The text most significant for this study is the short chronicle on Colchester and King Coel. It follows two king lists, one in narrative prose on f. 19r and a second on the dorse laid out as a list showing in columns date, name, years of reign and burial place. The short chronicle on Colchester (fols. 20r-v) has a similar annalistic layout. Both the lists and the chronicle are written in Latin. The only decoration is a decorated initial C at the start of the chronicle. It is typical for the composite and collective nature of the register that all three of these texts are in different hands and that the lists of kings are continued even into the seventeenth century by several later hands.

The Red Paper Book from Colchester is a similar town register. In the Red Paper Book Britnell identifies a chronicle of 1372-78.[207] He refers to several pages with narrative entries in a single hand focusing on the deeds of bailiff William Reyne during his time in office. It also contains the oaths to be sworn by the civic officials, notes on elections and comments on the wool market and royal taxes. This part does not look very different from the rest of the custumal book, which has similar administrative, narrative entries. In a similar layout, the entries are administrative, although they are told from the Reyne's point of view and the good reign of this particular bailiff is explicitly praised. The 'chronicle' in the Red Paper Book is not as historicised and is less traditional in form than that in the Oath Book, but nevertheless equally significant as evidence of urban historical recording.

Although the archives of Flemish cities contain many town books, it seems few of these registers contain historical information in the way described for Germany,

[206] Benham, *Oath Book*; Britnell, 'Oath Book'; Britnell, *Growth and decline.*
[207] Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, D/B 5 R2, fols. 5r-10v; W. Gurney Benham, ed., *The Red Paper Book of Colchester* (Colchester, 1902), pp. 10–13; Britnell, *Growth and decline*, chap. 8; Britnell, 'Oath Book'.

Holland and England.[208] However, administrative sources and historical writing were intertwined in many other documents, such as guild registers. The Bruges archives for example contain two guild books with short historical narrative entries.[209] The cloth shearers' register is a thick book, with a sixteenth-century decorated binding, but the inside is plain. It is all written in black ink, started in 1416 and continued in changing hands over the next few centuries, listing new apprentices and masters of the guild and keeping copies of other relevant administrative documents. Its sixteenth-century entries also contain a number of historical comments. The register of the St George guild has beautiful penwork initials and blue and red rubrication throughout. In addition to alphabetical lists of its members it has narrative comments relating to the events of guild members. In the guild book of the Ghent *metsenaars* guild we encounter two short hagiographical texts from the *Legenda Aurea*.[210] Magistrate lists were an important part of the town archive in all Flemish cities, and some of them also contain historical writing, as will be discussed in the next section.

Another Ghent example of a distinct town book is the fifteenth-century *Dagboek van Gent* (Diary of Ghent).[211] This register is a combination of copied administrative documents and additional narrative.[212] It is however different from the custumals discussed before in that it seems to have been written as a single political tract with one storyline in mind for which relevant documents from the town archive were used, rather than being a continuously used register in the town administration. This reminds us of a genre of 'cartulary-chronicles' that was identified by Reppich in 1924, a term used for the Diary of Ghent by Van Gassen.[213] Many scholars have

[208] I have found no clear examples in town books from the city archives of Ghent or Bruges (Ypres' town archive has not survived) from catalogue descriptions and consultation of more promising ones. The Diary of Ghent is an interesting exception, see below.
[209] The cloth shearers' guild book from 1416, Bruges, CA, 324; Schouteet, 'Kroniekachtige aantekeningen', see also pp. 185-86; the St George guild register: Bruges, CA, 385.
[210] Ghent, CA, 177/1, fols. 40r-43r; A. Van Elslander and M. Daem, *Twee Middelnederlandse Legenden. De vier gekroonde patroonheiligen vn de Gentse nering der metselaars* (Ghent, 1951).
[211] Ghent, SA, Fonds Gent, 158; Victor Fris (ed.), *Dagboek van Gent van 1447 tot 1470 met een vervolg van 1477 tot 1515* (Ghent, 1901).
[212] Hannes Lowagie, 'The political implications of urban archival documents in the late medieval Flemish cities: the example of the *Diary of Ghent*', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the administration of medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014); Van Gassen, '*Diary of Ghent*'.
[213] H. Reppich introduced 'Chartularchronik' quoted by Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung', p. 416; Van Gassen, '*Diary of Ghent*' prefers the French translation; based on Maria Milagros Cárcel Ortí, *Vocabulaire international de la diplomatique*, 2nd ed.,. (Valencia, 1997), p. 36.

identified this overlap of origin and legal history.[214] All examples in this category demonstrate again how flexible the boundary between administrative sources and history writing can be and how diverse the places are where we can look for a town's sense of history.

When we look at the materiality of these registers, they resemble other administrative manuscripts closely in their size, material, outlook and language. Town registers were functional books, and there is usually no decoration and little or no rubrication.[215] The longevity of these documents is often recognisable in the multitude of hands used, and different types of information included. The very nature of these registers and the forms of the historical information recorded means there is no one dominant form in which these custumals portray written evidence of historical culture.

Comparable to German *Stadtbücher*, many town registers in England and the Low Countries contain both administrative and historical material. Just as these *Stadtbücher* have been part of the study of medieval historiography for a long time, the English custumals and the *keurboeken* and registers from Flanders and Holland need to be studied for their contribution to the written historical culture of the towns. The nature of these town books as composite manuscripts, unique for every town, and thus heterogeneous in their precise formats and their level of historicity, characterises their form and needs to be part of their understanding.

Magistrate lists

Annotated magistrate lists form the second category. This category is easier to recognise as historical writing; the form resembles closely what might be thought of as annals in traditional historiography. Here, instead of abbots, bishops or kings being listed in chronological order, it is the civic magistrates, whose names as individuals and as representatives of urban power find their way into the historical record. Lists were the earliest and simplest form of civic administration and record-

[214] Klaus Wriedt tries out the term 'Stadtbuchchronik', although he does not continue to use it. Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung', p. 416; Lowagie, 'Political implications', p. 209.
[215] One major exception is the Bristol *Maire's Kalendar,* which contains many images. See pp. 113-14 on its decoration.

keeping in the Middle Ages.[216] The origins of chronicle writing in Florence started with twelfth-century lists of city officials, which became more elaborate over time, ultimately leading to the famous chronicles of Villani and Bruni. Early Florentine lists included chronologically ordered notes on historical events, but without any attempts to thematically or causally link the texts.[217] A large number of late medieval Flemish cities had similar lists, with the Ghent memory books as their most obvious example. This turns out to be a common form of late medieval civic historical writing, as there are also examples of similar annotated lists of civic officials in Holland and in many English cities. Whereas these civic lists were popular in Italy from the twelfth century, it was not until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that they became well-known in the Low Countries and England.

Among the types of sources discussed as urban history writing in Flanders in recent decades, these annotated magistrate lists are common. We know of lists of annual civic officials, referred to as *wetsvernieuwingen*, 'renewals of the law (=the collective of aldermen)' in many Flemish city's archives, as well as some owned by private citizens.[218] The city of Ghent has the most famous such lists in the collection of m*emorieboeken*, but they are also found in other cities, such as Bruges, Ypres and St Omer.[219] The works attributed to Olivier van Dixmude and Pieter van de Letewe from Ypres were long regarded as examples of regional chronicles, due to incomplete nineteenth-century editions. However, study of their manuscripts has found that their form is similar to the Ghent *memorieboeken* in origin because they too were built up as annotations to magistrate lists, albeit in a much fuller form. The edition of Van Dixmude's chronicle omitted the magistrate lists, although the structure of magistrate lists is provided in the otherwise incomplete edition of Pieter van de Letewe's work.[220] Although the Bruges city archive does not hold

[216] Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy', p. 220; Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, p. 9; Clanchy, *From memory*, p. 96.
[217] Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, pp. 3–15.
[218] See pp. 139-41 for more information on private ownership, often of wealthier citizens, who had been or were related to an alderman or other city official. This section will focus on the lists in the context of city administrations.
[219] Ypres' city archive has not survived, but we know them from Dixmude and Letewe. For St Omer see references to *registres au renouvellement de loi* in Alain Derville, *Saint-Omer: des origines ou débuts du 14e siècle* (Paris, 1995).
[220] Pieter Van de Letewe, Isodore Diegerick (ed.), *Vernieuwing der wet van Ypre van het jaer 1443 tot 1480, met het geene daer binnen dezen tyd geschiet is* (Ypres, 1863); Van Dixmude's chronicle continued from an un-annotated magistrate list for 1366-77. Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide'.

manuscripts similar to the Ghent *memorieboeken*, the archive does show how familiar they would have been to Bruges citizens. In Bruges, lists of the magistrates survive in fourteen registers for the years 1363-1795 (although incomplete).[221] These do not contain narrative entries on historical events in or around the city, but they do include short notes on the magistrates themselves.[222] Most common is a comment written in the margin next to a *schepen* or other office holder that he had died, with the name of the individual who replaced him in office. Beyond this level of information we can only get some historical context from the irregularities in these registers. In some of the rebellious years of the fifteenth century, the lists show that the magistrates were renewed in the middle of their normal year, that comital election commissioners were missing at the elections, or that magistrates were exiled. No further explanation is offered in the manuscripts, but these disruptions in the normal regular listings are witnesses of historical events we know better from other sources.

The Ghent *memorieboeken* are one of the most important Flemish sources of urban history. The name refers to a collection of (so far) forty-two manuscripts deriving from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, which are considered related through form and layout.[223] These documents started, similar to Florence's historiography, as lists of city officials recorded by the town administration. These *memorieboeken* were originally written by the town clerk or a scribe related to the town administration, and we know of several manuscripts commissioned by the town council to keep as the official town record.[224] In Ghent this recording started in the fourteenth century, two centuries later than Cochrane dates the Florence lists. The focus and structure of these manuscripts are the lists of the aldermen, usually starting with the list for 1301, the year of a charter granting Ghent a new election system. Historical notes were added to these lists of city officials for some years, but without any causal or thematic context. The lists of names are neatly recorded in the same way at the start of the page of each year. Annotations are added after these

[221] André Vandewalle, *Beknopte inventaris van het stadsarchief van Brugge* (Bruges, 1979), no. 114.
[222] Similar notes also occur in Ghent memory books.
[223] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 5–6, 281–370, for list of 42 manuscripts; edition: Polydore-Charles Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek der stad Ghent van't j. 1301 tot 1737*, vol. 1 (Ghent, 1852).
[224] Ghent, UL, MS2554 is the fourteenth-century official *'schepenboek'*, which has been copied for the town administration in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The sixteenth-century copy is now on display in the local museum. Other possible official copies also exist; Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 62–64.

lists, sometimes in later hands, to the bottom of the pages, but can even be scribbled sideways in the margins, with the lists of *schepenen* (*scabini*: aldermen) remaining the clear central focus of the page.

The extant manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contain few notes, and all of them are added in the margins or on the bottom of the page. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the amount of historical annotations increased enormously, with the chronicle entries becoming more and more elaborate and filling several pages for a single year in manuscripts from later centuries.[225] However, the lists of Ghent aldermen always remained the main structure of the text. This is visible in the layout where every year, without exception, starts with clear lists of the two benches of *schepenen*, thirteen names each. Even when they almost seem to interrupt the long narrative entries, they keep pride of place at the start of the page for every year. In many memory books the design of these lists is very consistent throughout. The manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries give the impression that the historical annotation is an afterthought. They can be in different ink or hands, and they are always kept to the margins, not interfering with the main lists on the page. Rubrication and headings are used for the names of the two benches of aldermen, whereas the annotations are in plain black ink. More elaborate decoration is very rare.

In Flanders the names of the *schepenen* (aldermen) are recorded, whereas in England this format is recognisable in the form of mayoral lists. In some instances other annually elected civic officials, such as the bailiffs or sheriffs, are noted next to the mayors' names.[226] English mayoral lists become particularly widespread from the late sixteenth century onwards, but in our time period they occur less frequently.[227] Still, many fifteenth-century city archives did feature such a list, sometimes annotated or in a composite manuscript with other material. The examples of the London Chronicles described above demonstrate some of the different formats such lists could appear in, from names as annual headings for large narrative texts to simple lists of names with rare comments in the margins.

[225] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 49–52.
[226] In a list of the mayors elected annually from 1272 to 1515 at the start of a town register of York, elections into office of some of the civic officials, such as the sword bearer and town clerk, are mentioned, York, CA, Y/COU/3/1.
[227] Woolf, 'Genre into artifact'.

In early civic recording lists were often kept on rolls, rather than the later more popular book form. There are two late medieval examples of rolls with an annotated mayor's list from Coventry and Lincoln, as well as two London Chronicles.[228] The oldest version of the Coventry Annals is on a parchment roll from circa 1462 and covers the period 1346-1462.[229] A paragraph above the annals gives the number of English kings until the present time. Then follow the mayors' names (without regnal or calendar years) with occasional notes of national and local interest. Another example of lists in a simple form, with a few annotations, are the rolls with Lincoln's mayors.[230] Two early sixteenth-century lists (and one seventeenth-century copy) feature regnal years with the corresponding Lincoln mayor and bailiffs or sheriffs, as well as comments on local and national events under several years. One of these lists is also preceded by a paragraph giving the names of both legendary and historical kings of England. The neat columns of years and corresponding mayors and bailiffs in black ink provide a clear visual structure. Annotations are written between and around these lines in red ink, but do not occur for every year.

A last English example in this chapter comes from the city of Bristol, which owns a similar text within *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar*, (a work I will elaborate on below) written in the fifteenth century by the town clerk Robert Ricart.[231] I want to mention this example, because it represents an important change in the layout and purpose of magistrate lists. This list of Bristol officials barely retains the layout of a list anymore. The names of the mayors are given for every year (with one or two provosts, bailiffs or sheriffs, depending on the year), with both the calendar year and the regnal year in the margin. However, other than in the above-mentioned manuscripts, there is ample empty space underneath available for notes. The layout is designed to cover two years per page, and this is continued even when there are no entries for those years. The layout of this work makes clear it was meant to be used for note-taking, rather than to simply provide a list of the names of the magistrates. The very first entry is of the year 1217, allegedly the year of Bristol's first mayor, and the list was continued until the end of the nineteenth century by

[228] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 47.
[229] Finch-Knightley of Packington Hall MSS, LH1/1; photocopy Coventry Record Office, PA 351/1; edition: Fleming, *Coventry.*
[230] Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Dioc/Miscellaneous Rolls/1; J.W.F. Hill, 'Three Lists of mayors, bailiffs and sheriffs of the city of Lincoln', *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers* xxxix (1929).
[231] Bristol, CC/2/7, the mayoral list begins on f. 60r and occupies the third, but also sections of the fourth, fifth and sixth parts of the book; Ricart, *Kalendar*, pp. 25–68.

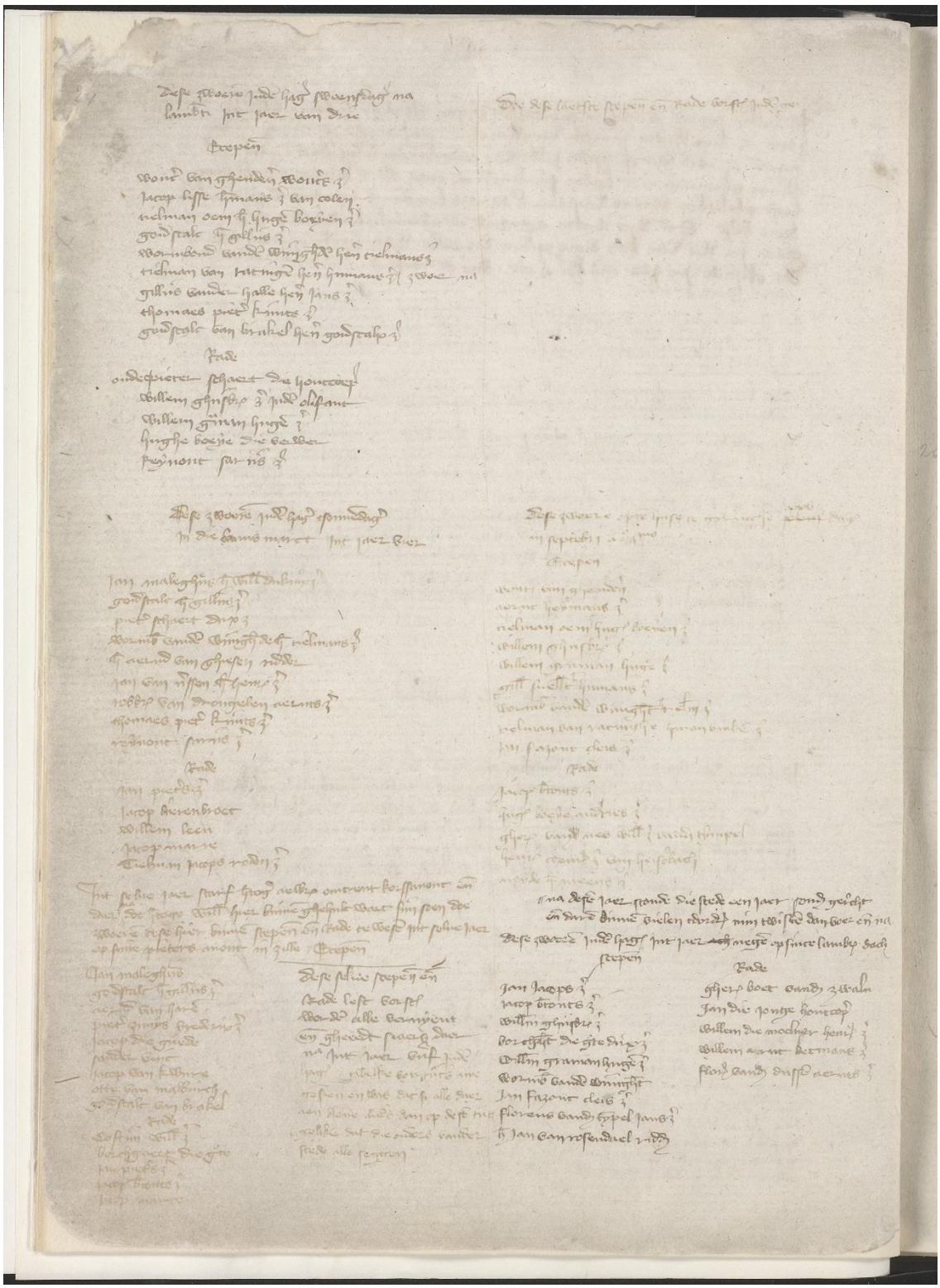
Ricart and his successors as town clerk.

A source that shows how smooth and logical the transition can be between an administrative source, such as the Bruges magistrate lists, and much more historicised documents such as the Ghent memory books, is to be found in the Dordrecht city archive. In a register of the city administration of Dordrecht we find lists of the nine *schepenen* (aldermen) and five *rade* (council members) of the city of several years between 1383 and 1433.[232] Only a few pages of this register are used to note down these magistrate lists and considering that the entries on letters received by the council and disputes brought to the aldermen and council on most of the recto sides are of an earlier date, it looks like these lists are added later to empty spaces in the manuscript. Every year starts with a short statement about the date and place where these officers took their oaths, below which the names of the city officials are recorded. The formulaic nature resembles other magistrate lists known and described above and, also in a similar way, the Dordrecht lists contain short annotations. The comments in the Dordrecht fragment are mostly about the specific *schepenen* in the list and thus comparable to those in the Bruges registers. Although most notes are made from a practical point of view, giving names of replacements in case aldermen died, moved to another office, or sat for two years rather than one, the boundary between administrative recording and note-taking on historical events becomes very thin. The description of a second oath-taking in the year 1404 reads like a historiographical entry:

> In the same year Duke Aelbrecht died around Christmas Eve and thereafter when his son, Duke Willem, was paid homage to here (within this town), those took oaths here to be aldermen and council members in the same year on St Peter's Eve in February.[233]

This shows how easily administrative and historical material can become intertwined. The writer added these notes on the political and social situation in his time to contextualise the administrative material. This is very similar to an annalistic way of writing history, where the main events of a year are recorded; contemporary

[232] Dordrecht, RA, toegang 1, no. 4, fols. 2r-9v.
[233] *'Int selve jaer starf hertog aelbrecht omtrent korssavont ende daer na doe hertoge willem hier binnen ghehult wart sijn soen doe zwoeren dese hier binnen scepenen ende rade te wesen int selve jaer op sinte pieters avont in zille.'* Ibid., f. 5v.



Dordrecht, RA, toegang 1, no. 4, f. 5v, lists of *schepenen*. With the kind permission of Dordrecht Regionaal Archief.

events at the time of writing, but valued essential for the future to understand and remember.

Although these pages are the only medieval magistrate lists I have been able to find in Holland so far, this source shows this form of recording was not unknown to towns in Holland. It is also very common to find lists of civic officials in urban archives in Holland from later centuries, suggesting these records might not have been alien to the civic administration's structure.[234] Although the layout of the pages varies, the magistrate list as the basic structure for historical annotations was familiar in all three areas.[235]

For sources in this category, the magistrate lists form the structure of the text. Many of these sources have names of mayors or aldermen for every year, but only additional narrative entries for some.[236] However, even when there are elaborate narrative entries surrounding them, the civic officials' names form the core of the text and the visual focus on the page. The examples from Bruges, Dordrecht and Ghent show the development within the 'genre' of magistrate lists and it is easy to imagine the development from administrative entries to more and longer annotations. The London Chronicles mentioned at the start of this chapter also portrayed the range of annotations. Also within these manuscripts the time more contemporaneous to the author often contains fuller narratives. This is for example clearly seen in the Coventry Annals or the London Chronicle in MS Gough London 10.

In addition to the manuscripts in this genre there are other urban historical writings which mention names of civic officials, but where they do not form the structure of the text. The Bruges *Boeck van al 't gene datter geschiedt is binnen Brugghe* [Book of everything that has happened within Bruges] for example has lists of civic officers of a few years, but did not generally record this information. When lists are provided they are incorporated in the main text. Because they do not occur annually, the layout of the text is not adapted to it.[237] Similarly, some manuscripts of

[234] E.g. Rotterdam, CA, 33-01_1518; Leiden, RA, no. 98; Johannes Isacius Pontanus, *Historische beschrijvinghe der seer wijt beroemde coop-stadt Amsterdam: waer inne benevens de eerste beginselen ende opcomsten der stadt, verscheyden privilegien, ordonnantien ende andere ghedenckweerdighe gheschiedenissen ... verhaelt werdt* (Amsterdam, 1614).
[235] See also the similarities with Peter van Os' Chronicle of 's Hertogenbosch in Brabant, which also has a structure of magistrate lists. Van Os, *Kroniek van Peter van Os.*
[236] E.g. 1366-1377 for Ypres' 'Olivier van Dixmude' chronicle; many years in the Bristol *Kalendar* and Lincoln lists; majority of the early Ghent *memorieboeken*.
[237] See p. 102 for a more detailed description of this source.

the *Excellente Cronike of Vlaenderen* contain magistrate lists, but they do not form the structure and are incorporated in the narrative continuous text.[238] The same is true for the texts attributed to Jan de Rouc, a Ghent craftsman.[239] From fragmentary copies made by his son Jan de Rouc Junior, it is known he wrote about the rebellious events in the city in the 1470s and 80s. The account of 1477 ends with the renewal of the city magistrates and it includes a list of the *schepenen* at this point. However, this list is used here in a narrative historical context, rather than as the basis of the historical account. I disagree here with Jelle Haemers, who wrote about De Rouc's texts as written in the tradition of the Ghent memory books. Haemers sees lists in memory books as mere background to a narration on politics, but that is not a correct characterisation of the origin and early centuries of these books. Also, a sixteenth-century use of the word 'memorie' could not have been a reference to the genre, as that term was only attributed to them in the nineteenth century.[240] In my opinion the lists do take centre stage in *memorieboeken* both in content and layout, which does not apply to De Rouc Junior's texts.

In the sources described in this category of magistrate lists the layout shows that the names of the civic officers formed the core element of the text. The attention and consistency in the neat lists of aldermen of one or two years on each page demonstrates this, as does the place of the annotations in the margins or the bottom of the page, as we see in the early memory books of Ghent and in Dordrecht. The Flemish and Dutch sources documented all aldermen, whose number changed per city and over time, but averaged around twenty names a year. The Ghent *memorieboeken* record two benches of thirteen aldermen annually, which makes the lists a prominent feature on the page. In England these sources often looked slightly different, because the list of mayors, sometimes complemented with bailiffs or sheriffs, recorded just two or four names per year. Some English examples, such as the Lincoln rolls, therefore look more like continuous lists, with columns indicating date and names of officials with occasional annotations in between.

[238] See below in this chapter for a more detailed description of this source.
[239] Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet', pp. 12–21, see also pp. 236-38.
[240] Ibid.; also Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 50–51.

Personal notebooks, commonplace books

Many of the Ghent memory books, especially the later ones, were owned by private individuals rather than the city archive. The original lists of aldermen were kept for the city administration, but during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries private copies became common.[241] One private memory book from the late fifteenth century is part of a manuscript owned by the noble De Baenst family. The lists of aldermen from 1301-1487 with a small amount of historical annotations and written in the hand of Roeland De Baenst, a knight, fill folios 134r-227v of the register. The manuscript also contains lists of family possessions and claims, privileges and accounts and a (later) French summary of the fourteenth-century diary by Galbert of Bruges.[242] The lists of aldermen with some entries are copied from an earlier *memorieboek*, but the annotations for the years 1476-1485 are original, which is probably related to Roeland's election as Ghent alderman in 1477 (civic year 1476). The hand of Roeland's son Antoon is recognised in the manuscript, and a later member of the De Baenst family, posssibly Roeland's grandson, penned down annotations to the memory book in the sixteenth century, as well as adding the French summary of the diary of Galbert of Bruges.

The Florentine *ricordanze* are famous for a similar mixture of family, business and historical information. These personal journals can be written in several hands when they are continued or copied by sons and grandsons, or, more exceptionally a widow or sister, and are often part of a more substantial family library. *Ricordanze* originated from the financial account books that Italian merchants started to keep from the twelfth century. In time a distinction was made between the recording of the business accounts and the personal wealth. Many merchants also started a separate section in their notebooks in which they recounted the major events in their family's history, such as the birth of their children, details of their weddings, deaths of family members. As the political situation in the city of Florence changed, other aspects became more important and were recorded in the *ricordanze* as legal evidence for the writer and his descendants. From the mid-fourteenth century lists of political offices held by family members were included and genealogies were

[241] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 49, 64–67.
[242] Bruges, City Library, MS442; Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 64–65, 76–80, Roeland De Baenst came from the city of Bruges and this is also detectable in his political view of events, pp. 169-172; Frederik Buylaert, 'Sociale mobiliteit bij stedelijke elites in laatmiddeleeuws Vlaanderen: een gevalstudie over de Vlaamse familie De Baenst', *JMG* 8 (2005).

researched and recorded.[243] In addition to business and family information, these *ricordanze* are also a source of civic history. Historical information included in the manuscripts took the shape of short entries recording important events in the city, often witnessed or participated in by the writer. They could include natural disasters and external events, but most frequently they had a clear connection to the city's or author's political life or business, such as assemblies, reforms and civic ceremonies.[244] The form became a tradition. In the fifteenth century it was used by artisans and others who did not need either extensive book keeping of their business accounts, nor held civic offices to keep track of. In this time these *ricordanze* included more narrative historical information.[245]

Personal notebooks or registers, referred to as commonplace books in English literature, were also an important source of urban historical writing in England and (to a lesser extent) the Low Countries.[246] Not many of these survived from Holland, but that they were not entirely uncommon is shown by the commonplace book of Jan Philipsz, town clerk in Leiden. His personal notebook (compiled during the 1470s) contains mostly liturgical texts, songs and religious poetry as well as correspondence in verse and some early rhetorician's poems.[247] In between those it has a substantial text about the official meeting of the Burgundian Duke and the Emperor in 1473. More examples of such registers are known from an administrative function, such as the register containing the Chronicle of Rotterdam, and Philipsz' profession as a town clerk might well explain his private interest in writing. Such composite notebooks of private citizens were less common in Holland,

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[243] Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, pp. 9–10; Ciappelli, *Tuscan family books*, pp. 12–15, 19–25.
[244] Ciappelli, *Tuscan family books*, pp. 22–23 and chapter 3; Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, p. 11; Christine Klapisch-Zuber, 'Comptes et memoire: l'écriture des livres de famille Florentins', in C. Bourlet and A. Dufour (eds.), *L'écrit dans la société médiévale. Divers aspects de sa pratique du XIe au XVe siècle. Textes en hommage à Lucie Fossier* (Paris, 1991). Some also included information on the wider world, whenever news came in from their agents about events in other parts of Europe.
[245] Ciappelli, *Tuscan family books*, p. 23; Green, 'Historical interpretation', pp. 161–163.
[246] David Reed Parker, *The commonplace book in Tudor London: an examination of BL MSS Egerton 1995, Harley 2252, Lansdowne 762, and Oxford Balliol College MS 354* (Lanham, 1998), p. 1; Marc Boone, 'De discrete charmes van het burgerbestaan in Gent rond het midden van de vijftiende eeuw: het financieel handboek van Simon Borluut (1450-1463)', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 81 (1998).
[247] Jan Philipsz., Herman Brinkman (ed.), *Het Handschrift-Jan Phillipsz. Hs. Berlijn, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Germ. Qu. 557* (Hilversum, 1995); Herman Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde: literatuur in Leiden aan het einde van de middeleeuwen* (Hilversum, 1997), p. 3.

or have survived less well.[248]

English commonplace books have survived in somewhat larger numbers from the late Middle Ages and many contain historicised information. Twelve of the forty-four surviving fifteenth-century London Chronicles identified by McLaren appear in commonplace books.[249] An example is MS Balliol 354 which contains a collection of material about London, such as a copy of a 'London Chronicle', a list of London churches, assize of bread, but also other items, such as songs, specimen letters and recipes.[250] The most obvious feature of a commonplace book is its composite contents, depending on the writer's interest, needs and available sources. They usually portray several different hands, as they are continued or copied by family members, or added to with pages bought from workshops. This means every commonplace book is unique as a personal notebook of its owner. They often contain things like family history, medical recipes, songs, lists of churches or other buildings in the city, money conversion tables, popular songs or romances, and most interesting for this research, local history. The only thing that binds the mixed contents together is the interest of the owner and the useful nature of the material.[251] Local history was often included in this collection of useful knowledge. Many are very simple in outlook, with little or no decoration and untidy cursive handwriting, as they were written for private and personal use. They include both material copied verbatim from other sources, as well as entries that are partly or entirely original. In the case of the London Chronicles we see quite often a different hand continuing the original chronicle copied into the register.

As with the above administrative manuscripts, this category of commonplace books is a heterogeneous and hybrid one. In the Ghent *memorieboeken*, for example, there is no clear boundary between administrative and private historical knowledge, and in the commonplace book of a London citizen useful knowledge could similarly take many forms. From recipes or factual lists to funny songs, the levels of historicity depending on the formats, the sources, and the owner and his interests. This hybridity of the sources and the fluidity of formats of urban historical

[248] There was a tradition in the early modern times as mentioned by Judith Pollmann, 'Archiving the present and chronicling for the future in early modern Europe', *P&P* 233: Supplement 11 (2016), pp. 234–237.
[249] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 47.
[250] Ibid., p. 36; Richard Hill, Roman Dyboski (ed.), *Songs, carols, and other miscellaneous poems, from the Balliol Ms. 354* (London, 1907).
[251] Parker, *Commonplace book*, p. 2

information within them is what defines urban historical writing. The formats are very different from the national chronicles, such as those written at the Burgundian Court. However, although different from administrative contexts, these more official regional or national chronicles also influenced urban historical texts.

Regional chronicle traditions

Besides administrative sources which shaped the forms of urban historical writing in *Stadtbücher*, custumals or magistrate lists, the field of traditional history writing was another context that influenced urban writers. Well-known national, or in the Low Countries, regional, chronicles existed in all of Western Europe.[252] These regional or national chronicles were responsible for much of the historical framework of urban writers interested in history. Within this tradition of regional chronicles, some manuscripts have strong ties to certain towns or have continuations with a strong urban character. The town can be just one of the interests in the contents, but the entire document, through small adaptations, emphasis, authorship and ownership, can and should be seen as an urban source. Forms that show this are regional chronicles adapted into urban ones either by continuing a broader chronicle with a local continuation or by selective copying of the chronicle and adding local entries to it.

There were many Chronicles of Holland written in the late medieval county, most based on the Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht by Johannes Beke. The chronicles of The Hague, Haarlem, and Rotterdam are all adaptations of regional Chronicles of Holland.[253] The Chronicle of The Hague for instance is a clear urban continuation of a copy of the Middle Dutch version of Beke's chronicle.[254] The large majority of the 157 folios of the manuscript consists of a copy of Beke's Chronicle of

[252] It makes sense here to compare English national chronicles with Flemish regional chronicles, as both represent the largest territorial entity the population felt part of. The Counties of Flanders and Holland were part of a larger personal union of the Burgundian and Habsburg Dukes, but this was never a territorial unit with which inhabitants identified or developed its own history. When I speak of national historiography in this thesis, I include county-wide histories of Holland and Flanders.

[253] On a much smaller scale: Leiden, UL, BPL 136d is a manuscript with a copy of the Chronicle of Gouda (a Chronicle of Holland) from 1463, which has a section on Haarlem's Damietta legend and an image of the Haarlem coat of arms inserted. It was known to be copied and first owned by Steffen Henricksz, mayor of Haarlem in 1492. W. Van Anrooij, 'Middeleeuwse sporen van de Haarlemse Damiate-legende', in E.K. Grootes (ed.), *Haarlems Helicon: literatuur en toneel te Haarlem vóór 1800* (Hilversum, 1993), p. 16.

[254] The Hague, RL, MS130 C 10; partial edition and article: Janse, 'Haagse kroniek'.

Holland and Utrecht until 1426. A subsequent quire has a continuation featuring the years 1425-1478 and paying special attention to events in and around the town of The Hague.[255] The format of this continuation is very traditional. The chronology forms the structure of the text, with every short entry simply starting with 'In the same year..' or 'In this year..' The Middle Dutch Beke preceding it has a more continuous narrative and a different page layout. The Chronicle of The Hague is written in a contemporaneous but different hand than the Beke Chronicle, and Janse suggests it might be a (selective) copy of another chronicle.[256] This last quire changes the emphasis of the manuscript into a more urban document, although the regional chronicle is a very present source and basis for it.

The Chronicles of Haarlem and Rotterdam consist of similar short entries structured chronologically. Although it is not currently clear in either case which chronicles have been used as their sources, the type of entries and similarities to known chronicles suggests at least some entries were copied from Chronicles of Holland. Both urban chronicles are short and have thus made very selective use of regional chronicles. These texts became more urban through their selection and through the incorporation within urban registers.

In England we find that local chroniclers used national chronicles; the *Brut* chronicle in particular was very popular. Rawlinson B173, mentioned at the start of this chapter, is an example of a London Chronicle added to a substantial *Brut* chronicle.[257] The text and page layout of the London Chronicle in this example was similar to the *Brut* chronicle that it succeeded in showing a single column of narrative prose text. However, instead of thematic headings, the London Chronicle noted the civic officials of every year, thus highlighting the chronological structure of the text. This use of a national chronicle resembles that of the Chronicle of The Hague. In both cases an urban continuation is added to an otherwise unchanged national chronicle.

The *Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar* consists of six parts preceded by an introduction.[258] Although the entirety of the Bristol *Kalender* can be seen as a

[255] A small part of these entries is entirely urban. See pp. 170-71.
[256] Janse, 'Haagse kroniek', pp. 18–23.
[257] For other examples, see McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 119–121.
[258] Ricart, *Kalendar*; Fleming, *Kalendar*; Peter Fleming, 'A new look at the Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar', *The Regional Historian* 9 (2002).

custumal or collection, the six parts form such individual entities that they can also be discussed independently, as they are here and in the section on magistrate lists. The first part is a chronicle, which according to the introduction, will recount the first foundation of the town of Bristol 'by recorde of Brutes cronicles'.[259] The chronicle consists of a summary of the *Brut* chronicle with the addition of a couple of lines to include the foundation story of Bristol. The first few pages of the chronicle are a narrative listing of the development of the dynasty of Brutus in Britain and a description of the towns those early kings founded. It is written as continuous prose with the names of the kings in larger letters and red underlined.[260] However, the urban element was also important to the author as the cities founded are noted down in the margin next to the text, in the same hand, forming a useful index. Both the dynasty and the city foundations form the visual structure of the text in this way. When it comes to the story of the foundation of the city of Bristol, the name in the margin is written in slightly larger letters and all in red ink, thus standing out from the other towns. Even more obvious, the chronicler has also included a drawing of the town which fills three-quarters of a page.[261] The text in this place diverges from the storyline of the well-known *Brut* chronicle to include just a sentence or two with some detail on the city gates and layout of Bristol.[262] With the exception of these lines, the chronicle provides a summarised account of the Brut chronicle focusing by its nature mostly on the English dynasty. However, the introduction and its place within the context of the *Kalendar*, the highlighting of the urban foundations in the margin, and the visual representation of Bristol turn this national chronicle into a form that is also distinctly urban.

In late medieval Flemish cities similar urban adaptations of regional chronicles of Flanders were more sophisticated. Many copies of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* were not merely continued with urban entries, but their writers also rewrote earlier events to create an urban history that suited them better.[263] The rewriting of the Flemish regional chronicle *Flandria Generosa* with a particularly

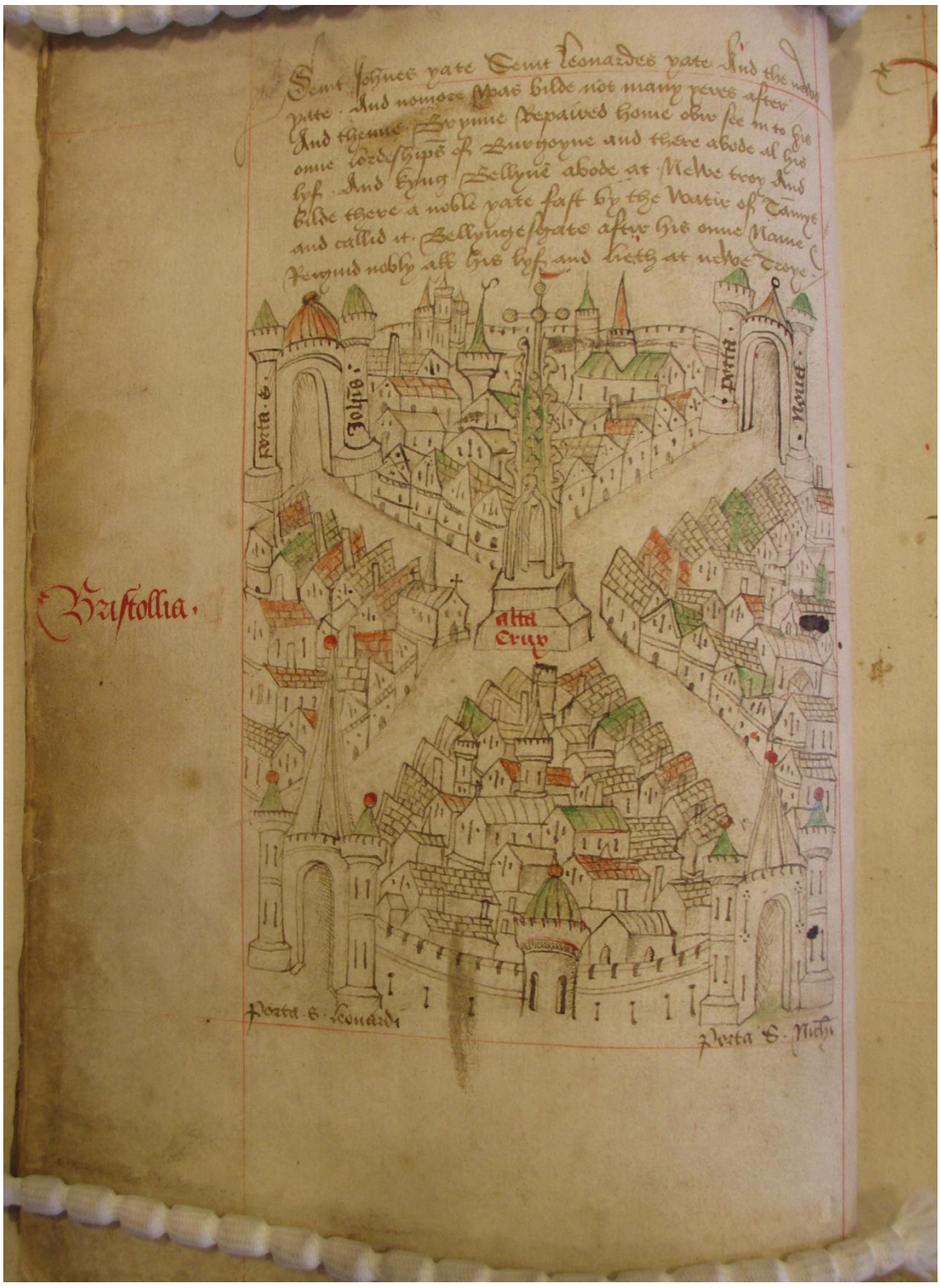
[259] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 3.
[260] This chronicle (Part 1) begins on f. 3v, ibid., p. 8.
[261] Bristol, CC/2/7, f. 5v; reproduced by Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 30.
[262] For more on this see also p. 184.
[263] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', pp. 40–44.

urban focus was not uncommon in Ghent and Bruges.[264] A majority of the fifteenth-century extant manuscripts of this regional chronicle retell the history of Flanders from a particular Bruges perspective. They are written in and for a network of urban elite of Bruges that was rebelling against the centralisation politics of the Burgundian Dukes. The texts in this chronicle tradition are in continuous prose narrative and although in chronological order, the main structure is mostly formed by the continuous narrative. This narrative focuses heavily on the counts of Flanders and their interaction with and government of the cities of Flanders. Except for occasional rhetorician's poems, genealogies of the French kings and in one occasion an urban family's family tree, they do not appear in composite manuscripts.[265] Some of these manuscripts are well-presented and decorated, and they are in Middle Dutch rather than the Latin of the earlier *Flandria Generosa*, which fits its author- and ownership of the urban elite. The urban focus is more obvious in the contents than in the form of the manuscripts.

Urban political ideology of Bruges citizens becomes clear through the light in which events are discussed in manuscripts of the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen*, whereas in Holland or England this urban preoccupation in regional chronicles is less sophisticated and more a matter of adding comments geographically focused on the town. Examples like the Chronicle of Rotterdam and Chronicle of The Hague are for a large part direct copies of regional chronicles for the period preceding the time contemporaneous with the writer. London Chronicles and the Bristol *Kalendar* similarly use the *Brut* to record the distant past, but switch to the form of an annotated mayoral list when getting closer to contemporary times.

These national chronicles were incorporated into the urban historical culture, as the urban writers were not afraid to add or change parts of the story to fit the town's narrative, but the transition to more contemporary and more local recording is clear in the manuscripts as the addition of a new quire in the Chronicle of The Hague or the change in form to magistrate lists in the Bristol *Kalendar* and London Chronicles. These chronicles, until now studied as regional sources, should also be included in the field of urban historiography because they were evidently a large

[264] Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles'; Johan Oosterman, 'De Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen en Anthonis de Roovere', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 118:1 (2002); Kelders, 'Laverend', pp. 167–177.
[265] Demets, 'Manuscript transmission', pp. 151–173.



Bristol Archives, CC/2/7, f. 5v, drawing of the city in the Bristol *Kalendar*. With the kind permission of Bristol Archives.

part of urban historical culture and historical understanding.

Other 'chronicles'

In this category I want to mention some other sources that have not been introduced yet in the above broad categories. Strangely enough, these are some of the sources that fit most closely the traditional view of what an urban chronicle would be: they are sources almost entirely about a town (in contrast to the adapted regional chronicles); with a strong chronological structure, in which each entry starts with a date or year; and with an almost entirely historical interest (in contrast to custumals and other administrative accounts). This is not to say that they look alike, because they do not.

The Oath Book of Colchester is described above as an example of a custumal. Within the Colchester Oath Book, after two lists of kings of England, a page-and-a-half-long text describes the earliest history of the city of Colchester, deriving its name from the legendary King Coel.[266] This text is written in a single hand and sits as a self-contained text within the register. The chronicle from the Oath Book is in form a very traditional medieval chronicle, or annal. It is very similar to annals written in monasteries or at court in the early or high Middle Ages. The use of Latin strengthens this, although many urban administrative records were also still written in Latin in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The text is laid out in two columns with the calendar year on the left in the format 'Anno domini' followed by Roman numerals and the corresponding entry next to it. The thirty short entries are roughly chronological, although those from the eleventh until the thirteenth centuries are not always in chronological order, very probably because they are copied in sections from different sources. This text gives a very interesting early history of Colchester, connecting the town in just three generations to 'Rex Britonnum fortissimus', the most powerful King of the Britons, King Coel, his daughter Saint Helena, who retrieved the Holy Cross, and her son Roman Emperor Constantine who brought Christianity to Europe. Not a bad ancestry for a town!

The Chronicle of Haarlem similarly is found in a town register, but forms a

[266] Chelmsford, D/B 5 R1, f. 20r-v; Britnell, 'Oath Book'; Philip Crummy, *City of victory: the story of Colchester - Britain's first Roman town* (Colchester, 1997).

stand-alone text.[267] Next to overviews of charters and privileges, several peace agreements, ordinances given by the Counts of Holland, and a conversion table of coins, Register 928 also contains a poem on the Nine Worthies, a short chronicle of Holland (fols. 19r-31r) and a short chronicle of Haarlem(fols. 32r-39r). It has a coherent layout and both chronicles have a very similar format without headings or title, although they start with a four-line high red initial. The text bloc of the page is measured out with lines and the single column text in black ink is rubricated with red initials and paragraph markers. The text of the Chronicle of Haarlem is written in a very neat and consistent hand. The fact that it starts with an introduction commenting on the character and purpose of the text and finishes with a short conclusion ending in 'Amen', strengthens the suggestion of a well-planned and self-contained text. On f. 32v after the introduction follows an acrostic play on the word 'Harlem', using every letter to ascribe a positive trait to the city. This little poetic inclusion seems to be based on a wordplay, and likely reflects rhetorician's influence, but is set here in a vernacular context where all but the Latin positive characteristics are in Middle Dutch. The rest of the chronicle is in the form of substantial narrative entries that all start with 'In the year of our Lord' followed by Roman numerals. The initial I and the calendar year are rubricated for every entry, making this chronological structure stand out in the text of the chronicle. A later hand has made marginal annotations on some pages adding some details, which shows the work was used for several centuries.

The Chronicles of Haarlem and Colchester follow a very traditional medieval format for history writing with entries on a collection of topics structured by years. Although the same topics might re-occur, there is no causal or thematic link between consecutive entries, which seem simply a collection of facts structured chronologically. The table-like structure in the Oath Book and the rubrication and red initials in the Chronicle of Haarlem emphasise the chronological structure. Both these texts end much before the contemporary time of writing and both are written in a single hand and continuous style. It is therefore clear they are copies of (one or more) older sources. Not only the inclusion of the rhetorician-inspired wordplay or the later marginal notes in the Chronicle of Haarlem, but the very fact that they were copied into these late medieval registers is proof of a continuous significance ascribed to these medieval historical texts.

[267] Haarlem, Register 928.

This format of chronologically structured entries starting with a date was still in use in the fifteenth century. *Het Boeck van al 't gene datter geschiedt is binnen Brugghe (*from now: *Boeck van Brugghe*) is a Flemish example.[268] It starts with events from 1477 and describes the following rebellious years of Bruges until it ends mid-sentence in 1491. The anonymous author gives accounts of processions, executions, royal entries and all the political and practical issues connected to the war efforts of the rebellious 1480s in the town. Throughout all his descriptions the focus is very much on the town itself, for example, the moment of actual peace agreements are not recorded, but rather the moment it was announced in Bruges.[269] This 'book' is written not long after the events it describes and the writer (or his sources) were present at many of the events.[270] Every entry begins with the phrase 'Item on the [x]th day of [month], anno [year]', keeping a detailed chronological account. The book is written in a single hand, in black ink with thin black lines between the entries. This style is kept throughout the book, although some red ink is used in the description of decoration for the festive entry of the Burgundian Duke. Towards the end of the book the handwriting is more untidy at times and erasures, corrections and added notes on bits of paper show less distance in time to the written events. The cursive handwriting and simple layout of the book suggest a private rather than a public use. The format has a strong link to medieval historical texts through its chronologically structured entries covering a wide range of topics. However, the start of the entries with 'Item', the lines separating the entries and the inclusion of some administrative documents such as peace agreements, a few lists of aldermen, and detailed juridical confessions, also suggest an administrative influence into the format.[271]

These texts have certain features in common, such as a strong chronological structure making use of calendar years rather than regnal or mayoral years. The inclusion of a range of topics from processions, local buildings, the weather, and wars, to ducal/regnal matters and international events is also typical of the more traditional genre of medieval chronicle. However, the length of the entries and geographical focus of the text, as well as the layout of the page differs greatly

[268] Brussels, RL, MS13167-69; Charles Louis Carton, ed., *Het boeck van al 't gene datter gheschiedt is binnen Brugghe sichtent Jaer 1477, 14 Februarii, tot 1491* (Ghent, 1859).
[269] Example in Chapter 4, pp. 185-86.
[270] More detail pp. 235-36.
[271] More discussion on authorship and the link to the town administration in Chapter 3.

between them. These are brought together here because they do not fit into the other categories, showing again the heterogeneity and hybridity of all these manuscripts and the problems in categorising them.

Verse and songs

Songs, poems and other accounts in verse also recount historical urban identities. These were mostly handed down through the generations orally, but some late medieval versions have survived in writing. The Antwerp Songbook printed in 1544, holds a rare and remarkable collection of Flemish songs, including many with medieval origin.[272] A minority of these could be identified as historical songs, recounting an event or person from the past.[273] Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers highlight the political context often encapsulated in historical songs through the suggestion to refer to 'political songs', as that would provide a better understanding.[274]

In the fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Low Countries travelling poets (*sprooksprekers*) were a common sight.[275] Willem van Hildegaersberch and Bertelmeus van den Watersloet, for example, were court poets of whom work has survived. Some of this has a historical and political tone.[276] Outside their court performances on special occasions they also travelled around and performed in towns and cities in the area. *Van den Sloetel*, Willem van Hildegaersberch's poem on Leiden recounts the beauties of the town and its location as well as reminding the Count of Holland of its loyal attitude to him in the past.[277]

This poem on Leiden featured many aspects of the genre of the *laus urbis,* odes to cities.[278] Homages to cities, often with references to the town's past, have

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[272] D.E. Van der Poel and L.P. Grijp, eds., *Het Antwerps Liedboek* (Tielt, 2004).
[273] Van der Graft identifies 28 historical songs from the *Liedboek*: C.C. Van de Graft, *Middelnederlandsche historieliederen* (Arnhem, 1968), pp. 19–20.
[274] Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems'.
[275] Theo Meder, *Sprookspreker in Holland: leven en werk van Willem van Hildegaersberch (circa 1400)* (Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 450–452, for urban context see e.g. p. 488; Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde.*
[276] Van Hildegaersberch wrote for example at least two poems on the Cods-Hooks conflicts: *Hoe die yerste partie in Hollant quam* and *Een exempel van partyen*. Willem van Hildegaersberch, W. Bisschop and Eelco Verwijs (eds.), *Gedichten van Willem van Hildegaersberch* (Utrecht, 1981), pp. 102–103, 122–123.
[277] Meder, *Sprookspreker in Holland*, pp. 515–519 on *Vanden Sloetel*; van Hildegaersberch, *Gedichten*, pp. 164–169. See also pp. 138-39.
[278] See Chapter 5, pp. 214-19.

survived from Germany and Italy, but also, albeit in much smaller numbers, from the County of Holland and England. Although I have encountered these mostly in verse, there is also a related tradition of laudatory descriptions of cities in prose.[279] Dirk Matthijsz, probably the one mentioned as *sprookspreker* in the accounts of the Counts of Holland in 1400, wrote an Ode to Haarlem.[280] This early-fifteenth century poem may be the most well-known example of these in Holland. We find a similar poem on the city of Chester, in Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, a fourteenth-century English national chronicle.[281] It has comparable elements, such as describing the landscape, some characteristic features of buildings, and the wealth or good traits of citizens. Historical features are the etymological explanation of the town's name and some historical events it prides itself in. For Chester this is a reference to kings Harold II and Henry IV, who are connected to its history and are buried in the town; for Haarlem it's the story of Damietta, where its citizens fought proudly and gained international praise. Almost a century later, another English example ascribed to William Dunbar is a poem 'To the city of London' which mentions its origin as New Troy and relation to Julius Caesar as historical elements.[282] In Holland, Johannes a Leydis' second Chronicle of Holland from the late fifteenth century includes six odes to Dutch cities from a contemporary poet.[283] These latter ones were written in Latin, presumably due to the same humanist influences that made A Leydis write in Latin. The examples from Leiden and Haarlem were in the vernacular, showing a rooting of this genre in the local literary tradition. The inclusion of some of these odes into narrative chronicles reflects their connection with historical interest, and a written rather than an oral tradition.

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[279] E.g., WIlliam Fitzstephen's twelth-century description of London, Helen Carrel, 'Food, drink and public order in the London *Liber Albus*', *UH* 33:2 (2006), p. 178; J.K. Hyde, 'Medieval descriptions of cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48:2 (1966), pp. 308–340; Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 24; Frans Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht: oorsprong en ontwikkeling tot in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1990).

[280] Van Anrooij, 'Middeleeuwse sporen', p. 16; Dirk Mathijszen, Karel Van Mander, and Johan Diederik Rutgers van der Loeff, *Drie lofdichten op Haarlem* (Haarlem, 1911). For description see pp. 216-17.

[281] Ranulf Higden and John Trevisa, Churchill Babington and J.R. Lumby (eds.), *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis: together with the English translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century* (London, 1865), pp. 80–83. Modern translation: http://medievalchester.ac.uk/texts/facing/enm_Higden.html, <last accessed 28/10/2018>.

[282] William Dunbar, W.M. Mackenzie (ed.), *The poems of William Dunbar* (London, 1932), pp. 177–178, 240–241.

[283] Ioannis Geerbrandi Leydensis, 'Chronicon Hollandiae comitum et episcoporum Ultraiectensium...', in F. Sweertius (ed.), *Rerum Belgicarum annales chronici et historici. De bellis, urbibus, situ, & moribus gentis, antiqui recentioresque scriptores...* (Frankfurt am Main, 1620); Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*, pp. 247–251. See pp. 214-16.

Other types of poems also appeared within prose texts, for example in some manuscripts of the Excellent Chronicle of Flanders and in the Chronicle of Rotterdam.[284] In Flemish manuscripts in particular, the inclusion of rhetorician's poetry was common in the late fifteenth century. However, the majority of rhetorician's work did not concern history.[285] Sometimes verse was used to ease memory of historical events or lists. In England many variations exist of lists of kings in verse and these frequently feature in town registers. The poem of the Nine Worthies in Register 928 in the Haarlem Archives is another example. Remembering history is aided by the use of verse and couplets. Local and thus smaller scale events had more chance to be eternalised in songs or short phrases than in such formal poems.

From Holland several short rhymed accounts of sieges, riots and a heretic's trial in Haarlem survived. Verses on events that took place in the cities of Haarlem and Dordrecht have survived and are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.[286] These are not necessarily history of a town, but describe an urban historical event nevertheless. A Flemish example of an urban source in verse is the poem on the seven gates of Bruges.[287] In England, there are some examples of poems featuring Chester from the fifteenth and sixteenth century.[288] The format, quite short and rhyming poems, and the not so serious tone of several of them, suggest these Chester poems were part of an oral tradition. This oral tradition was historicised to a certain extent, but these poems were not composed for the purpose of recounting history.

These urban historical events described are often political and the political nature of some of these texts is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Both for the Low Countries and England political poems, pamphlets and writing have been

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[284] Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', p. 24; Demets, 'Manuscript transmission', pp. 146–139, 151–173.
[285] This does not mean they had no historical interests as individuals. Anthonis de Roovere, a famous rhetorician, also copied and owned a copy of the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen*. On rhetoricians: Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille* for Flanders; for Holland: Arjan Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten. Rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480-1650)* (Amsterdam, 2009).
[286] See pp. 240-43. J.H. Gallée and S. Muller Fz. (eds.), 'Berijmd verhaal van het beleg van IJsselstein door Gelder en Utrecht in 1511', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* 4 (1881); Utrecht, UL, MS1180 contains a *Gouds Kroniekje*, Dirc Mathijsz.'s Ode to Haarlem, a tale concerning the capture of Dordrecht and a song on the riots in Haarlem. Also *Verslag over het kettergericht te Haarlem* in Alkmaar, RA, 128 A 1.
[287] Jan Dumolyn, 'Une idéologie urbaine «bricolée» en Flandre médiévale: les sept portes de Bruges dans le manuscrit Gruuthuse (début du XVe siècle)', *RPH* 88:4 (2010).
[288] 'Mapping Medieval Chester: Welsh Poems to Chester', <last accessed December 2018>, http://medievalchester.ac.uk/texts/intropoems.html.

studied for this period, and some of this referred to urban examples as well.[289] Even when songs themselves have not survived, historical accounts and court sources recount punishments for the singing of political songs or the use of pamphlets and poems to spread political messages. These examples mainly survive from Flanders, in relation to urban revolts, for example remembering Artevelde, and from Holland, where they referred to the Hooks-Cods tensions.[290] Both the urban population and the government acknowledged the political power of songs in spreading a certain reading of past events, calling for action, or keeping the memory alive.

Comparison of forms

The above analysis shows the abundance of written sources for urban historical culture that can be found in England and the Low Countries, as well as the range in forms they appear in. The main conclusion that can be drawn from the study of these formats is that there was no single dominant form, but rather a multiplicity of forms that were used for writing historicised texts in late medieval towns. This heterogeneity was however not created by a lack of traditions and there is a remarkable level of similarity in several forms internationally. Considering that the political situation and degree of urbanisation was very different in the fifteenth-century counties of Holland and Flanders and the kingdom of England, it would not have been surprising if the types of sources from these areas were very diverse. However, most of the six categories can be found to some degree in all three regions. Although some elements are interestingly recognisable across the borders, not all forms appear in all areas in similar strength.[291]

[289] V.J. Scattergood, *Politics and poetry in the fifteenth century, 1399-1485* (London, 1971), pp. 13–34, 298–377; Wendy Scase, *Literature and complaint in England 1272-1553* (Oxford, 2007); Thomas Wright and Peter R. Coss, *Thomas Wright's political songs of England: from the reign of John to that of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1996); Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems'; Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, '"A bad chicken was brooding": subversive speech in late medieval Flanders', *P&P* 214:1 (2012); Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, 'Des portes qui parlent: placards, feuilles volantes et communication politique dans les villes des Pays-Bas à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 168:1 (2010).

[290] Specific examples of Hooks-Cods songs, Chapter 5, pp. 240-43. Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde*, p. 44; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems', pp. 5–8.

[291] There could be many reasons why certain texts would have survived better in one region than another. Of all the texts ascribed there is often only a single extant manuscript, so it is incredibly difficult to know how much has been lost and how significant these types of texts once were.

Magistrate lists are a recurring theme in the majority of urban historicised writing. They take centre stage in some documents, but many other formats, even self-contained historical accounts such as the *Boeck van Brugghe,* include some lists of civic officials. Current evidence suggests magistrate lists were a lot more common in Flemish and English towns than in towns in Holland.[292] The form of magistrate lists annotated with historical notes is especially well-known from London and Ghent. The development of this format in both cities was similar. The London Chronicles originated in the late thirteenth century. Early examples started as lists of city officers and copies of administrative documents, to record legal information.[293] The *memorieboeken* started out as lists of the *schepenen*, showing the two benches of Ghent aldermen. The first few manuscripts that survived, from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, have few and very short annotations in the margin, whereas annotations became more extensive in later centuries. The fifteenth-century London Chronicles similarly became products of a broader urban and historical interest, whereas the use of copies of civic documents almost entirely disappeared.[294] Both London Chronicles and Ghent memory books developed from an administrative instrument kept by the town clerk to manuscripts in the ownership of interested, wealthy citizens.

The Flemish examples developed not only later than their London counterparts, but many of them also never changed as much in form as some London Chronicles did. There is more variety in the form of London Chronicles than in the Ghent memory books, and this is true for other towns in England and Flanders as well. The rolls of Lincoln and Coventry or the mayoral list in the Bristol *Kalendar* are all variations of a similar structure, whereas the Bruges and Ghent lists are much more alike. Part of the reason for this might be the simple fact there were twenty-six Flemish *schepenen* to be noted down for every year, whereas English towns usually only had two or four officials per year to record. This simply took up less space on the page and dominated the structure to a lesser extent, leaving more room for the writer's own interpretation of the format. The Dordrecht lists resemble the

[292] Although the Dordrecht example and later examples indicate the form was not unknown. But the numbers of surviving documents in Ghent and London suggest a huge popularity of those sources which is unlikely to have existed in Holland.
[293] McLaren suggests a possible development in direct response to the first *quo warranto* investigation of 1274. I think it is more likely that both these developments reflect the general tendency all over Europe of increased written recording. McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 15–18; Clanchy, *From memory*, pp. 41–44.
[294] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 25.

Flemish lists most, with a similar number of *schepenen* recorded for every year.

The last genre described, that of poems or odes of towns seems to be most common in Holland, but has left little trace in late medieval Flanders and England. The few short pieces we have from Chester are mainly situational; it describes an event that happens to be around Chester, rather than the town itself being the focus of the poem. Similarly, in Flanders, city poems seem to have been less of an official genre, although poetry was obviously written in towns, especially in the chambers of rhetoric. The genre appears better developed in Holland. Poets used similar elements in their city poems throughout the fifteenth century, such as a greeting at the start, comparison of the city to other places, praise of the inhabitants and the surroundings. History was included through origin stories, significant historical events, or as etymological explanation for the name of the city. It was not an uncommon genre in the Middle Ages, similar city poems were known from other parts of Europe, especially Germany and Italy, and elements of the genre spread to Holland from these countries. The practise of travelling poets in Holland, who already in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries incorporated towns as subjects in their work, was revived by the fifteenth-century 'humanist' writers inspired by the Italian and German traditions.[295] Rhetoricians and other urban literary societies active from the fifteenth century in Flanders and Holland did write poetry, but did not spent much time on this genre.

Many examples of the written evidence of urban historical culture appear in composite manuscripts: both administrative registers and private notebooks. Commonplace books and town registers are difficult to compare in detail between towns and regions because they are by their very nature unique in contents and form. But similar features are clearly recognisable in urban historicised writing throughout late medieval North-Western Europe. Some magistrate lists from Ghent, but also Bruges, Ypres and smaller Flemish towns are linked to elite lineages, meaning they have aspects of family books as well as urban texts, along with the traditional Italian *Libri di Ricordanza*, many German *Städtechroniken* and London chronicles in commonplace books.[296] Even the Chronicle of Rotterdam, which is part

[295] Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*; Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 24 mentions an example from Nürnberg.
[296] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', pp. 34–40.

of a register of that town, contains notes on the family history of one of the town clerks. These composite books were collections of all sorts of useful information and knowledge, whether this was in a private or professional context.[297] Urban history was just one of the interests of the writers. The very nature of these registers thus means the form can be untidy and can change throughout the book if a successor or son continued or the focus of the writer shifted. In the examples mentioned it becomes clear that all formats of history writing - such as annals, magistrate lists, narrative prose stories, adapted regional chronicles or poems - appear in composite manuscripts, both private and public ones.

Hybridity of forms

What becomes clear from the above description above all else is that these categories and formats are fluid, of hybrid nature and non-exclusive. The categories I used are of course by no means intended to become a new fixed categorisation and exclude evidence in other formats, as genre definitions have done in the past. These categories currently provide a useful pragmatic tool to be able to compare sources and countries. However, this typology is not meant to be final or complete, but merely a representation of my finds in city archives and an efficient way to understand the array of texts, their contexts and backgrounds. Many hybrid forms exist and we have seen that many sources can be placed in more than one category depending on the perspective taken and whether an entire manuscript or one section of it is studied as a separate entity. In the above the Chronicle of Colchester in the Oath Book and the Chronicle of Haarlem in Register 928 are just two examples of self-contained texts that obviously need to be studied in their overall structure as a custumal as well. A large part of the sources in this study are hybrid sources compared to both the traditional categories and the ones created here. The *memorieboeken* are annals and chronicles. The Chronicle of The Hague is a regional and an urban chronicle. The Bristol *Kalendar* is, or contains, a chronicle, a mayoral list and a custumal. The conceptual framework of historical culture gives this study the opportunity to incorporate all these forms and discuss their aspects whether they fit into typologies or not.

[297] Debbie Cannon, 'London pride: citizenship and the fourteenth-century custumals of the city of London', in Sarah Rees Jones (ed.), *Learning and literacy in medieval England and abroad* (Turnhout, 2003).

The hybrid nature of these sources is essential to their understanding. The fact no clear typology appears from all the above formats tells us that their late medieval writers did not try to conform to a certain pre-established form. Certain elements, such as creating lists of the urban magistrates was a recurrent and widely practised custom and traditions of formats appeared in cities and countries, but whether, how and to what extent these texts were historicised varied considerably.

Administrative and historiographical sources intertwined

Another point that stresses the hybrid nature of many of the documents is the merging of administrative and historiographical elements. Although there are typical medieval chronicles, such as Beke's Chronicle of Holland, on one end of the scale, and entirely administrative documents, such as council minutes, on the other end, in many manuscripts, these two perspectives and traditions are intertwined. Flenley published a short edition of a text known as the Chronicle of King's Lynn.[298] This text covers the years 1477-1542 and contains a very 'traditional' chronicle content of royal deaths and births, international wars, extraordinary celestial events, prices of foodstuffs, local building works, and also the local struggle of legal procedures of the town against the bishop. It is bound in a composite manuscript with administrative documents from Norfolk. Some elements of this source therefore overlap with characteristics of the above-mentioned custumals although the layout of this chronicle is that of a magistrate list, with the name of the mayor in larger letters next to the calendar year as heading to every entry. While the format clearly originates in administrative forms, the contents were taken from traditional historical sources, such as *Fabyan's Chronicle* from London.[299]

The link between urban historical texts and the town government has been important in the study of historical culture and has even been considered part of the definition of an urban chronicle.[300] It was even a very essential element of history writing in Germany and Italy, the places where the prototype city chronicles are said

[298] Oxford, BodL, MS Top. Norfolk C2, fols. 33–38; edition: Flenley, *Town chronicles*, pp. 84–95, 184–201; London, BL, Add MS8937 is a seventeenth-century version of the list of King's Lynn magistrates, but the content of the annotations is different.
[299] Flenley, *Town chronicles*, pp. 85, 184–201.
[300] Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', p. 1432; Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 14–27; Van Bruaene, 'L'écriture', p. 151. Although she takes a broader view in more recent publications. Du Boulay, 'German town chroniclers', p. 446.

to originate. Gary Ianziti's work on Milan shows how inherently intertwined administrative documents and history writing can be.[301] The Milan example shows how Sforza's administration, which can be argued to have acted in his reign as the town administration as well, had an active role in the creation of historiography. Books with administrative documents and extracts were prepared and supplied to the proposed chronicler so that administrative evidence was an important source and was sometimes copied into the history works. Next to the supply of relevant documentation, some employees of the chancery were themselves active in writing history.[302] This chapter discusses a multiplicity of sources that are historicised to different degrees, and provide examples of written evidence of historical culture in their own ways.

The first two categories described above, custumals and magistates lists, have an administrative use and background as well as historiographical value. All late medieval towns had written records for the city administration and some also recorded historical information as useful knowledge thought to be valuable for future generations.[303] Although details differ evidently between the three regions, the general forms of register books that include historical information and magistrate lists as a structure to record events are surprisingly similar. When we recall the German *Ratbücher*, they are very familiar to the custumals in English literature and registers or *keurboeken* in the Low Countries.

The fact that the London Chronicles, despite their name, were placed in the second category in this overview rather than under the heading of 'chronicles' (and some can even be argued to fit into the custumals category as well) is indicative of the hybridity in perception of these sources. Looking at these text from a more inclusive perspective of historical culture means we have to re-establish, or rethink, the boundary between administrative sources and history writing, because it is evident they can be intertwined.[304] The combination within Bristol's *Maire's Kalendar* of chronicle elements and custumals of both Bristol and London is another

[301] Ianziti, *Humanist historiography.*
[302] E.g. Simonetta. See ibid., pp. 127–231.
[303] Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy'; Pollmann, 'Archiving the present'.
[304] This idea is not new, as Ianziti's work on Milan and Brabant's situation described by Robert Stein prove. See Ianziti, *Humanist historiography*; and Robert Stein, *Politiek en historiografie: het ontstaansmilieu van Brabantse kronieken in de eerste helft van de vijftiende eeuw* (Leuven, 1994). However, in historical research in England and the Low Countries these have rarely been combined but rather studied as separate spheres.

perfect example of this. The significant overlap between administrative sources and historical sources is a major element in understanding the context, function and forms of historical writing in towns.

There are different concrete ways in which administrative and historical sources are intertwined. The most explicit one is where historical texts appear in and as part of administrative manuscripts. Examples include the Chronicle of Haarlem in its town register and chronicle-style entries in the Bruges Cloth Shearers Guild Book. Next to that there is the question to what degree we can understand some administrative texts as historical sources as well. Mayoral and regnal lists, which occur in many English custumals, are administrative sources but also form the historical framework of the town and its administration. Even the magistrate lists from Bruges or Dordrecht, which hold very few annotations, carry a clear sense of the past and continuity of their urban power. Other administrative records which can mention the past of a town explicitly or implicitly sketch a picture of a town's past in itself are court cases and charter books.[305] Through these collections we can see the major events in the distant and recent past from an urban perspective, which can teach us a lot about the urban historical culture.

Manuscript appearance

The material and codex form of the manuscripts described above conforms generally to common fifteenth-century custom. Both paper and parchment were commonly used for historical writing in England and the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There seems to be no clear distinction between genre of text and material, but in the shape of some books the development of the genre can be recognised. The Italian *ricordanze* developed from account books. This tall narrow shape of book is also recognised in a Ghent memory book of the sixteenth century.[306] Some London commonplace books also appeared in small tall ledgers, the shape of manuscripts traditionally used for accounts.[307]

Most of the texts are found in codices, but the Coventry Annals and Lincoln

[305] Some of these are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5**.** E.g. Hereford: Gervase Rosser, 'Conflict and political community in the medieval town: disputes between clergy and laity in Hereford', in T.R. Slater and Gervase Rosser (eds.), *The church in the medieval town* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 20–42.
[306] Ghent, UL, MS2337.
[307] Parker, *Commonplace book*, p. 37.

Roll are parchment rolls. Rolls used to be common for record-keeping in earlier centuries. For the Coventry Annals the roll form can also have been chosen because of its ease to display. The royal genealogy on the dorse of the role was possibly written for and displayed at the royal visit of Edward IV in 1461.[308] Whether the Lincoln Roll also took this form because it was meant to be publically displayed one can only guess. It seems to have organically grown, as more membranes were added, and the writing is small, but the effect of the several meters long roll is an impressive reminder of the length of its urban history.

In general all of these manuscripts are very plain. Some can even be said to be quite messy, continued for private use, or by many successive writers. The lack of decorations seems to be a characteristic shared by the texts from all the three regions. Most of the texts only use black ink, and even when some basic level of decoration occurs it is usually a very simple rubrication of initials. The few manuscripts that are decorated are mostly representative town books, possibly on public display at certain occasions. The 'most luxurious' copy of the Ghent memory books is the sixteenth-century *Schepenboek*, now in the Ghent museum.[309] This was one of the official copies made on commission of the town council and represented the official record.[310]

The elaborate illustration scheme of the *Maire of Bristowe Is Kalender* is extremely exceptional and can only make us wonder whether other sources like this once existed. Both the scale of the manuscript and its scheme of decorations are unusual for town registers. Beginning in the chronicle part and continuing into the magistrate list, the *Kalender* is beautifully illustrated with thirteen half-page images of kings (William the Conqueror and Henry III in full page) and an image of the first sheriff in 1373.[311] It also has an illustration of Bristol itself to accompany the story

[308] The genealogy on the roll might have been used at the royal entry of the new king Edward IV in Coventry in 1461. There are known examples of other genealogical rolls being publicly displayed, and Louis thinks to identify a hole at the top of the roll used for hanging. However, the pedigree that the text refers to is not included (but could have been on a separate parchment) and the mayor list in the same hand continues after the date of the entry, so Louis puts this suggestion forward with caution. C. Louis, 'A Yorkist genealogical chronicle in middle English verse', *Anglia* 109 (1991), pp. 1–20; Fleming, *Coventry*, p. 24.
[309] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 49, 61–62.
[310] Guild books were also representative and some have rubrication and minor decorations. The Ghent carpenter's guild register started in 1415 is clearly made with great care and features a small image of Jesus on the Cross on the first page under the oath. Ghent, CA, 190/1.
[311] Fleming's new edition has reproduced all images with commentary: Fleming, *Kalendar*, pp. 23–69.

of the first foundation of the town and images of the Annunciation and the Adoration of Christ at the very start of the book. A very impressive full-page depiction of the oath-taking ceremony of a new mayor features at the beginning of Part Four of the book on f. 152v. Several pages feature colourful initials decorated with penwork. The mayor's oath on the next page even has an initial laid in with gold and floral border decoration. Fleming is convinced this book was not used for public display, posing questions to the reason for such expenditure for the decorative scheme of the *Kalender*.[312] However, this level of decoration is very rare in this study.

Exceptions can also be found in manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen,* some of which are finished to a very high standard and contain decoration. Where included, miniatures depict mostly counts and countesses and might stem from the tradition of regional chronicle writing. It was not uncommon for substantial national chronicles to be decorated, as they were expensive works and were usually produced for the luxurious libraries of nobility, royalty or monasteries. The urban manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike* were owned by well-off citizens, members of the urban elite. Decorated initials and rubrication as well as inclusion of coats of arms are common in these urban manuscripts.[313] However, the large majority of the texts under investigation in this thesis is quite plain-looking.

The texts under discussion here have mostly survived in one single manuscript. For many there is also no indication that the text was ever copied and multiple manuscripts ever existed. In England, the London Chronicles are an exception as a group. Although many of these manuscripts are unique in detail, they are often copied largely from another London Chronicle and only adapted in a minor way. We find a similar situation for the Ghent *memorieboeken* and the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* copies. Exact copies are extremely rare and almost all manuscripts contain some unique omissions and adaptations, but are clearly copies of a recognisable text and genre.

Both the reasons and implications of the fact that we are mostly dealing with single manuscripts in this study are very interesting. That many of the texts we discuss seem to have had only a very limited spread carries significant implications for its reception, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. The audience seems to have

[312] See Chapter 5, pp. 247-48.
[313] Demets, 'Manuscript transmission', pp. 151–173.

been limited to the direct circle of the author, which usually meant it was only for the eyes of the town government. It does not necessarily imply that the common people were not involved in any of these processes of memorialising information. The town government had the duty in a town to keep the charters, privileges and all other town documents safe, for the sake of the entire population, but many of the elements of the historical culture might have been well-known throughout the town.

The administrative context can explain the limited number of manuscripts. The manuscripts were usually kept in the archive or town hall and were not to be taken out of the building, making multiple copies unnecessary. However, when we look at the form, many towns had traditions they continued. For some towns continuations have survived, such as of the Coventry Annals or the Bristol *Kalendars*. We have already seen that London Chronicles and Ghent memory books were copied well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This also fits into the general idea that urban history writing becomes more and more common throughout the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The majority of the texts discussed appear in the vernacular, although the use of Latin is not uncommon. The use of language in urban history writing was connected to literary and social changes and administrative custom. Literature had shifted to the use of the vernacular in the Low Countries in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[314] In Holland, the main Latin historiographical work, Beke's *Chronographia*, had been translated and continued in Dutch by the fifteenth century.[315] New regional historiography, such as the *Gouds Kroniekje,* was written and printed in Dutch.[316] Fourteenth-century England saw the *Brut* translated and continued from Anglo-Norman in English prose. The fifteenth century then saw a similar growth of English as a suitable language for law, literature and history writing.[317]

French was the language of the court and the central Burgundian administration, but most urban administrations in Flanders and Holland used

[314] W. Prevenier, 'Court and city culture in the Low Countries from 1100 to 1530', in Erik Kooper (ed.), *Medieval Dutch literature in its European context* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 16–17.
[315] Janse believes that the additions in the Dutch Beke also show the author assumed a lay audience. Janse, 'Nederlandse Beke', p. 126.
[316] The *Gouds Kroniekje* was printed in 1478, and reprinted in 1480 and 1483. Ebels-Hoving, 'Nederlandse geschiedschrijving', pp. 238–241.
[317] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 139–140; Clanchy, *From memory*, pp. 213–222.

Middle Dutch.[318] Chronicles or chronicle-style entries we find in town registers are thus in the vernacular.

However, Latin continued to be used in monastic and administrative context until early modern times both in England and in the Low Countries. Many of the custumal books contain a combination of Latin and vernacular languages. The Colchester chronicle is one of the few texts entirely in Latin, which reflects its monastic source.[319] Late fifteenth-century Holland saw a revival of Latin use by historiographers, of which the poems in Johannes a Leydis' work are an example.[320] Both French and Latin was known by many, especially used by professional writers. Flemish regional historiography also occurred in French, focused on an elite and court audience.[321] The lack of French texts from Flanders or Holland supports the idea that the writings were urban and local and not connected in any direct way with the Burgundian historiography.

Conclusions

The six formats explored in this chapter show the wealth of evidence available for written urban historical culture, not only in metropoles in Flanders, but also in smaller towns in England and the Low Countries. These categories have also demonstrated the diversity in form that is inherent to urban history writing in this time in these areas. The sources I discuss in this thesis are often unique in at least some characteristics. The categorisation into six types in this chapter is done to facilitate easy discussion and international comparison. These categories are not

[318] Malcolm Vale, 'Language, politics and society: the uses of the vernacular in the later Middle Ages', *EHR* 120:485 (2005), pp. 15–28; C.A.J. Armstrong, 'The language question in the Low Countries: the use of French and Dutch by the Dukes of Burgundy and their administration', in John Hale, Roger Highfield, and Beryl Smalley (eds.), *Europe in the late Middle Ages* (London, 1965); M. Gysseling, 'De invoering van het Nederlands in ambtelijke bescheiden in de 13de eeuw', *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde (nieuwe reeks)* (1971); Andrew Brown, *Civic ceremony and religion in medieval Bruges c.1300-1520* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 258; Serge Ter Braake, *Met recht en rekenschap. De ambtenaren bij het Hof van Holland en de Haagse Rekenkamer in de Habsburgse tijd (1483-1558)* (Hilversum, 2007), p. 140.

[319] The annalistic form of comments is also monastic. Although chronicles have survived from the local Abbey of St John, no definite identification of source material has been made yet. See pp. 194-95.

[320] Levelt, *Jan Van Naaldwijk's Chronicles*, p. 58; Stapel and De Vries, 'Leydis, Pauli, and Berchen revisited'.

[321] Beke's *Chronographia*'s French translation was a rarity for Holland. Stein, 'Regional chronicles', pp. 7–23; Small, 'Local elites'.

meant to be mutually exclusive or exhaustive. At this stage of the research on urban history writing, categorisations like this are exploratory and serve to clarify the scope of the field, not to install new rigid boundaries. Too specific boundaries of definitions have stopped scholars from recognising these texts as history writing before. Viewed through the broad perspective of historical culture, all the above sources are examples of written evidence of urban historical culture.

This heterogeneity of formats is a critical feature of late medieval urban historical writing. Within this heterogeneity we found some traditions that provided context and form to urban writing, such as the collections of London Chronicles and Ghent memory books, but even within those there is variation. It is clear there is no single dominant format that urban writers of historical information adhered to. Also Italian and German texts, often seen as stereotypical urban historiography, were used throughout this chapter as examples for multiple formats. Even those sources do not cohere to a single definition of format. Towns from both the Low Countries and England have produced comparable historiographical sources.

A remarkable conclusion from this chapter is that certain elements can be recognised throughout the different geographical areas. For example, lists of urban officials, composite manuscripts, the inclusion of historical information in town registers, and the influence of national chronicles. International use of lists as an early (and continuously developing) form of urban record-keeping as well as wide-spread use of town registers explains how some of the textual elements look similar. Just as the traditional medieval genres of chronicles and annals were not bound to country boundaries, their localised use was not country-specific, although the urban interpretations of these influences resulted in a multiplicity of forms.

Considering all the formats mentioned in this chapter means we have to re-evaluate the connection between administrative sources and history writing, because it is evident they can be intertwined. The combination within the Bristol *Kalendar* of chronicle parts, a magistrate list and custumals of both Bristol and London is a perfect example of this. Many urban historiographical sources have been influenced by administrative formats and especially town registers and magistrate lists come from a clear administrative tradition as well as carrying a strong historiographical perspective. Other chapters will show a similar overlap of the two perspectives in regards to authorship, contents and function. The hybridity of administrative and historiographical perspectives and purposes, in format, as well

as other elements, is a key feature in the understanding of many of the manuscripts.

On format, towns in the Low Countries and England turned out to produce comparable sources to each other, and to the German and Italian chronicles, although local differences exist. For example, poems seem more evident in the County of Holland, and mayoral lists have survived particularly well for English towns, even though their layout is not always the same. To be able to fully compare the English, Flemish and Holland sources we need to look further than the form discussed here. The social context, contents and function need to be taken into account and will be studied in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: Authorship

In this chapter we will address the question of the identities of the urban writers responsible for written historical culture. Authors' names are only known to us for a handful of the texts we have, most of the sources under investigation here are anonymous. Even when a name is known, it is not always clear whether this person is the author or a scribe, copyist or owner. Considering the medieval concept of authorship and authority, which was based on copies and adaptations rather than the modern idea of originality, this chapter incorporates 'writers' who fit in all these medieval categories. Whether copied, compiled or newly written, these texts give us an insight into urban views on history and identity in the time that they were written down.

This chapter will show how literacy was common in fifteenth-century towns in Holland, Flanders and England, and that interest in history was reasonably wide-spread. Literacy in towns grew from the thirteenth century onwards and administrative record-keeping and town chanceries became more common in the second half of the Middle Ages. Increased complexities of trade and government meant written documents became much more common, creating new formats and customs, and a growing group of professional writers endowed with new interests and influence. Based on the literary groups in urban society, several categories of possible authors will be covered. We will find many fifteenth-century townsmen involved in historical writing, both as individual efforts and as representatives of a shared historical culture of guilds or the town administration.

Professional writers, such as town clerks and notaries, form the main group of writers of historiographical texts. This reiterates the link to the town administration discussed in the previous chapter. However, also other groups, such as clergy, members of the chambers of rhetoric or wealthy individual citizens were responsible for historical writing. The exercise to investigate the social background and connections of these writers, rather than a quest to find their individual names, does provide us with valuable information to understand the place of these sources and their writers in urban society. Although often linked to the town government, the shared historical culture is often wider than that. The spread of documents of the London Chronicles from town chancellery to individual citizen's homes is evidence

of this.

I will also show that considering the traditions of history writing and record-keeping and the collective authorship of many of these works is essential for their understanding. The two previous chapters have explored elements of two different traditions captured in the written sources portraying urban historical culture in fifteenth-century towns. Firstly, in Chapter 1 it is shown that if one perceives these sources with a definition of 'medieval chronicle' in mind many texts do not quite fit the traditional definitions. Nevertheless, some manuscripts show elements from such a chronicle tradition in format and contents; consider the manuscripts discussed under Chapter 2's subheading of regional chronicle traditions. Secondly, Chapter 2 discussed the multiplicity of forms and concluded a strong connection with administrative recording. Pragmatic and administrative writing or record-keeping also influenced certain (physical) aspects of urban historical writing. The hybridity identified in the format of the texts reflects these different traditions. In this chapter we will look at the way customs from both chronicle writing traditions and administrative customs have influenced the writers of urban historical culture in the format and contents they write and copy.[322] The large corpus of manuscripts of the Ghent *memorieboeken*, are an obvious example of a tradition which influenced contemporary and successive writers.

Urban literate mentality

'Laymen want to write, in verse or in prose, on all kinds of subjects as if they belonged to the literate', remarked Antwerp clerk Jan van Boendale with astonishment in 1330.[323] This comment reflects a development in literacy and the use of literature and documents ongoing in late medieval European towns. Traditionally the clergy had been the literate (read: literate in Latin) group in society. However, from the thirteenth century the increased professional demands

[322] Britnell discusses two modes of writing, Richard Britnell, 'Pragmatic literacy in Latin Christendom', in Richard Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic literacy, East and West 1200-1330* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 3–4; Mostert and Adamska, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[323] Erik Kooper's translation in W.P. Gerritsen et al., 'A fourteenth-century vernacular poetics: Jan van Boendale's "How Writers Should Write"', in Erik Kooper (ed.), *Medieval Dutch literature in its European context*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 253, 260, 'Literate' translated here from the Middle Dutch ' clercen', perceived here to mean 'learned' rather than 'clerics'. Prevenier, 'Court and city culture', pp. 11–12.

for artisans and merchants as well as more structured governments and the use of written evidence for legal purposes caused a significant and long term increase in the use of documents and literacy.[324] This 'documentalisation' or 'records revolution' happened in state government first, but urban record-keeping intensified in the second half of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in cities all over Europe.[325]

Forms of recording the town's history and memory were shaped as part of this growing familiarity with documents and the development to record the necessary and useful. Many of the recurring formats described in the last chapter, such as magistrate lists, custumals or town books and commonplace books, were shaped by the medieval developments of 'pragmatic literacy'. 'Pragmatic literature' refers to functional or practical use of literacy, including but not limited to administrative documents.[326] From around 1400 town books became common in most towns in England and the Low Countries as the overall number of documents increased significantly. The traditions of pragmatic literacy meant a growing group of professional writers wrote to collect 'useful knowledge'. A lot of this was of legal and administrative nature, but some was of historical nature. This perception of writing as keeping records or preserving useful information rather than writing

[324] Marco Mostert, 'Lezen, schrijven en geletterdheid. Communicatie, verschriftelijking en de sociale geschiedenis van de middeleeuwen', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 28:2 (2002), pp. 218–221; Herman Pleij, 'The rise of urban literature in the Low Countries', in Erik Kooper (ed.), *Medieval Dutch literature in its European context* (Cambridge, 2006); Clanchy, *From memory*, chap. 2; Ellen E. Kittell, *From ad hoc to routine: a case study in medieval bureaucracy* (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 11–12.

[325] Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy', pp. 220–221; Jeroen F. Benders, 'Urban administrative literacy in the Northeastern Low Countries: a comparison of Groningen, Kampen, Deventer, and Zutphen, twelfth-fifteenth centuries', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the administration of medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014); Geoffrey Martin, 'English town records 1250-1350', in Richard Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic literacy, East and West 1200-1330* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 122–128; Mostert, 'Lezen, schrijven', pp. 218–220; Geertrui Van Synghel, 'The use of records in medieval towns: the case of 's-Hertogenbosch (Brabant)', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the administration of medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 37–38; Thomas Behrmann, 'The development of pragmatic literacy in the Lombard city communes', in Richard Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic literacy, East and West 1200-1330* (Woodbridge, 1997); Kittell, *Ad hoc to routine*, p. 204; Malcolm Richardson, *Middle-class writing in late medieval London* (London, 2016), pp. 31–38; R.A. Houston, *Literacy in early modern Europe: culture and education, 1500-1800*, 2nd ed. (Oxfordshire; New York, 2013). Cannon, 'London pride', pp. 180–181.

[326] Inspired by the German *Verschriftlichung*. Richard Britnell, ed., *Pragmatic literacy East and West 1200-1330* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. vii; Behrmann, 'Development of pragmatic literacy', p. 26; M Mostert, *A bibliography of works on medieval communication* (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 12–13; Mostert and Adamska, 'Introduction', p. 4; Rees Jones' 'civic literacy' includes also the uses of that writing in creating a sense of identity and purpose within a civic community. Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy', p. 220.

history meant the sources were of a different format and contents.

Despite a clear growth of a documentary culture in towns in North-West Europe, the exact amount of people able to read and write the vernacular or Latin are hard to quantify.[327] Estimates are very rough, but around half of the male population of large European cities could probably read in the fifteenth century.[328] Quantitative studies of literacy have made way over the last decades for a wider focus on literate mentality, pushed forward by Clanchy's influential *From Memory to Written Record*.[329] Numbers of men of letters fully literate in Latin would remain small, but many middle class people, such as artisans and merchants, would deal with documents and be able to read in the vernacular or Latin set phrases, although some might request the help of scribes for writing. The growing need for pragmatic literacy caused more urban schools and institutions to be established, attended by children from middle and upper-class families. Due to the very nature of towns as centres for trade and institutions, as well as education, this 'records revolution' was most prevalent in towns. All these developments changed urban societies in the later Middle Ages into societies familiar with using and preserving documents, even though many other forms of communication remained crucial.[330]

Literacy and the general interest in literature, plays, or history was not something that only existed within the higher classes.[331] The ability and interest for literature and the consequent ownership of books has long been ascribed to the clergy and nobility, and urban clergy indeed accounted for much of the book ownership and

[327] Houston, *Literacy*, pp. 125–139; Charles F. Briggs, 'Literacy, reading, and writing in the medieval West', *JMH* 26:4 (2000), pp. 398–401; Malcolm Beckwith Parkes, *Scribes, scripts and readers: studies in the communication, presentation and dissemination of medieval texts* (London, 1991).

[328] As writing was taught later and separate from reading, less people would have been able to write (competently) themselves. Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The merchant class of mediaeval London, 1300-1500* (Ann Arbor, 1989), pp. 157–158; Parker, *Commonplace book*, p. 4; Both England and the Low Countries were known as areas with high literacy, Houston, *Literacy*, p. 128; Van Selm estimates 60-70% of the male urban population in the Low Countries a century later. Bert Van Selm, *De Amadis van Gaule-romans: productie, verspreiding en receptie van een bestseller in de vroegmoderne tijd in de Nederlanden* (Leiden, 2001).

[329] Very useful overview of the development of the field in Briggs, 'Literacy'.

[330] Mostert, 'Lezen, schrijven'.

[331] Hilde De Ridder-Symoens, 'Education and literacy in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands.', *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 16:1 (1995) shows how well-spread literacy, vernacular reading material and education was in the fifteenth-century Netherlands; Also e.g., Dumolyn and Haemers, '"A bad chicken was brooding"'.

readership in towns.[332] However, studies show that books were more widely owned in the later Middle Ages. Wills from York, Norwich and London indicate it was not uncommon for books to be mentioned separately in wills of middle class people, such as artisans, merchants, or professional writers.[333] In the Northern Low Countries, religious 'self help' books inspired by the Modern Devotion movement were especially popular from the late fourteenth until the printed versions of the early sixteenth century.[334] Traditional chronicles in decorated manuscripts would have been restricted mostly to libraries of noble families or institutions, such as monasteries or chanceries. However, individual members of the urban elite, for example rich patricians or wealthier members of chambers of rhetoric in Flemish towns did sometimes own such decorated codices, for instance urban copies of the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen*.[335] More mundane looking codices with forms of history writing started to occur as well in the late Middle Ages. Italian r*icordanze* and the London Chronicles in commonplace books are prime examples of individual urban historical writing on a smaller and more personal scale.[336] However, book ownership is not an accurate way to measure the extent of either literacy or familiarity with textual forms of historical culture. Many citizens would have used the service of scriveners, professional writers, for letters or wills, or have property boundaries recorded in town registers, thus being comfortable in a literate society without ever owning manuscripts themselves. Reading out loud was still very common in the fifteenth century, and historical culture would also have been present in plays, poems and songs which were transmitted orally.[337]

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[332] E.g. the schemes of charitable books to borrow for the poorer clergy, e.g. Wendy Scase, 'Reginald Pecock, John Carpenter and John Colop's "common-profit" books: aspects of book ownership and circulation in fifteenth-century London', *Medium Ævum* 61:2 (1992).
[333] P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Lay book ownership in late medieval York: the evidence of wills', *The Library* s6 16:3 (1994); Scase, 'Reginald Pecock'; Norman P. Tanner, *The church in late medieval Norwich, 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984); For Flemish examples: Albert Derolez, 'Copi catalogorum Belgii', in Albert Derolez and Benjamin Victor (eds.), *The medieval booklists of the Southern Low Countries 1: Province of West Flanders* (Brussels, 1997).
[334] Herman Pleij, *Komt een vrouwtje bij de drukker... Over gezichtsveranderingen van de literatuur uit de late middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam, 2008), pp. 110–111; W. Lourdaux, 'Het boekenbezit en het boekengebruik bij de Moderne Devoten', in Rafaël De Keyser (ed.), *Studies over het boekenbezit en boekengebruik in de Nederlanden vóór 1600* (Brussels, 1974); The Modern Devotion movement was also heavily involved in education in the Northern Netherlands. De Ridder-Symoens, 'Education and literacy', pp. 11–12.
[335] Douai, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS1110; Demets, 'Manuscript transmission', pp. 164–165.
[336] For an excellent example from the Low Countries: Mulder-Bakker, 'The household' shows how books from Brabant designed to be read (aloud) in the household by the lady of the house.
[337] Joyce Coleman, 'Interactive parchment: the theory and practice of medieval English aurality', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 25 (1995); Pleij, *Komt een vrouwtje*, esp. pp. 99-133; Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, 'Political songs and memories of rebellion in the later

Much of the history writing in these countries, and in general the spread of literacy and use of documents, was an urban affair. Historical interests of townsmen do, however, not always focus themselves on urban history. The town clerk of Leiden Jan Phillipsz includes a long poem describing the official meeting between Charles the Bold and Emperor Frederick III in Trier in 1473 in his otherwise mostly devotional book.[338] A fellow townsman, Jan Hendrik Paedssenz, made a copy of the Middle Dutch translation of Froissart's chronicles.[339] Townsmen were also interested in courtly texts, and similarly, court chroniclers could equally be townsmen with an interest in urban events.[340] The Burgundian chronicler George Chastelain also wrote about what he saw happening around him in Valenciennes while living and working there.[341] The literary mentality of urban centres was a natural spur for historical writing from multiple perspectives.

Who were the people writing?

It is impossible, both because of a lack of sources, and in the scope of this study, to identify all authors of the urban historical writings under investigation. Although a full biographic study of the authors is impossible, certain groups involved in the production of these texts can be identified and discussed in their social context.

The large majority of the manuscripts studied here are found in city archives.[342] The chancery was the place or institution at the centre of this writing revolution and hence also crucial in the understanding of the creation of most historiographical texts.[343] Not many people had access and opportunity to write in or copy from official documents. Professional writers were thus often responsible for the historical texts in registers, magistrate lists and other records. Schmid's entry

medieval Low Countries', in Éva Guillorel, David Hopkin, and William G. Pooley (eds.), *Rhythms of the revolt: European traditions and memories of social conflict in oral culture* (Farnham, 2016).

[338] Philipsz., *Het Handschrijft Jan Phillipsz.*, pp. 94, 108.

[339] Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde*, p. 103.

[340] Small, 'Indiciaires'; although their view on urban life might have differed from that of some townspeople; Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies*, pp. 51–56. There are also several examples of Flemish town clerks who continued their career in comital service: Paul Rogghé, 'De Gentse klerken in de XIVe en Xve eeuw: trouw en verraad', *Appeltjes van het Meetjesland. Jaarboek van het Heemkundig Genootschap van het Meetjesland* 11 (1960), pp. 17–18.

[341] Small, *George Chastelain*, p. 86.

[342] Although, exceptionally, we know several manuscript in the Ghent town archive and university library were bought at auctions and might not have been there in the Middle Ages. Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, p. 73.

[343] Mostert and Adamska, 'Introduction', p. 5.

on town chronicles in *EMC* summarising the current positions in research emphasises the administrative context of the writers:

> Among town chroniclers, clerks of the urban chancelleries (in the German speaking parts of the Empire) and notaries and lawyers serving the councils (in Italy, Spain, and France) were most numerous.[344]

Professional writers

An intellectual middle class of professional writers, such as clerks, notaries, and scribes, grew significantly in the late Middle Ages due to the new literate needs in trade, government and jurisdiction. It is a sign of this development that in the late Middle Ages *clericus* came to mean a common clerk or scholarly person rather than a member of the clergy.[345] Professional writers most obviously involved through their function at the town chancery were the town clerks or secretaries. Town clerks also appear persistently as author in research done on German and Italian urban historiography.[346] It is indeed not hard to imagine that notaries, scriveners, or clerks would be more interested and capable than the average person in literature, writing and indeed historical texts.[347] Many famous late medieval writers or poets were clerks: Geoffrey Chaucer and Thomas Hoccleve in London, and Jan van Boendale in Antwerpen, to name just a few.[348] Professional writers formed, however, not a large part of the population. In late fifteenth-century Leiden only circa one percent of the urban population had a 'writing' profession.[349]

The context of the town administration is evidently essential in understanding the writers, contents and purpose of the sources. Realising the collective character of pragmatic writing it is worthwhile to describe some key characteristics of the profession, social background, status and interests of the writers of these groups of professional writers.

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[344] Schmid, 'Town Chronicles', pp. 1432, 1434.
[345] Clanchy, *From memory*, pp. 228–248; George Shuffelton, 'John Carpenter, lay clerk', *The Chaucer Review* 48:4 (2014), pp. 434–436.
[346] Du Boulay, 'German town chroniclers', p. 446; Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, pp. 47–48; Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 14–27; Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, e.g. on pp. 41-89, 227-228.
[347] Albert Rigaudière, *Gouverner la ville au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1993), pp. 266–267.
[348] Ethan Knapp, *The bureaucratic muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the literature of late medieval England* (University Park, 2001); Mulder-Bakker, 'The household', pp. 196–200; Gerritsen et al., 'Vernacular poetics'.
[349] The urban clergy is not included in this. Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde*, p. 31.

Town clerks

We know for certain that in some cases town clerks were responsible for writing town books including historiographical material in England and the Low Countries. This could either have been as the result of a commission of the town, or from a personal interest, which presumably was supported by their profession. In the case of custumals, where the more explicit historical texts are just a small part of a larger administrative document, it is highly likely these historical texts are written by the town clerk or another member of the town administration. Robert Ricart from Bristol, and Jan Allertsz and Cornelis Jansz from Rotterdam can easily be identified by name.

The Rotterdam register containing chronicle notes, which collectively have become known as the Chronicle of Rotterdam, has been used by several successive town secretaries. In addition to two sixteenth-century hands, which fall outside our time frame and added few notes, the fifteenth-century hands adding chronicle-sytle notes can be identified as those of Jan Allertsz and his son Cornelis Jansz.[350] Jan held the office of Rotterdam's city secretary from circa 1453 until 1489. He started this notebook and wrote the majority of the historical notes. Jan used earlier sources for chronicle notes on the history of Holland, but also wrote comments on his own time which were presumably mainly based on personal experience. Son Cornelis, who became the town clerk in 1495 continued the historical notes until the year 1499.[351] The identification of these authors is straightforward. Both clerks identified themselves as author in the notes, and their hands are recognisable in other documents of Rotterdam's city administration. Jan Allertsz and Cornelis Jansz both used the term 'clerc' to describe themselves. Moreover, Jan described himself as 'notarius et clericus traiectensis', but there is no evidence that his son was also a notary.[352]

Robert Ricart introduces himself at the start of the Bristol *Kalendar* as the common clerk of Bristol since Michaelmas 1478.[353] Ricart remained Bristol's town clerk until1489. Although there are at least two Robert Ricarts found in the sources and therefore identification of the *Kalendar*'s author is not beyond all doubt, Peter

[350] For the following, H. Ten Boom, 'De eerste secretarissen van Rotterdam', *Rotterdams Jaarboekje* VIII:7 (1979).
[351] Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', pp. 1–3.
[352] Rotterdam, CA, no. 690, f. 319r.
[353] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 1. Full quote on p. 151.

Fleming shows us that the most likely candidate for the town clerk was a merchant active in the 1450s. This Robert Ricart was through his profession and contacts as a merchant 'on good terms with members of the governing elite'.[354] He would have been in his fifties and sixties as a town clerk in the 1470s and 1480s, which sounds plausible.

Sarah Rees Jones identified Roger Burton as the particular clerk in York's town administration who started a tradition of civic history writing in the first half of the fifteenth century.[355] John Carpenter, elected as London clerk in 1417 is known as the compiler of the *Liber Albus.*[356] Many others, like the writers of the Ghent memory books, the Colchester Chronicle and the Chronicle of Haarlem, can be identified as town clerks, but remain anonymous. The short chronicle (fols. 20r-v) focusing on the origin of the town, castle and chapel of Colchester is written by a town clerk who can be identified as clerk through his hand in court rolls and the Red Paper Book in the 1370s.[357]

Town clerks fulfilled a very significant role in late medieval towns. Although they are usually not counted as holding one of the political civic offices, such as mayors, aldermen or councillors, and thus not really part of the urban governing elite, town clerks or secretaries held an influential position.

The exact title of these clerks could differ over time and in different towns. Common clerk (common as in communal, to differentiate from e.g. a bailiff's clerk), town clerk and town secretary were widely used titles.[358] In Haarlem as well as Rotterdam, the title 'secretary' refers more to the representative aspects of the role or the 'head clerk', whereas 'the clerc' is used in reference to the person doing the writing and recording work.[359] The office of town clerk appeared in major towns in

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[354] Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 3; Peter Fleming, 'Making history: culture, politics and the Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar', in Douglas L. Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove, and A. Compton Reeves (eds.), *Reputation and representation in fifteenth-century Europe* (Leiden, 2004), p. 307.
[355] Sarah Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration 1354-1464', in Sarah Rees Jones (ed.), *The government of medieval York: essays in commemoration of the 1396 royal charter* (York, 1997), pp. 108–110.
[356] Shuffelton, 'John Carpenter'.
[357] We do know the name of his successor, Michael Aunger (clerk 1380-98), who continued the registers, Britnell, 'Oath Book'; Britnell, *Growth and decline*, p. 123.
[358] Betty R. Masters, 'City officiers III: the town clerk', *The Guildhall Miscellany* 3 (1969), pp. 56–57; Attreed, *York house books*, p. xix; John Gilissen, *Les légistes en Flandre aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Merksplas, 1939), pp. 177–178; Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', pp. 5–7, 105–106.
[359] J.W. Marsilje, 'Het Haarlemse klerkambt in de 15e eeuw', in D.E.H de Boer and J.W. Marsilje (eds.), *De Nederlanden in de late middeleeuwen* (Utrecht, 1987), p. 185; Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', pp. 159–161.

the thirteenth century and had become common in the fifteenth century for all but the smallest towns and villages of Northwest Europe.[360] During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when running town chanceries became more and more work, tasks were divided and several clerks or scribes hired to help with writing jobs.[361] A new role, that of pensionary (in the Low Countries; recorder in England) appeared in towns in the fifteenth century for more specialised diplomatic visits and legal advice which had been covered by the secretary until then.[362] These latter men often had a background as a lawyer.

Just as all other civic officials, town clerks took an oath to faithfully fulfil their office. From their oaths we can see that keeping accurate records of courts, council meetings and keeping accounts were their most important tasks. In addition to administration, they were often also involved in collecting fines and taxes, as well as correspondence and diplomatic visits.[363] Besides describing their work, the oath of the town clerk of Reading, although from Elizabeth I's time, reminds the clerk that

> You shall attend the common councells, courts and other meetings […] and the matters att such meetings and councells consulted […] you shall keep close and secrett, […] other then for advice to an alderman or assistant of the

[360] See essays covering international developments in Walter Prevenier and Thérèse de Hemptinne, *La diplomatique urbaine en Europe au Moyen Âge: actes du congrès de la Commission internationale de diplomatique, Gand, 25-29 août 1998* (Leuven, 2000) especially E. Dijkhof, 'The growing literacy in the towns of the County of Holland and Zeeland', pp. 133-142. Mieke Leroy, 'Les débuts de la production d'actes urbains en Flandre au XIIIe siècle', 267-79. G.H. Martin, 'The diplomatic of English borough custumals', 307-320. London had a first town clerk in 1220, Masters, 'The town clerk', p. 55; Stephen Alsford, 'The town clerks of medieval Colchester', *Essex Archaeology and History: Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 24 (1993), p. 125; Arie Van Steensel, 'Het personeel van de laatmiddeleeuwse steden Haarlem en Leiden, 1478-1572', *JMG* 9 (2006), pp. 207–209; Benders, 'Urban administrative literacy', pp. 79–80; Gilissen, *Les légistes*, pp. 178–181.

[361] Masters, 'The town clerk', pp. 55–74; Arie Van Steensel, 'The emergence of an administrative apparatus in the Dutch towns of Haarlem and Leiden during the late medieval and early modern periods, circa 1430-1570', in Manon Van der Heijden, Elise Van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Griet Vermeesch (eds.), *Serving the urban community: the rise of public facilities in the Low Countries* (Amsterdam, 2009), p. 49.

[362] Gilissen, *Les légistes*, pp. 181–187; Leiden in the 1450s, R.C.J. Van Maanen and J.W. Marsilje, *Leiden: de geschiedenis van een Hollandse stad. Dl. 1: Leiden tot 1574* (Leiden, 2002), p. 84; Haarlem in 1478: Marsilje, 'Haarlemse klerkambt', p. 191; Rotterdam only in 1508, Ten Boom, 'De eerste secretarissen', p. 161; Attreed, *York house books*, p. xix; Alsford, 'Town clerks Colchester', p. 130.

[363] Esther Liberman Cuenca, 'Town clerks and the authorship of custumals in medieval England', *UH* (2018); Benham, *Oath Book*, pp. 36–37; J. M. Guilding (ed.), *Reading records: diary of the Corporation. Henry VI to Elizabeth, 1431-1602*, vol. 1 (London, 1892), pp. 270–271; Alsford, 'Town clerks Colchester', pp. 125–126; Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', pp. 9–13; Gilissen, *Les légistes*, pp. 177–181; Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', pp. 153–154; Van Steensel, 'Personeel', pp. 209–213.

said Guild'.[364]

The pledge to keep records secret was common.[365] The exception made for the sharing of information and advice with aldermen or civic officials illustrates the clerk's function to support the government. We can imagine this scenario would not have been uncommon. Most town clerks were not elected annually, as the other officers were, and therefore represented the continuing factor of town government. In Colchester there were elections, but the anonymous Colchester town clerk who copied the short chronicle 'De Colocestria et Coele', was re-elected for almost a decade, confirming the suggestion that the clerk's specialist knowledge would have been valuable.[366] It was common for town clerks to stay in office for multiple years, sometimes decades, as the above examples of Jan Allertsz, Cornelis Jansz and Robert Ricart demonstrated. The clerks held a crucial position in the town administration and functioned as the city's living memory, dealing with the town's history on a daily basis. They were responsible for the town's records, which formed the tangible political-administrative urban memory, but their governmental experience would also have been appreciated.[367]

Town clerks were not always natives of the town where they worked. Sometimes qualified professionals from outside were hired, which would ensure neutrality regarding political factions.[368] Usually, however, they had to be or become freemen of the town to ensure their loyalty. In Leiden the city secretary had to have been a freeman of the town for seven years.[369] Town secretaries were paid reasonably well, although it was not a luxurious income generally. They received an annual salary from the urban government and in many instances also (money for) a livery, as well as parchment or paper and ink to do their work. Many town clerks

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[364] *Reading records*, p. 271; Benham similarly translates the Latin oath of the town clerk of Colchester to make him swear to 'failthfully conceal the counsel of the Bailiffs and also of the commonalty aforesaid in all things', Benham, *Oath Book*, p. 37.
[365] Cuenca, 'Town clerks', pp. 10–14. For a Dutch example: Jeroen F. Benders, 'The town clerks of Deventer and Zutphen (IJssel region, Eastern Netherlands) from c.1300 to the late fifteenth century', *Quaerendo* 41 (2011), pp. 84–85.
[366] Alsford, 'Town clerks Colchester', pp. 129–130; Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 80–83; In contrast, the clerk of Leiden was appointed for life, Van Steensel, 'Personeel', p. 201.
[367] Cuenca, 'Town clerks'; Lowagie, 'Political implications', pp. 209–230; Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration', pp. 111–112; Van Steensel, 'Personeel', p. 235; Small, 'Municipal registers', p. 58, quoting Riguadière. A. Rigaudière, *Saint-Flour, ville d'Auvergne au bas Moyen Âge. Etude d'histoire administrative et financière* (Paris, 1982), p. 159.
[368] Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 73, 300–303; Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', p. 13.
[369] Van Steensel, 'Personeel', p. 216; Alsford, 'Town clerks Colchester', pp. 127–129, clerks became freemen shortly before starting their clerkship, suggesting it was a requirement.

added to their salary by doing writing jobs for the urban population or special assignments for the town council.[370] The Haarlem secretary received the same clothing and travel fees in the fifteenth century as the mayors and aldermen, although the other two clerks in the chancery earned less, suggesting diplomatic work was valued higher than the writing work.[371]

Notaries

We should not just look at town clerks, but also people in other writing professions, such as scriveners and notaries. Notaries public are known to us as important players in late medieval towns most of all from France, Italy and Germany.[372] Du Boulay lists 'notarius' and 'notarium civicum' as terms used to denote the *Stadtschreiber* (secretary).[373] Kathrin Utz Tremp provides us with the example of the Swiss city of Freiburg and the Cudrefin family demonstrating the interconnectedness of writing professionally and privately.[374] Several men from the Cudrefin family, city secretary-notary Jakob Cudrefin, his father, brother-in-law and cousin all with similar professions, wrote historical pieces from occasional annotations in notary registers, on the archers festival, royal visits, battles, the weather or family history, to narrative reports, for instance on the events in 1449-50, when the city officials of Freiburg were deposed, arrested and some of them taken hostage by Duke Albert VI of Austria.[375]

In the Low Countries and England the role of the notary public was less significant in cities and city governments, and consequently also in urban history

[370] Masters, 'The town clerk', p. 64; Van Steensel, 'Emergence', p. 53; Van Steensel, 'Personeel', pp. 213–214; Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', pp. 108–110.
[371] Masters, 'The town clerk', esp. p. 64; Marsilje, 'Haarlemse klerkambt', esp. pp. 184-187.
[372] Small, 'Municipal registers', pp. 58–64; Volker Honemann, 'Die Stadtschreiber und die deutsche Literatur im Spätmittelalter und der fruhen Neuzeit', in Walter Haug, Timothy R. Jackson, and Johannes Janota (eds.), *Zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des 14. Jahrhunderts. Dubliner Colloquium 1981* (Heidelberg, 1983), pp. 320–353.
[373] Du Boulay, 'German town chroniclers', p. 447.
[374] Kathrin Utz Tremp, 'Notariat und Historiografie. Die Freiburger Notarsfamilie Cudrefin und die Anfänge der freiburgischen Historiografie (Mitte 15. Jahrhundert)', *Freiburger Geschichtsblätter* 88 (2011); Chantal Ammann-Doubliez and Kathrin Utz Tremp, 'Der Freiburger Stadtschreiber Petermann Cudrefin (1410-1427) und sein Testament', *Freiburger Geschichtsblätter* 81 (2004).
[375] Tremp, 'Notariat und Historiografie', pp. 36–39, 44–51; Hans Greyerz also wrote a more traditional chronicle on the Savoy war of 1447-48, ibid., pp. 46–51.

writing.[376] However, both in the Low Countries and in England there are examples as well of town clerks who were also notaries. Hendrik Callewier has found eleven notaries in fifteenth-century Bruges, who also fulfilled the function of town secretary or town pensionary at some point.[377] This is a very small percentage of the 190 public notaries he identified in this century, but probably a relatively large percentage of town secretaries and pensionaries considering they usually held the office for several years. Notaries who served as town clerks are also known from the cities of Ypres and Ghent.[378] In the Northern Low Countries there was a similarly clear link between notaries and town secretaries. Jan Allertsz from Rotterdam was a lower cleric, who was married and made a career in the town government rather than in the church. We find his notarial *signum* a few times in the town register that also contains the so-called Chronicle of Rotterdam.[379] For Haarlem and Leiden, there are suggestions of notaries as city pensionaries or secretaries as well. A 'meester' (*magister*) Steffen Pietersz was made pensionary of Haarlem in 1478 after having done ad hoc services for the town government before. He is said to be a priest, which in combination with his 'master' title and the juridical and diplomatic work he is asked to do, could well suggest a notarial background.[380] There are similar examples of notary-town clerks from Utrecht, Groningen and 's-Hertogenbosch in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[381]

Notaries did appear in England from the later thirteenth century onwards, but in much smaller numbers and almost never connected to urban

[376] Small, 'Municipal registers', p. 63; compare Callewier, 'Brugge, vijftiende-eeuws centrum', and James M. Murray, 'The profession of notary public in medieval Flanders', *Legal History Review* 61 (1993).
[377] Hendrik Callewier, 'Brugge, vijftiende-eeuws centrum van het notariaat in de Nederlanden', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 77:1–2 (2009), pp. 95–100. Unfortunately, without total numbers of secretaries and pensionaries, it is difficult to grasp the real influence of notaries on these public positions.
[378] Examples from fourteenth-century Ypres include the notary Johannes Berengarius, who started his career in service of the count but became Ypres town clerk around 1340. He travelled to the court of Edward III on diplomatic missions for his town. Johannes Cramme worked in the early fourteenth century as one of the earliest public notaries in Ypres and became town clerk there and, a decade or so later, also in Bruges. Johannes van Vinderhoute and Jan van Leuven were both town clerk in Ghent, and the latter is known to have travelled on diplomatic missions for the government of Jacob van Artevelde during his time in office. Murray, 'Profession', pp. 16, 26–28.
[379] Ten Boom, 'De eerste secretarissen', nt. 24; Rotterdam, CA, no. 690, a notary sign on f. 324r.
[380] Marsilje, 'Haarlemse klerkambt', p. 191. Voor Leiden, Van Maanen and Marsilje, *Leiden*, pp. 80–82.
[381] Ten Boom, 'De eerste secretarissen', p. 158; Van Synghel, 'The Use of Records', pp. 35, 41.

administration.[382] A rare exception is John Beche, notary public and likely candidate for Colchester town clerk between 1398 and 1404.[383] That England never developed a tradition of notaries can be explained by its Common Law system as opposed to the system of Roman Law that was used on the continent. The few notaries not working for church or royal authority were scriveners and registered as such in the Scriveners Guild of London, adding a *signum* and '*notarius publicus*' to their name in the guild register.[384] There is little definite and direct evidence that the English notaries were related to any form of urban history writing. London Chronicle in MS Trinity College Dublin 509 is attributed to a Robert Bale who can possibly be identified as a scrivener and notary in London in the mid-fifteenth century.[385] However, like scriveners and notaries in other countries, they might well have been more interested in writing history through their profession than the average literate London citizen. Not all notaries who worked for the town governments in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did so as town clerk. Several will have performed specific tasks or general writing work for the town government without being in a public office.[386]

An example of a public notary (but not a town clerk) involved with historical writing, is Rombout de Doppere.[387] De Doppere (ca. 1432-1502) was a public notary in Bruges with a successful notary business who also made a career in church offices and was secretary of auxiliary bishop Gillis de Baerdemaker.[388] He never kept any public offices in the town government, although he took on some loose assignments

[382] C.R. Cheney, *Notaries public in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries* (Oxford, 1972); C. W. Brooks, R. H. Helmholz, and P. G. Stein, *Notaries public in England since the Reformation* (Norwich, 1991), pp. 7–11, 52, 112–115; Patrick Zutshi, 'Notaries public in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*:23 (1996), pp. 421–433.
[383] Alsford, 'Town clerks Colchester', pp. 128–129.
[384] Cheney, *Notaries public*, p. 69; Edwin Freshfield, 'Some notarial marks in the "common paper" of the scriveners' company', *Archaeologia* 54:2 (1895), pp. 239–254; it is suggested York also had a scrivener's guild and it is possible other English towns had as well. Brooks, Helmholz, and Stein, *Notaries public in England*, p. 77; Zutshi, 'Notaries public', p. 428.
[385] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 33–34; C.L. Kingsford, 'Robert Bale, the London Chronicler', *EHR* 31:121 (1916), pp. 126–128; James Yonge, a notary in early fifteenth-century Dublin, wrote at least two literary works, although not urban in character. Caoimhe Whelan, 'The notary's tale', in Sparky Booker and Cherie N. Peters (eds.), *Tales of medieval Dublin* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 119–134.
[386] Callewier, 'Brugge', p. 95.
[387] Hendrik Callewier, 'Leven en werk van Rombout de Doppere', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis* 150:2 (2013), pp. 219–244.
[388] Callewier, 'Brugge'; Murray, 'Profession', pp. 29–31; Callewier, 'Rombout de Doppere'.

from the town government of Bruges in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.[389] Rombout de Doppere served mostly religious communities in the city of Bruges and worked from 1479 in his own 'scryfcamere' or 'writing shop' next to the St. Donatian's church. De Doppere did have a clear interest in writing and literature, which can be seen through his career as a notary, as well as his membership of the rhetorician's Chamber of the Holy Spirit and his library of 57 books at the time of his death.[390] De Doppere's fellow notary and apprentice Philippus Mietins was also a member of the Chamber of the Holy Spirit.[391] Two works have survived from De Doppere's his hand. One is a travel guide to Rome and Jerusalem written in Flemish around 1491.[392] The second, and most interesting for this study, is a chronicle of Bruges and Flanders, of which part has survived as continuation of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*. Of the four books he allegedly wrote, only the last two have survived in copy or translation.[393] De Doppere seems to have written this chronicle of Bruges mostly based on his own experience and in the style of a diary. It started in 1482 with the death of Mary of Burgundy and continued until 1498. He chose to write this chronicle in the vernacular as well, rather than using Latin, which he would have used on a daily basis for his work. This shows that not all history writing had to do with civic offices and the administrative context of the town government.

Social background

Even without many specific identifications, a general picture of the social background of professional writers can be painted. The social background of the men becoming secretaries and public notaries in the Low Countries and England seems to have been similar. In the thirteenth century many town clerks in Flanders and Holland were minor clergy, but late medieval writing professionals had no ecclesiastical background and rather came from wealthy urban middle class

[389] Callewier, 'Rombout de Doppere', pp. 233–239.
[390] Ibid., p. 241.
[391] Callewier, 'Brugge', p. 87.
[392] Callewier, 'Rombout de Doppere', pp. 227–228.
[393] Book Three (in Flemish) has become part of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* as continuation and is part of its print in 1531. MS1110 in Douai Municipal Library states it contains De Doppere's Book Three for the years 1488-90, but the manuscript in fact provides a continuation from 1482-90, making it unclear whether all of this is by De Doppere. Ibid., p. 230; Oosterman, 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen', p. 26; Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles', p. 97, note 38 seems to count the same text twice. Book Four, covering the years 1490-98, has survived in a sixteenth-century Latin translation and adaptation by Jacobus Meyerus; see Callewier, 'Rombout de Doppere', pp. 230–232.

families.[394]

It was not uncommon for town secretaries, especially when they were also notaries, to have attended university, which became more common with the growth of universities from the thirteenth century onwards.[395] Although the above description has highlighted these examples, notaries in service of the town government were a minority in the late Middle Ages, many held positions in the church or as professional scribe. The majority of the public notaries would have learned their profession through local education and apprenticeship at a family or local notary's office and many town clerks similarly climbed up through the ranks from generic clerk and scribe to the town secretary's office. It was not uncommon for sons to follow their fathers' footsteps into writing professions.[396]

Town clerks could come from different backgrounds, even members of the lower nobility occasionally took on the function of clerk, but they came mostly from a middle class or urban elite background. A background as a merchant, as is exemplified by Robert Ricart from Bristol, was not unusual. Examples of clerks who had family connections with important patricians, clerics and notaries, confirm such a middle class background.[397] That a reasonable number of writing professionals did finish the local Latin schools or even held university degrees as well as the membership of many notaries and clerks of chambers of rhetoric in the Low Countries, similarly suggest a literate, middle class context. We know that Richard Burton, common clerk in York between 1405 and 1436 was a lawyer and had previously worked for the archbishop.[398] The fact that not just the urban elite but also sons of middle class families could build up a career as town clerk in the late Middle Ages demonstrates how literacy and the literate mentality had changed since town clerks started to appear in the thirteenth century from mostly clerical backgrounds.

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[394] Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', pp. 17–22; Gilissen, *Les légistes*, p. 181; Zutshi, 'Notaries public', p. 429; Callewier, 'Brugge', pp. 99–100.
[395] Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', pp. 13–15; Benders, 'Town clerks', pp. 81–82; Van Steensel, 'Personeel', pp. 216–218.
[396] Marsilje, 'Haarlemse klerkambt', p. 194; Van Steensel, 'Emergence', p. 52. Rotterdam is the obvious example, as well as the Cudrefin family in Freiburg mentioned above.
[397] James Murray suggested in 1993 that Flemish notaries were recruited from the lower classes, but Callewier saw no evidence for this: Murray, 'Profession', p. 9; Callewier, 'Brugge', pp. 82–83; for an English example, see Cheney, *Notaries public*, pp. 45–46; Whelan, 'Notary's tale', pp. 119–120.
[398] Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration', p. 108. Other clerks also learned the profession in service of a bishop or other ecclesiastical position; Cuenca, 'Town clerks', pp. 9–10.

This middle class background of professional writers was comparable for England and the Low Countries, and confirms what we know of similar writers in Germany and Italy. Goro Dati, famous for his work *Istoria di Firenze* which covers the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, was born in a 'reasonably well-to-do burgher family'.[399] He followed the typical Italian career of apprenticeships and building up a merchant business before participating in civic government in several roles in later stages of his life. However, he seems to have written the *Istoria* before his extensive political experience. Although in his forties, he had only occupied some 'minor offices such as that of consul of his guild' when writing his history.[400]

Jan Allertsz' and his son Cornelis Jansz' function as town clerk meant they held an important position in Rotterdam. We can deduce this both from the tasks they performed in their function as city secretaries as well as from some data on their private lives. Before the arrival of the positon of a pensionary or second secretary from 1508, the city secretary travelled with the magistrate or by himself on official business to the court and to other towns. To represent the town in this way was an important role. Even more significant is the role that 'Jannes de clerck' had during the Entry of Maximilian in April 1478. Jan Allertsz was the one who took the oath for the town of Rotterdam 'mit luyder stemme'.[401] This is a significant public performance by the town clerk and suggests he was well respected by the governing elite. Moreover, from Cornelis Jansz' private life we know his family was well connected to the urban elite. Many of the witnesses at the baptisms of his eight children were magistrates and their wives.[402] So these city secretaries had important functions and held some status and good connections in the city. However, they were not themselves directly part of the inner urban elite. This is very clear when we realise there is a difference between 'honorair secretarissen' and the secretaries who do the actual work. Jan and Cornelis belong to the last group. Doe Jans van der Sluys, who was the honorary secretary for most of Jan Allertsz' career, is only mentioned twice in the sources, because despite holding the official lease of the office of city clerk it would have been beneath his status to do the daily work.[403]

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[399] Green, *Chronicle into history*, pp. 112–113.
[400] Ibid., p. 115; for German examples: Du Boulay, 'German town chroniclers', pp. 446–448, 459–460; Burger, *Stadtschreiber*, pp. 42–52.
[401] Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', p. 66.
[402] Ten Boom, 'De eerste secretarissen', p. 161.
[403] In one of the two cases that he is mentioned as 'secretarius', it is clear he was related to the people involved in the court case, explaining his involvement. He did prepare Rotterdam's annual accounts for an income of 10 pounds. Ibid., pp. 159–161.

John Carpenter, common clerk of London between 1417 and 1438, represented London twice as Member of Parliament. He was the only clerk to be elected the city's MP, but it demonstrates the high regard long-serving town clerks were held in.[404] Some familial or social relationship with aldermen or other higher officials was not uncommon for secretaries and occasionally one used the post as a stepping stone for their political career.[405] However, this was rare and many clerks served their office for years until they died or retired. Robert Ricart was well-off and well-connected in Bristol through his successful career as a merchant and clerk, but never held a political civic office himself.[406] Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Colchester town clerks occupied any other civic offices.[407]

The social background of town clerks in the Low Countries and England was similar. Professional writers were generally part of the middle classes. They had good connections through family, socially and ultimately through their profession with the inner urban elite, but they were not themselves part of the governing upper class. The view of historical culture apparent in their pragmatic and historical writing can be considered very close to that of the members of the town government as they had a similar education, moved in the same circles and worked for and with the governing elite on a daily basis.

Public and private writing

Who did most of the writing work in the town chancellery, the town secretary himself, one of his clerks or hired scriveners, will have differed from town to town. Who the hand writing the Chronicle of Rotterdam, the Diary of Ghent or the Haarlem Register belonged to is not necessarily significant for our study, knowing the social context the text originated from. When a text is closely related to administrative documents and it survived in a town archive, we can assume the clerk, notary or scribe who wrote it worked for and with the town government and would thus roughly share a historical culture with the urban governing elite. The administrative context in which many custumals and magistrate lists occur means we can assume

[404] Shuffelton, 'John Carpenter', p. 438.
[405] Masters, 'The town clerk', p. 56; Marsilje, 'Haarlemse klerkambt', p. 188; Van Steensel, 'Emergence', pp. 53–54; Rogghé, 'Gentse klerken', pp. 18–20; it could also be the other way around where previous *schepenen* would take up the office of town clerk, e.g. Ibid., p. 24.
[406] Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 3.
[407] Alsford, 'Town clerks Colchester'.

that they often present public rather than private views.

Not all historical texts written by town officials reflect an official view. The layout, structure and content of the *Boeck van al 't ghene dat geschiedde te Brugghe* is less formal, and this could well reflect a more private venture. However, the content of the *Boeck* suggest the writer was a (lower) civic official, or someone who worked for a civic institution. The manuscript includes copies of four peace agreements (although they are in a different, but contemporary hand), as well as several lists of the magistrates, especially in the later years. The writer also copied the confessions of several well-known rebels in the turbulent 1480s, and thus provides justification for their punishment and execution.[408] I want to suggest, although more research on this manuscript is very welcome, that the text depicts an interest for crime or policing in the city, rather than scandal, as previously suggested.[409] The writer might have worked in a function related to this or he might have been responsible for writing or copying certain court rolls or police reports.[410] Alternatively he could have been related to the St John's Hospital. This was the place where dead bodies were brought when found in the city so a connection to the hospital would explain some of the writer's knowledge.[411] He describes many crimes and executions, but also many accidents, often providing details of name and address of the victim. To give two examples from September 1489:

> Item on the 3rd day of September, anno 89, there was in the morning, at the 8th hour, found a dead man outside the Cross Gate, at a house named The Three Magi outside the pillory of the city of Bruges, straight opposite the pillory, on the other side of the road, and he was dressed in a grey shirt and 2 white stockings and 2 wooden shoes, and he was from Eeckeloo.[412]
>
> Item on the 6th day of September, anno 89, there was a fight outside the Smith's Gate of the city of Bruges, outside what was called the White House,

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[408] For example: Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, p. 77: *'Item up den 5den dach in Hoymaend, anno 85, doe was ghemaect een schavood up de grote Merct voor de Halle, ende daer waren op gherecht, metten zweerde, vier poorters van dezer stede van Brugghe […]hier naer volgende ende achtervolgende elc sinen name, zyn verluyd.'* Also e.g. ibid., p. 160.

[409] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', p. 31.

[410] The manuscript is not related to the *Verluydboek* (register of criminal sentences) in the Bruges City Archive.

[411] Hilde Lobelle-Caluwé, 'Het Sint-Janshospitaal in Brugge', *Openbaar Kunstbezit in Vlaanderen* 39:2 (2001), p. 12. In some instances the writer not only specifies the time of death, but also of burial.

[412] *'Item up den 3den dach in September, anno 89, doe zo was tsnuchtens, ten 8 hueren, ghevonden een man dood buuten der Cruuspoorten, by een huus geheeten de 3 Kuenynghen buuten der pale van der stede van Brugghe, recht tiegen hover de pale, an dander zyde van den heereweeh, ende hy hadde an eenen graeuwen keerel ende 2 witte cousen ende 2 houde schoen, ende hy was van Eeckeloo.'* Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, p. 303.

> the landlord of the house was called Antheunis Manins and he stabbed to death one named Jan Scoutyts, and he was a tailor, under the Vlamync Bridge.[413]

I do not think it is scandal he reports, rather the deaths from accidents, fights and executions. His tone is often quite factual, never shows any excitement when reporting fights or executions but rather concern and sympathy for his fellow townsmen. He adds 'God rest their souls', after fatal accidents and executions and gives the names of most people he mentions, whether they are victims of accidents or criminals to be executed. One aspect of the book that might seem to show his scandalous interests are the detailed descriptions of the many punishments, torture and executions arising from the rebellious 1480s in Bruges, which he details in a similar factual manner. He is very accurate in his descriptions, not just of executions, but also in descriptions of nobles or armies. He always reports the clothes and the number of people and horses a nobleman rides into town with or the number of soldiers found pillaging the countryside, as well as detailed routes of processions. This eye for detail shows us it must have been a citizen who knew the town and its inhabitants well, and his comment at an execution in 1482 that 'he was a cloth shearer's son whom I didn't know' confirms this.[414] In combination with the court or crime reports he could access, it points to a well-educated writer, possibly a notary, or a scrivener in service of the town government or other civic institution.[415] The use of several documents copied into the book, and the peace agreements added to it, highlight this link with the town government.

On some occasions the intervention of the town government in historical writing or other forms of historical culture even outside the town archives is more evident. The poet Willem van Hildegaersberch wrote *Of the Key [Van den Sloetel]*, referring to the keys on Leiden's coats of arms, a poem to be performed for the Count of Holland in the early fifteenth century.[416] This poem was commissioned by the

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[413] *'Item up den 6den dach in September, anno 89, doe gheschiede een ghevecht buuten der Smede poorte van der stede van Brugghe, buuten geheeten ten Witten huuze, den weerd van den huuze die hiet Antheunis Manins, ende die stac dood eenen gheheeten Jan Scoutyts, ende was een cleeder lapper, beneden de Vlamyncbrugghe.'* Ibid., p. 304.
[414] Ibid., p. 40. He also describes how he never saw the blind with their bells in 1491, p. 429. Also many detailed descriptions of executions etc. point towards the writer being in Bruges.
[415] The writer calls himself 'the scrivener' several times. I take this as a simple reference to either himself or the author of the source he copies, rather than a reference to a profession.
[416] 'Vanden sloetel', the coat of arms of Leiden carries St Peter's keys and Leiden is still known as the 'sleutelstad', or city of the keys.

town government of Leiden to remind the count of the long and strong relationship between the town and dynasty and to show mercy after a recent revolt.[417] Characterised as diplomacy as much as literature, it is a poem that sings the praises of the city and reminds the count of historical examples of merciful princes.[418] Alhtough not very sophisticated from a literary point of view, the diplomatic use of literature and history by the poet and the town is interesting. Van Hildegaersberch is one of the few travelling poets known by name. These travelling poets were known more from the Low Countries than England and existed mostly in the high Middle Ages, disappearing from records in the fifteenth century. Van Hildegaersberch worked at the comital court of Holland, but also moved around cities in the Low Countries to offer his services when he was not required at court. His work was in a very different tradition than any other source I described in this chapter, as it came from a poetic, literary and mostly oral tradition.

Non-professional writers

Professional writers were not the only group of potential history writers. Another literate group in urban society which occasionally got involved in historical writing are members of the clergy, particularly from the mendicant orders, who usually lived in towns, especially in Germany and the Low Countries. Men with a private or professional connection to the town administration or simply interested individuals also produced written evidence of urban historical culture. The type of people with time, interest and money to own or produce such texts were generally rich merchants and proud citizens of larger cities.

Interaction with literature, history and other forms of non-professional writings was often done in groups. Guilds, fraternities and other societies, such as the fifteenth-century chambers of rhetoric (in the Low Countries), and other literary societies before that, acted as patrons to writers, as well as forming part of the audience.[419] The chronicle entries in the guild register of the Bruges cloth shearers

[417] Meder, *Sprookspreker in Holland.*
[418] Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde*, chap. 5.
[419] E.g. Thirteenth-century Arras already knew some sort of literary confraternity, as did some other Northern French towns. Prevenier, 'Court and city culture', p. 15; U. Peters, *Literatur in der Stadt: Studien zu den sozialen Voraussetzungen und kulturellen Organisationsformen städtischer Literatur im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1983), pp. 63–85; Peters also discusses literary circles in Zürich, Basel and Strassbourgh, ibid., pp. 97–137 However, none of these resembled the cultural institutions that the chambers of rhetoric were.

and Golden Legend extracts in the Ghent masons guild register are good examples.[420]

Many of the London Chronicles and Ghent *memorieboeken* were - as far as we can detect - owned by individuals rather than the town chancellery. These individuals often held or were connected to civic offices, other than the writing professions discussed above. The herald Christofer Barker was the owner of London College of Arms MS 2M6, which is a commonplace book with, among other things, a London Chronicle, lists of nobles, and accounts of ceremonies. Although the London Chronicle is very brief, it is fair to assume Barker was interested in a description of major historical events because of his profession. Identification of Barker's own hand in the brief continuation to the chronicle, together with his decision to include it in his commonplace book, proves his interest.[421] The Ypres chronicles (the so-called Chronicles of Olivier van Dixmude and Peter van de Letewe), discussed in more detail later in this chapter, were presumably written by a succession of aldermen.[422] They were normally not practically involved in the writing of urban records, but would have been familiar with the urban administrative culture.

Other manuscripts were simply owned by wealthier citizens, like the Italian *ricordanze*. In her study of the London Chronicles, McLaren questions the authorship traditionally ascribed to some manuscripts. She gives convincing evidence that *Gregory's Chronicle* is probably written by an 'older, class-conscious, worldly wise, philosophical man' with strong Yorkist sympathies, based on Parker who suggested the owner could have been a 'rising London merchant who wants to improve his social station'.[423] One Richard Hill, citizen and grocer of London, born shortly before 1490, owned a commonplace book which included a London Chronicle (MS Balliol 354).[424] Although he never held civic office, he obviously had an interest in civic affairs and Hill described himself as servant of alderman M. Wynger. This London Chronicle begins in more recent times than the traditional start date of 1189, displaying a predisposition to Tudor and contemporary accounts of history. Through shared social circles and historical culture these private citizens not only

[420] Chapter 2, p. 82.
[421] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 34–35.
[422] See pp. 159-60.
[423] In any case there is convincing evidence this man was not skinner and Mayor William Gregory, to whom it has been ascribed since the nineteenth century. Parker, *Commonplace book*, p. 34; McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 29–33.
[424] Parker, *Commonplace book*, pp. 49–50; McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 35–37.

had access to texts originally based on town records, they also identified with them enough to copy and continue them and share in the collective authorship of these annotated magistrate lists.

It is difficult to assess how widespread this 'amateur' habit of writing historical urban works was. Most of the manuscripts discussed in this thesis are found in town archives, but that could possibly be explained simply by their heightened chance of survival compared to private documents. Similar private manuscripts of the Ghent memory books are known, but mostly from the sixteenth century and later. In early modern towns there was an increase in (urban) history writing through antiquarian and humanist interests as well as diary keeping.[425] However, there is much less evidence of these private ventures in both the Low Countries and England from the fifteenth century.

Clergy

The clergy is traditionally seen as the most literate group in society in the high Middle Ages where monasteries were the main institutions producing chronicles. In fifteenth-century towns the main institutional focus had shifted to the town chanceries, but the urban clergy remained one of the groups familiar with and interested in literature and writing, as well as with access to a library and heavily involved in urban education. Their involvement with history writing was however not on the same scale and in a more individual capacity than in previous centuries. Germany in particular provides us with named examples of clergy involved with writing work for the town administration, which could include urban historiography.[426] Some individuals of the urban clergy in Holland, Flanders, and England seem to have been as interested in history writing as their urban contemporaries in other literate professions. However, the tradition of collective authorship they belonged to and their view of historical culture identified mostly with their abbey and their ruler, rather than with the town they lived in.[427]

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[425] Pollmann, 'Archiving the present', pp. 239–241; Woolf, 'Genre into artifact', pp. 347–354; Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory and autobiography'.
[426] Du Boulay, 'German town chroniclers', pp. 461, 463, 468; Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung'; Van Synghel, 'The Use of Records', p. 37 for 's-Hertogenbosch.
[427] E.g. an anonymous Dominican in Bruges wrote a 'Chronicon conventus Brugensis' about his monastry in the fifteenth century. A.H. Thomas, 'Boekenbezit en boekengebruik bij de Dominikanen in de Nederlanden vóór ca. 1550', in Rafaël De Keyser (ed.), *Studies over het boekenbezit en boekengebruik in de Nederlanden vóór 1600* (Brussels, 1974), pp. 456, 475.

In the above examples, we have encountered some lower clergy who were also notaries and involved in history writing, such as Romboud de Doppere in Bruges.[428] In Haarlem the canon Johannes a Leydis is known to have produced several substantial history works, although the majority not specifically urban. He is also the suspected author of the verses that form the captions of the portraits of the counts and countesses of Holland made for the monastery in the fifteenth century, but now in the city's town hall.[429] The anonymous writer of the Chronicle of The Hague was possibly a clergyman as well. Janse shows how the writer seems to have had a specific interest in news relating to liturgy, churches and the Elisabeth convent, indicating an ecclesiastical background.[430]

Urban abbeys also played a role in history writing in England, although in a different form. Medieval monasteries were the place where libraries were found, which also included historical texts and were thus a rich source of information for any citizen interested in books and history. Bristol's Ricart got some of his sources very probably from the library of the abbey close by, and also included a short history of the abbey in the *Kalendar*.[431] The Colchester chronicle is also very likely to have come, at least partly, from the origin legends of the local St John Abbey.[432] In Holland the monastery of Egmond was an important source of historical information on the county, although until now the use of Egmond sources for urban historical texts has not been confirmed.[433]

The influence of the clergy in historical writing was not as large anymore in the fifteenth century as it had been two centuries before. However, there are individual examples in all three regions of urban friars, priests or other lower clergy involved in urban historical writing, whether through writing work for the town administration or a personal interest. These urban clerics shared many characteristics with other well-educated writing professionals, including an interest in urban historical culture.

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[428] Hendrik Callewier, *De papen van Brugge: de seculiere clerus in een middeleeuwse wereldstad (1411-1477)* (Leuven, 2014), pp. 315–318, 337.
[429] He wrote two Chronicles of Holland, a Chronicle of the monastery at Egmond, a Latin and a Dutch version of a Chronicle of the Brederode family. More on Johannes a Leydis: Ebels-Hoving, 'Johannes a Leydis'; Stapel and De Vries, 'Leydis, Pauli, and Berchen revisited'; W. Van Anrooij, *Haarlemse gravenportretten: Hollandse geschiedenis in woord en beeld* (Hilversum, 1997), pp. 18–19.
[430] Janse, 'Haagse kroniek', pp. 15–16.
[431] Fleming, 'Making history', pp. 293–297.
[432] See Chapter 4, pp. 194-95.
[433] Burgers, 'Geschiedschrijving in Holland'.

Chambers of rhetoric

The chambers of rhetoric were important cultural institutions in the towns of the medieval Low Countries. They appeared in Flanders from the early fifteenth century and in Holland from the very end of that century and only impacted town life in Holland significantly in the sixteenth century.[434] Although the chambers played an important part in urban literary life in Holland, membership was low at around 5% of the male adult urban population.[435] This was different in the County of Flanders, where the chambers were much more popular and influential. The organisations were founded by a small cultural elite, but became increasingly popular in fifteenth-century Flanders. This meant the membership of the chambers grew and organisational changes occurred to reduce the financial, devotional and social obligations that were expected.[436] Van Bruaene estimates that thousands of citizens would have been a rhetorician at some point.[437] Her detailed study of chambers of rhetorics in the Southern Low Countries shows that the social background of rhetoricians was varied. It was not uncommon for members of the city magistrature to belong to one of the rhetoricians' chambers and there are also some examples of members of the nobility participating.[438] But most rhetoricians were literate citizens from the middle classes, often members of craft guilds, especially masters, but also school masters, urban clergy and civil servants. The fees in the second half of the fifteenth century were relatively low and membership thus accessible for many.[439] Despite the name, not all members of chambers of rhetoric would have been particularly interested in literature and play. The devotional and social events were an equally important reason to become a member, just as they were essential in other guilds and fraternities in Flemish towns. A few, called the 'cultural elite' by Van Bruaene, were highly active in writing poems, songs and plays for the frequent local

[434] Although there were similar, but smaller, literary societies before the fifteenth century in the Southern Low Countries. These social-religious confraternities also brought together men interested in literature and writing. They were not necessarily cultural societies in the sense that chambers of rhetoric were, and readings of literature would have been more exceptional and something only part of the confraternity members engaged in. See Peters, *Literatur in der Stadt*, pp. 63–77 for the Arras *Puy*, traditionally seen as the oldest example of such a society.
[435] This was also related to the different role the chambers fulfilled in the Northern Netherlands, where they were mostly pedagogical institutions rather than being focused on public performance. Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, pp. 97–98.
[436] Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, pp. 77–80.
[437] Ibid., p. 256.
[438] Ibid., e.g. pp. 65-66, 119, 126, 220; Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, e.g. pp. 111, 186.
[439] Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, p. 80.

and interregional competitions, as well as copying, translating or adapting prose, such as chronicles.[440]

As the rhetoricians' chambers grew in size and importance in Flanders, the town governments started to officially support them. They realised the potential of the chambers and individual rhetoricians for the public plays and ceremonies, and it was also through rhetoricians they got reports of royal entries in their own or other towns.[441] It was common that the rhetoricians wrote at least part of the plays at important urban feasts and royal entries, which we mostly know through the payments made to them in the city accounts.[442] How influential the city government was in dictating the theme and content of the play is unclear, but considering they received payment we can assume the rhetoricians pleased them. In interregional competitions rhetoricians also represented not just their own chamber, but also their city.

Although the emphasis within the rhetoricians' culture was on collective identity, this did not stop talented individuals, such as Anthonis de Roovere from blossoming. But in their involvement with historical texts, we need to remember he was the exception, not the typical rhetorician. The involvement of rhetoricians in history writing is best shown through the urban development of the regional *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* in fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Bruges.

Anthonis de Roovere is one of the most famous Flemish rhetoricians. He was a Bruges master stonemason and had a great interest in poetry, literature and history. In addition to a large collection of mostly religious poetry, he was responsible for a continuation of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* for the years 1436-82.[443] This was consequently copied by others resulting in a Bruges cluster of *Excellente Cronike* manuscripts. He was relatively famous in his time and several manuscripts attribute the text to him in the years after his death.[444] Poems written by De Roovere were also used widely in rhetorician circles, and sometimes even added to the chronicle manuscripts.[445] Further continuators were equally involved in the chambers of

[440] Ibid., p. 85.
[441] E.g. two members of the Holy Spirit Chamber travel to Antwerp to make a report of the Entry of Maximilian there in September 1494 for the City of Bruges. Ibid., p. 72.
[442] E.g. Entry ceremony in Bruges, 1515: Andrew Brown and Graeme Small, *Court and civic society in the Burgundian Low Countries c.1420-1530* (Manchester, 2007), p. 204.
[443] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', p. 32; Also, Oosterman, 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen'; Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles'; Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, p. 73.
[444] Oosterman, 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen', pp. 26, 29.
[445] Ibid., p. 26; Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles', pp. 89, 98.

rhetoric. De Doppere's chronicle has become part of the further continuation, as mentioned above. The first part of the manuscript that also contains De Doppere's continuation, as well as another copy of the *Excellente Cronike*, has been written by Jacob van Male.[446] Van Male wrote the Douai manuscript between 1485 and 1490 while imprisoned for being part of the anti-Habsburg revolt. He was not only a member of one of the rhetoricians' chambers, but also of another religious confraternity. This confraternity also included Willem Moreel and Pieter Lanchals in its members, the two leaders of the opposite political factions in Bruges in the 1480s.[447] These confraternities were thus not of a single political view, but the social structures and networks built through them would have influenced the social networks in the town.

Andries de Smet is yet another rhetorician who has a continuation, or at least a copy, of the *Excellente Cronike* attributed to him. In the 1531 edition we find his name several times. In 1496 he went to see the large rhetoricians' competition in Antwerp, although his own Chamber of the Holy Spirit did not compete: 'I, Andries de Smet, who wrote this having pleasure in the art of rhetoric, travelled from Bruges to Antwerp, and saw all the things that happened'.[448] De Smet made some changes in the text before 1482 and either continued or copied a continuation on to 1515. Obviously it is not only the copyists or continuators who are vital for the spread and popularity of these texts, but also the owners and readers. The brothers De Labye founded The Three Female Saints, the second chamber of rhetoric of Bruges. A family tree of the De Labye family is found in a manuscript that contains a version of the *Excellente Cronike* with Anthonis de Roovere's continuation until 1482 and another continuation that brings the story to 1506.

For towns in Holland the situation was slightly different, because chambers of rhetoric were founded later and fewer people were involved. Links between known rhetoricians and people who wrote historiographical texts are not obvious, at least we cannot find these links as easily. The Leiden town clerk Jan Philipsz included a few rhetoricians' poems in his commonplace book that included mostly religious

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[446] Oosterman, 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen', p. 29; Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', p. 34.
[447] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', pp. 39–40.
[448] *'ick, Andries die Smet, die dit screef als ghenouchte hebbende in die Retorijcke, track van Brugghe […] tAntwerpen, ende sacht al diesser of ghebuerde.'* via Oosterman, 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen', p. 23; *Dits die Excellente Cronike va[n] Vlaendere[n]* (Antwerp, 1531), f. 282v.

verses and letters.[449] Despite some personal interests, the town governments did not support the chambers to visit or set up contests, which probably contributed to their slower growth in the Northern Low Countries.[450] The questions rhetoricians in Holland tried to answer in their competitions seem to have been mostly religious, rather than historical. They commented on topical subjects sometimes, and the oldest rhetoricians' refrains in Holland were written about the Jonker Fransen war, the latest stage of the Cods-Hooks conflict. But many topical conflicts were about religion and devotion in these years before and after the Reformation.[451] A few printers, like Jacob Bellaert in Haarlem and Gerard Leeu in Gouda, published some historical texts, and a few rhetoricians' texts that we know of.[452] It is possible the printers were involved in the chambers of rhetoric, considering their logical interest in literature, but it is unclear whether there is any direct link between them. We can conclude that printers, rhetoricians and town government shared, at least partly, an intellectual and social network, just as they did in Flanders.

Medieval England never knew literary societies such as the chambers of rhetoric on the continent. Around the turn of the fourteenth century there was a short-lived Puy in London. However, after 1321 nothing is heard of it anymore.[453] In the sixteenth century the Inns of Court start to produce literature, poetry and plays next to their more legal business, but the social contribution to that was much more restricted and involved exclusively rich young men.[454]

Besides these formal structures, many people in both England and Flanders were still involved in the performance of plays through guild structures, and at urban processions. Occasional historical references were present in entry ceremonies, in addition to the traditional biblical themes, and examples from Bristol and York will be discussed later in the thesis. However, these performances usually

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[449] Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde*, chap. 3.
[450] Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde.*
[451] Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, p. 172.
[452] In the Southern Low Countries rhetoricians' texts were more popular, but very few of these were printed. Wilma Keesman, 'Jacob Bellaert en Haarlem', in E. K. Grootes (ed.), *Haarlems Helicon: literatuur en toneel te Haarlem vóór 1800* (Hilversum, 1993), p. 36; for printers, Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, pp. 100, 286; Gerard Leeu published Anthonis de Roovere's *Sacrementslof* in 1478 and the *Gouds Kroniekje* in 1478, Janse, 'Gelaagdheid', p. 134; Keesman, 'Jacob Bellaert', pp. 27–48.
[453] Anne F. Sutton, 'The *Tumbling Bear* and its patrons: a venue for the London puy and mercery', in Julia Boffey and Pamela King (eds.), *London and Europe in the later Middle Ages* (London, 1995).
[454] Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight, eds., *The intellectual and cultural world of the early modern Inns of Court* (Manchester, 2011).

consisted of mostly biblical plays and tableaux and was not an environment that produced urban literary or historical texts.

Medieval authorship

In the above section I have mostly focused on the influence that pragmatic literacy had on urban historical culture and on many historical texts written in a practical context of recording the useful and memorable. However, some writers of urban historiographical texts built upon the medieval tradition of chronicle writing as well. We can see this in the way they approach authorship.

Antwerp town clerk Jan van Boendale, in his 1330 treatise *How writers should write*, warns that 'from the word of the author one should not deviate an inch'.[455] A medieval 'author' was surrounded with authority. Ownership of the text, a concept that is crucial to the modern idea of authorship, only developed after the Middle Ages.[456] Medieval authors, such as Chaucer, at times even denied authorship.[457] Originality and a writer's self-assertion in a genre only became common in early modern times; tradition was crucial to medieval authorship. Scholarly study of medieval literature and storytelling has stressed this perception of authors as 'stewards of tradition' rather than original authors and this understanding of medieval authorship is useful to understand written evidence of historical culture too.[458]

The medieval St Bonaventure distinguished four types of writers: author (*auctor),* scribe *(scriptor),* compilor *(compilator)* and commentator (*commentator*).[459] The

[455] Erik Kooper's English translation of Jan van Boendale's 'How writers should write and what they should pay attention to', Book III, Chapter 15 of *Der leken spieghel* (The Laymen's Mirror), in Gerritsen et al., 'Vernacular poetics', p. 257.
[456] A. J. Minnis, *Medieval theory of authorship: scholastic literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot, 1988), p. 10; Bernard Cerquiglini, *In praise of the variant: a critical history of philology* (Baltimore, 1999), pp. 8–12.
[457] Robert R. Edwards, 'Authorship, imitation and refusal in late-medieval England', in Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (eds.), *Medieval and early modern authorship* (Tübingen, 2011); Minnis, *Theory of authorship*, p. 192; A.C. Spearing, 'Narrative voice: the case of Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale"', *New Literary History* 32:3 (2001), pp. 715–746.
[458] Preben Meulengracht Sorensen, *Saga and Society: An Introduction to Old Norse Literature* (Odense, 1993), 76. Quoted in Slavica Ranković, 'Who is speaking in traditional texts? On the distributed author of the sagas of Icelanders and Serbian epic poetry', *New Literary History* 38:2 (2007), pp. 293–307.
[459] Although Bonaventura wrote these definitions in a theological context, Minnis showed 'pagan' writers could be described in the same categories. Minnis, *Theory of authorship*, p. 113;

first three are especially useful for the discussion of late medieval authorship of urban historical writings:

> For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be merely the scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler. […]. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and the materials of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author.[460]

The majority of the text of medieval chronicles is thus, sometimes word for word, copied. This medieval way of writing influenced modern scholars' thoughts on medieval manuscripts, both literary and historical. Many texts were ignored by scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, because the many compilations and copies of history works were seen as mere versions or erratic variations of the same text, only valued for the amount of new information about historical events they provided.[461] This is the context that produced the incomplete nineteenth-century editions, discussed before, which would only publish 'new' or 'relevant' pieces of a work. During the twentieth century, however, the academic world came to realise the value every selection and compilation by a chronicler holds for the history of mentalities and our understanding of medieval culture. Bernard Guenée wrote in his influential 1980 book *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident medieval*:

> En réalité, toute compilation est une construction qui mérite d'être étudiée pour elle-même, et précisément comparée aux sources qu'elle a utilisée. Chaque mot omis, chaque mot ajouté est révélateur d'une conviction religieuse, d'une attitude politique, d'un choix critique.[462]

Textual changes can thus reflect meaningful differences rather than copying errors or accidental text variations. 'Medieval writing does not produce variants; it *is* variance', Cerquiglini summarised this new scholarly appreciation for compilations.[463] In the last decades, ideas from the New Philology and Genette's

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Alistair Minnis, 'Ethical poetry, poetic theology: a crisis of medieval authority?', in Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (eds.), *Medieval and early modern authorship* (Tübingen, 2011).
460 Bonaventura quoted in Minnis, *Theory of authorship*, p. 94.
461 Snijders, 'Manuscript terminology'.
462 Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, p. 63.
463 Cerquiglini, *In praise of the variant*, pp. 77–78.

concept of *réécriture* have provided scholars with ways to discuss the many copies and compilations in medieval writing in their own right.[464] Copies of the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen* made in Bruges of Ghent, for example, are thus no longer considered incomplete copies of an original but rather separate works formed by the writer's politics and historical culture. All manuscripts can be analysed as one of multiple variants of a text in their own context by taking manuscripts as a whole and studying their textual, material and social aspects.

The group of manuscripts referred to as the London Chronicles demonstrates how arbitrary lines are between authors, compilers, scribes and even owners in discussing medieval manuscripts. Sixteen of the forty-four London Chronicles show more than one hand. The later hands of these texts are often messy and untrained, evidence of owners keeping the manuscripts up to date.[465] The neatness of the initial hands could demonstrate a need to produce an attractive manuscript for sale or on commission, probably written by trained scribes, either in workshops or in the service of the town government. Which of these hands one should identify as author, compiler, copyist, scribe or owner is impossible to say, especially from a modern view of authorship. This means in this thesis all hands of the London Chronicles, whether copying verbatim or adding new information, are evidence of an interest in and consciousness of history, and I will consider all of them here when discussing authorship.

Authority

The nature of medieval authorship meant that texts carried authority through the tradition they were part of, independent of the (latest) hand that wrote them down. Medieval chronicles in particular carried authority, and even English kings consulted chronicles in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[466] Chronicler John Hardyng describes how Henry IV in a council meeting in September 1399, after he locked Richard II in the Tower,

> …put forward this same chronicle, thereby asserting his title to the

[464] Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles', p. 92; Snijders, 'Manuscript terminology'; and Stephen G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a manuscript culture', *Speculum* 65:1 (1990), pp. 1–10; G. Genette, *Palimpsestes, la littérature au second degré* (Paris, 1982).
[465] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 25.
[466] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 65–78.

> crown by descent from the same Edmund. Whereupon all the chronicles of Westminster and of all the other notable monasteries were brought in to the council at Westminster and examined by the lords, and it was proven by reference to all these chronicles that the said King Edward was the elder brother, and Edmund the younger brother.[467]

Written sixty years after the events described, it is difficult to prove any truth in John Hardyng's account and it might well be made up. However, we can assume that the idea of chronicles as a legitimate way of proving past events and holding enough authority to be referred to by the king and his councillors, would have been acceptable to any readers.

The authority carried by chronicles evidently reflected upon the activity of chronicle writing, which was consequently seen as an important and possibly influential activity. Someone like Jean Froissart consciously made a name for himself as chronicler. At the birth of the future Richard II at the Black Prince's court in 1367, the nobleman who announced this allegedly turned to Froissart, sitting in the hall, and told him 'Froissart, write down and commit to memory that my lady the princess has given birth to a fine son!'[468] In the Prologue to his *Chronicles* Froissart introduced his sources, the past 'learned men' that his work rests upon, as well as his commissioner, but the voice of a self-confident author, who sets out to do more than copying other sources verbatim, sounds through.[469]

Following this tradition of medieval chronicle writing we expect to find a preface or colophon in fifteenth-century chronicles. Surrounded by humility *topoi*, medieval chroniclers revealed their name, acknowledged the many authors who came before them (although rarely mentioning them by name) and so stressed their place in the tradition of history writing, while claiming some ownership of their new compilation or 'derivative text'.[470] The early sixteenth-century chronicler Jan van Naaldwijk prefaced his Chronicle of Holland in such a way:

> I, Jan van Naaldwijk, aspired to write this chronicle of Holland according to my rough intellect, to be corrected by those who are more knowledgeable. I

[467] Quoted in ibid., pp. 70–71; John Hardyng, H. Ellis (ed.), *The chronicle of John Hardyng* (London, 1812), pp. 353–354.
[468] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 74 from Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (25 vols., Burssels, 1867-77), XV, p. 167, XVI, p. 234.
[469] Jean Froissart, Geoffrey Brereton (ed.), *Chronicles* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 37–38.
[470] Matthew Fisher, *Scribal authorship and the writing of history in medieval England* (Columbus, 2012), chap. 2, esp. p. 70.

> compiled, collected, translated and adapted into Dutch this history, *gest* and chronicle from many French and Latin books and authors.[471]

The Bristol *Kalendar*'s author Ricart is exceptional in this study, for he introduced himself in a proper preface to the work:

> I, Robert Ricart, from the time I was elected common clerk on Michaelmas in the 18th year of Edward IV [1478], began, composed and wrote from diverse chronicles, customs, laws, privileges, and other memoranda and other diverse useful sources, to be observed eternally in perpetual remembrance.[472]

He therefore showed a clear sense of ownership and authorship of the text, while at the same time stating that he composed the text using diverse sources. The similarities to Van Naaldwijk's preface show how Ricart was aware of and used elements of the tradition of chronicle writing, although he also mentions laws, privileges and customs as sources of his work. Both the preface and the strong dependence on the *Brut Chronicle* for the first part of the manuscript clearly show an influence of the chronicle tradition.

This is very different from the many anonymous urban texts discussed in this thesis. Almost all sources lack the name of the writer as well as introductory prefaces. However, there are a few exceptions. We have seen that several manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*, for example, are not anonymous, and writers of those can be linked back to the Flemish rhetoricians. The Haarlem Chronicle, influenced by traditional Chronicles of Holland, also features a clear introduction mentioning earlier books and chronicles, although not an author's name. The format and genre of these texts might have contributed to the author's choice to introduce themselves. Interestingly, these urban sources based on national chronicles, such as the *Kalendar*, the *Excellente Cronike* manuscripts, and the Haarlem Chronicle are also the sources that use the word 'chronicle'.[473] These writers used the large, narrative regional and national chronicles that carried

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[471] Levelt, *Jan Van Naaldwijk's Chronicles*, p. 22. Translation by Sjoerd Levelt.
[472] *'Ego, Robertus Ricart, ex tunc ibidem communis clericus electus a Festo sancti Michaelis Archangeli, anno regni regis E. quarti post conquestum decimo octavo, istum librum incepi, composui, et conscripsi de diversis croniclis, consuetudinibus, legibus, libertatibus, ac aliis memorandis et necessariis diversis, ad perpetuam rei memoriam inviolabiliter observandis.'* Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 1.
[473] Although the entire volume is referred to by Ricart as either *Register* or *Kalendar*, he names the first parts *Chronicle*. See before, p. 30.

authority and although they gave them an urban flavour, in format and contents they continued within the literary tradition of chronicle writing. It was only fitting therefore to also include the appropriate preface and mention authorship.

Many of the other urban manuscripts, such as the Lincoln Roll, the Ghent *memorieboeken*, the London Chronicles in commonplace books, or the Coventry Annals, did not fit the medieval idea of chronicle writing and were based more heavily on the traditions of pragmatic and administrative literacy. The majority of sources studied in this thesis are historical texts of a different kind and on a different scale than typical medieval chronicles, and they do not contain long narrative prose, have divisions into chapters or books, and lack prefaces. The (professional) writers of these sources did not consider themselves chroniclers, but rather recorded useful information.[474] They valued remembrance of knowledge and history, but did not link their writing to the traditional chronicles they knew, which contained greater authority. This tradition of recording useful information applies both to many commonplace books, which collect historical stories or poems, but gather them with medical information, prices or weights for trading, family data, romances, prayers and songs, recipes for making ink, and other texts, and composite town records.

Public officials writing in town books are an especially strong example of writers who set out to record information rather than write history. They had an official assignment, and therefore were given the authority to write and record the urban memory of the town. The name of the person who wrote these was insignificant to the authority the text carried, as his function, not his individual identity, carried and transferred authority. This explains why most of the urban sources studied in this thesis are anonymous. That they did not name themselves, does not mean that all writers we encounter lacked a sense of ownership of their text. We have to understand this sense of ownership and authorship in a medieval context, centred around tradition. These texts in town books carried authority, just as much as the chronicles consulted by kings and princes. The authority does not lie in the name of the *auctor*, but rather in the textual tradition of recording itself.

Haarlem case-study

Register 928 found in Haarlem's town archive is a clear example of a composite

[474] Pollmann, 'Archiving the present', pp. 231–152, esp. pp. 234, 249. Pollmann suggests even chronicles, in their recording of diverse events, weather, prices etc. were much more practical than often thought; Cannon, 'London pride'.

manuscript that contains both administrative information and history writing, thus carrying aspects of both traditions. The majority (fols. 69r-151v) of this late fifteenth-century parchment register consists of administrative information: ordinances, privileges and charters given to the city by the Counts of Holland on several occasions, as well as the privileges and charters of the brewers' guild in Haarlem (fols. 153r-155v). It also contains three peace agreements from the 1420s (fols. 40r-67r) and a conversion table for coins.[475] The three other texts in this composite manuscript are of a historiographical nature. There is a nine-couplet poem about the Nine Worthies and two chronicles, one on (the counts of) Holland and one on Haarlem. The first, a 'Chronicle of Holland' begins without any title or introduction (although a later hand has written '*korte cronijck van Hollant*' in the margin). The second, a 'Chronicle of Haarlem', in the same hand, starts with a more introductory incipit: 'Historical matter and writings in short words written chronically of the actions and deeds of the inhabitant citizens of the city of Haarlem.'[476]

The reference to historical matter as well as the use of 'chronically' as an adjective (the only use of the adjective of chronicle I have encountered so far) show that the author considered this text to be history writing and closely connected to a chronicle. The first chronicle follows the structure of the dynasty, starting new sections with red subheadings whenever a new count starts his reign. The second, urban, chronicle has a chronological structure, beginning all entries with the calendar year.

Although the writer of this manuscript is completely anonymous, we can assume from the contents for which access to the archive would have been necessary and the fact the manuscript survived in the city archive, that he was a clerk or scrivener working for the town administration. It is also likely he was at least partly familiar with Latin. Both the inclusion of the rhetorician-style acrostic at the start, which is half in Middle Dutch and half in Latin, as well as the suggestion he copied from A Leydis' Latin *Chronicon,* assume an educated writer. He felt at home with narrative traditional history writing as well as administrative sources. The manuscript has a very neat layout, is mostly written in a single hand and style and consistent rubrication is used throughout. This suggests that both the ordinances,

[475] The conversion table is in a different, slightly more cursive, hand.
[476] *'Historialike materie ende gescriften in corten woirden coronikelic bescreven van den gesten ende daden der inwonachtige burgers van der stede van Haarlem'*, Haarlem, Register 928, f. 32r.

peace agreements and charters, as well as the historiographical information, were (largely) copied from earlier sources and are all part of a single effort to create this manuscript. In the way that the writer expresses this historical culture traditional aspects from both chronicle writing and record-keeping shine through. Although there is a clear difference in the format and language used for administrative and historiographical texts, the writer is comfortable in using both styles and assigns them equal weight in this register.

From other sources we know that Haarlem's town government, at least in the early sixteenth century, had an active cultural policy. One legendary story from Haarlem's past, the Damietta legend, was central to this. This story recalls how people from Haarlem conquered the city of Damietta in Egypt while on crusade, by sawing through the chain blocking its harbour with a saw attached to their ship. As a sign of gratitude, the Count of Holland, the pope, and the patriach of Jerusalem gave the city the symbols on its coat of arms.[477] The town government presented stained-glass windows with the Damietta story to several towns in Holland. In the early sixteenth century there was also a children's parade to commemorate the Damietta victory; it is possible this was a tradition already started in the preceding century.[478] The town government, a changing collection of men from the urban elite, made use of these stories from Haarlem's past to increase its status within Holland. The urban elite must have felt an ownership of such stories to use them in texts and material objects as they saw fit. Register 928 in the Haarlem Archive includes part of the story of Damietta in its Chronicle of Haarlem.[479] It is unknown whether this register was directly commissioned, designed or used by the town government for its culture politics. But kept in the city's archive and written together with practical administrative information, this Chronicle of Haarlem was created within the social context and prevalent historical culture of the town administration. The register shows that whoever the handwriting of Register 928 belonged to was connected to

[477] There are variations on the persons who present this gift, as well as other details of the story, see for a coherent overview Jaap Van Moolenbroek, 'De ketting van Damietta, een Haarlems zaagschip en Willem I van Holland: over de wording en standaardisering van een kruistochtmythe', *JMG* 14 (2011).
[478] Van Anrooij, 'Middeleeuwse sporen', pp. 11–14. Many families from Haarlem also pretended to have ancestors who fought at Damietta and incorporated elements of the coat of arms received there into their family heraldry, see p. 13.
[479] Haarlem, Register 928, fols. 34r-35r. On f. 35r, after a description of the victory on Damietta, half a page is left empty where (according to a Latin note) in other manuscripts the story about the coat of arms follows. It is possible the writer wanted to find a better source of information for this part of the story, of hoped to include drawings.

the upper classes of Haarlem and worked within a shared historical culture with the urban governing elite, together with artists and organisers of Damietta windows, parades or other memorials.

Collective authorship

The majority of the sources with fifteenth-century urban historiographical texts (and the majority of those studied in this thesis) are anonymous. For example, all extant fifteenth-century manuscripts with London Chronicles are anonymous; authors' names are only known to us via later attributions or deductions. In her study of the London Chronicles, Mary-Rose McLaren suggests this is not an unfortunate accident or result of lost evidence, but purposely kept that way by the fifteenth-century writers as part of 'the nature of the chronicles themselves'.[480]

> There were people who wrote down this common history – who added, deleted, or changed passages – and people who continued it. But the type of author we seek – a William Gregory or a Robert Bale – does not exist.[481]

Instead, McLaren sees the production of the London Chronicles as the recording of a common history:

> The chronicles were constructed by a communal authorship: participating individuals saw themselves as part of a larger, cohesive group of chroniclers […] by virtue of their being citizens [of London], literate and English.[482]

Although commonplace books that include London Chronicles 'as useful and shared information' are inherently private documents, collected mainly for the use of its owner, the creation and contents of both commonplace books and London Chronicles were determined by tradition and a shared pool of information.[483]

To appreciate medieval history writing it is immensely important to understand its collective nature. Awareness of the past is always a social awareness, something that only exists within the structures of a collective or community; not just an

[480] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 15, 47.
[481] Ibid., p. 47.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.; Parker, *Commonplace book*, pp. 2, 9–10.

individual's, but a social memory.[484] However, that does not mean that there is only a single idea of the past in every society. Multiple networks, groups and structures in society carry different perceptions of the past, just as people have multiple identities (local, national, professional).[485] Not all textual proof of a communities' historical consciousness should therefore be seen as 'communal', it might in reality derive from a smaller group within the community. Even when we discuss textual expressions of historical culture written by civic officials representing the town, they are often just representative of the ideas of a small governing elite.

Collective authorship is used here in a pragmatic way to emphasise the relationships between people and groups in society, and the influence of the historiographical traditions, collective ideologies and social memory they were part of, and which contributed to the creation of these texts.[486] Very useful is Rankovic's concept of 'distributed authorship' in the context of traditional sagas, which she uses to explain how each unit in a community or network contributes but no one is ever responsible for the development of the whole, allowing for synchronic and diachronic distribution of authorship.[487] The concept of collective authorship, which is narrower and more concrete than 'distributed authorship', is used here as a means to focus on the creation of specific texts, rather than the dissemination of oral sagas. It enables us to discuss medieval authorship without dwelling on (the lack of information about) often unknown individuals, but to understand the social contexts, traditions and views behind the individual writers. There is not a single form that this collective authorship takes, and several extreme, but not exclusive, examples will be discussed here.[488] Ties of collective authorship can be very loose,

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[484] I will speak of collective ('people acting as a group') authorship here, rather than McLaren's communal ('of all members of a community') authorship. In the evolution of memory studies 'social memory' has been preferred over 'collective memory', because the latter concept did not allow for the multiplicity of social memories as well as being seen as ignoring the individual's agency. Fentress and Wickham, *Social memory*. I do not think this problem is inherent to the adjective 'collective' and prefer that here over a possible 'social authorship', because the concept here includes very concrete collaborative ventures of identified groups as well as more abstract sharing of ideas.

[485] J.G.A. Pocock, 'The origins of study of the past: a comparative approach', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4:2 (1962), pp. 211–213.

[486] Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet', p. 17 discusses how the historiographical tradition, ideology, collective identity and memory practices are all part of social memory that influences the making of a historical text. Collective authorship uses these elements to discuss in what ways social memory influences the writing of these texts.

[487] Ranković, 'Who is speaking', pp. 293–307.

[488] This collective authorship is not easy to define, but is much wider than formal collaborative authorship of a single text, see for a discussion also L.S. Ede and A.A. Lunsford, *Singular texts/plural authors. Perspectives on collaborative writing* (Carbondale, 1990).

when we talk about relationships between groups of (unidentified) people writing in a similar tradition, or very concrete when we discuss examples of relationships between certain individuals (e.g. multiple authors working on a single manuscript).

A very concrete example of collective authorship between contemporaries, which can even be called collaborative, is the production of the *Continuation* of Jan van Boendale's Brabantine chronicle *Brabantse Yeesten*. Robert Stein identified several roles in the creation of this *Continuation*. Petrus de Thimo, pensionary of the city of Brussels, was in charge of the larger project, while Edmond de Dynter, secretary at the Burgundian Court, and poet Wein van Cotthem were doing most of the practical work.[489] De Dynter collected and selected the material and directed Van Cotthem to make it into a rhymed chronicle. This was a project where three contemporaries worked collaboratively on the same product in different functions.

A fifteenth-century urban comparison from England to this is the production of the Bristol *Kalendar.* Traditionally, the town clerk Robert Ricart is considered the author of this work. He was appointed on the same day the new mayor, William Spenser, took up office. Ricart tells us the book is started in Spenser's mayoralty and during the eighteenth regnal year of King Edward IV, so the *Kalendar* must have been started between September 1478 and March 1479.[490] Although he states that he started, composed and wrote this book from several sources, it is likely the actual writing was done by someone else. Peter Fleming has concluded after new comparison of the handwriting in the original *Kalendar* with those parts of *The Great Red Book* of Bristol that are signed by Robert Ricart, that Ricart did not write the text himself.[491] He may have compiled, designed and possibly translated the *Kalendar*, but a scribe wrote the actual manuscript. We also know that Ricart made the *Kalendar* not as a personal venture, but in his function as town clerk and after the work was commissioned by Bristol's Mayor William Spencer. We can however assume from the introduction that the intellectual authorship and compilation of the work can be ascribed to Ricart himself. The *Kalendar*'s editors Toulmin Smith and Fleming both play with the suggestion that Spencer commissioned the register to whitewash his recent past. That Bristol in hindsight had supported the wrong side

[489] Stein, *Politiek en historiografie*; Astrid Houthuys, *Middeleeuws kladwerk: de autograaf van de Brabantsche yeesten, boek VI (vijftiende eeuw)* (Hilversum, 2009), p. 47; Stapel and De Vries, 'Leydis, Pauli, and Berchen revisited', p. 96.
[490] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 1.
[491] Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 2; Toulmin Smith in the 1872 edition said Ricart's hand could be recognised in the *Kalendar* until 1506, Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. iii.

in the Wars of the Roses and that Spencer had performed an explicit role in those shows of support is illustrated by several later accusations and royal pardons for him. Whether this was the main reason to write the *Kalendar* is difficult to prove, but we have seen before, for instance in the examples of Henry IV relying on chronicle evidence, that historical texts had authority enough to perform such a political and social function.[492] It is equally uncertain whether we can really count Spencer as part of the collective authorship, because we have no way of knowing whether he had any direct influence on the contents of the *Kalendar*. However, the situation bears some similarity to the Brabantine example of collaborative authorship, in which De Thimo is described as the overseer or 'master builder', De Dynter the 'supplier of building material', and Van Cotthem the 'builder'.[493]

Collective authorship as described in an article by Rombert Stapel and myself is a less direct way of collaboration.[494] Writing in late fifteenth-century Holland, Johannes a Leydis, Theodoricus Pauli and Willem van Berchen (to only mention the core group) exchanged manuscripts and ideas over several decades, mutually influencing each other's work. We know they copied from each other's manuscripts, but, following medieval tradition, they did not credit their sources. Although the authors in question lived in towns, they wrote mostly regional chronicles and works on the nobility. We can describe frequent mutual textual interaction between these authors, all writing in the same tradition of Latin (regional) historiography at the end of the fifteenth century in the county of Holland. This way of collaboration could mirror how some urban historical texts originated. Although there is no evidence of personal acquaintance or direct collaboration between these authors to produce a single manuscript together, they are more closely connected to each other than to other sources they copy and use.

Applying the concept of collective authorship is not only possible within a certain time between contemporaries, but also through time as traditions of history

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[492] A 'practical guide to' and the remembrance and (legal) safeguarding of privileges can also be seen as purposes for writing the Bristol *Kalendar*. This does not, however, has to exclude the other possibility. That William Spencer had a politically challenging background is demonstrated by the fact that he is accused in March 1479, during his year as mayor, of having been a traitor to King Edward IV. This case, in which the King judged in Spencer's favour, is elaborately described in The Great Red Book of Bristol. The *Kalendar* was started before March 1479, and can therefore not be a direct response to the case, but Spencer might well have known that his political past could cause him trouble. Fleming, 'Making history', pp. 308–316 gives the fullest account of this.

[493] Stein, *Politiek en historiografie*, p. 57.

[494] Stapel and De Vries, 'Leydis, Pauli, and Berchen revisited', pp. 95–137.

writing appeared in certain regions and localities. Medieval traditions of regional and national history writing are well-known and are identified above as important carriers of authority on the past, influencing urban writers. Examples are the Ghent and Bruges branches of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* corpus and the Chronicles of Haarlem, The Hague and Rotterdam based on Chronicles of Holland in the tradition of Beke's fourteenth-century chronicle. In England the *Brut Chronicle* tradition was used by Ricart in Bristol, in the Colchester Chronicle and in several London Chronicles. We also have administrative examples of such diachronic traditions. The large similarities within the groups of manuscripts now known to us as the London Chronicles and Ghent *memorieboeken* clearly illustrate that these were not designed by individual writers.[495] Not only the ideology behind the text and much of the actual content is shared, also the particular format is copied time after time. Although every copy, every variant, of these works is slightly different and contains interesting information about a personal scribe or collector, his framework of identification, and his understanding of the text in combination with other texts in the manuscript, they all belong to the same 'tradition of recording'.[496]

Paul Trio describes examples of such 'expressions of one and the same tradition within the "Ypres historiography"'.[497] He argues that the chronicle traditionally attributed to the Ypres alderman Oliver van Dixmude has to be seen as a collective venture. Olivier van Dixmude (d. 1458) has been credited with the authorship because the writer identifies himself as *schepen* in the years 1423 and 1438.[498] Van Dixmude was a member of the town government for many years, from 1423-50, and owed his successful political career to the respected position his family, whose wealth derived from the wool trade, held in Ypres. The authorship of Olivier is questionable, because of a changing ideology and style throughout the text and references which are made to Van Dixmude in the third person. Joris de Rijke was aldermen in the same years and is identified as a likely (second) author, while Trio also makes the case for more unidentified authors to have contributed. The manuscript that Lambin's 1835 edition was based on was written in a single hand

[495] Antonia Gransden uses 'chronicle tradition' to describe the London Chronicles. Gransden, *Historical writing*, p. 227.
[496] Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide', p. 218.
[497] Ibid.
[498] Olivier Van Dixmude, Jean-Jacques Lambin (ed.), *Merkwaerdige gebeurtenissen, vooral in Vlaenderen en Brabant, en ook in de aengrenzende landstreken: van 1377 tot 1443* (Ypres, 1835), pp. i–ii.

(except for a short addition by author Joos Bryde at the end), but Trio interprets this as a copy of an original manuscript written contemporaneously throughout the years by many authors, of which Olivier van Dixmude was only one.[499]

This collective authorship of the so-called Chronicle of Olivier van Dixmude is itself part of a larger recording tradition. An addition at the end with more information on the years 1303-1440 is written by Joos Bryde, also a civic official. The text is then continued in another manuscript, known as the Chronicle of Pieter van de Letewe. Although very little is known about the latter text or its attribution to Van de Letewe, it can be recognised as a continuation because it starts with the year 1443 and thus continues where the previous account ended, and it has a similar textual structure based on magistrate lists.[500] Unfortunately, Van de Letewe's text edition is incomplete ending abruptly in 1475, and a missing introduction means it fails to provide any information on the author's identification.[501] But we can conclude that the author or authors were likely part of the Ypres magistrature. This social context is clear from the text and from the use of documentary sources such as peace agreements and letters, which would not have been widely available. Olivier van Dixmude, Joris de Rijke, Pieter van de Letewe and their anonymous counterparts all worked on similar expressions of a tradition of Ypres historical writing. These chronicles were kept in the town archive and had a public character, communicating a shared, not a personal, historical culture. These Ypres texts thus show collective authorship through contemporary collaboration and a diachronic urban tradition of recording.

The Ypres example highlights another important expression of collective authorship, namely the public nature of writing by civic officials. Collective authorship is very clear in many pragmatic administrative records, as successive officials would continue the work of their predecessors. The large number of magistrate lists we have found in urban archives in the Low Countries and England particularly spring to mind. The Ghent *memorieboeken* tradition spans five centuries and similarly the mayor list in the fifteenth-century Bristol *Kalendar* is continued until the nineteenth century. The annalistic form of many of these documents facilitated easy continuation of a document by successive town scribes or other

[499] Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide', p. 214.
[500] Ibid., pp. 216–219.
[501] Van de Letewe, *Vernieuwing der wet van Ypre.*

interested individuals.[502] This is collective writing of a diachronic nature showing writers continuing each other's work, not mutually influencing each other. Historical writing of an official nature has a very strong sense of collectivity in a different way as well. In his function of a civic official the town clerk or secretary wrote not as an individual but as a representative of the town, and thus of the entire community. (Whether the entire community felt included is another question altogether.)

> Sie ist gleichsam namenlos: der Verfasser als einzelner ist für sie, die nicht von einem privaten Interesse an der Vergangenheit, sondern von einer auf die Gegenwart bezogenen Rechtsauffassung bestimmt ist, nicht entscheidend.[503]

Heinrich Schmidt describes the German city secretaries' anonymity in a way that echoes McLaren's view that the identity of individual authors of the London Chronicles was irrelevant.[504] The individual scribe was insignificant as he represented the city, which was the real author of the text.[505] John Carpenter, London's common clerk, when writing the *Liber Albus* in 1419, describes his role as merely collating customary laws that have not previously been written down or are scattered around and difficult to find. He mentions the name of the mayor, Richard Whittington, in the year he is undertaking this work and assures the necessity for it felt by 'the superior authorities' as well as those civic officers of 'subordinate rank', but fails to identify himself; this is a work performed by and for the city.[506] The historical culture such a writer communicates is thus not (necessarily) his own, but a collective one, and whether it is possible to identify him is relatively insignificant for the understanding of the text as long as his position and social background are known.

The above section can give the impression that within this adherence to collective authorship and tradition there is no agency left for the individual to create and take ownership of the written text. The term collective memory has often been discarded because of this reason, and preference given to the concept of 'social

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[502] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 122.
[503] Ibid., p. 18. [He is, as it were, nameless: the author as an individual is for him, who is not determined by a private interest in the past, but rather by a contemporary view of the law, not significant.].
[504] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 47.
[505] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 18–20, 84: *'Durch sie [the author] schreibt die Stadt selbst.'*
[506] John Carpenter, Henry Riley (ed.), *Liber Albus: the white book of the city of London* (London, 1861), pp. 3–4.

memory', as it would better show the dynamic social processes involved. This is not at all the point of the use of collective authorship here. The foregoing discussion has hopefully made clear that the pragmatic use of collective authorship here allows for conscious individual writers and compilers working together in a synchronic or diachronic way and within the medieval concept of authorship.[507] The selection of material from Chronicles of Holland that subsequent clerks copied into the register to form the so-called Chronicle of Rotterdam or the changes made while making a copy of the official Ghent memory book for a private family; every variant of these texts is interesting in its reflection of the writer's social background, politics and purposes.

Conclusions

For many medieval manuscripts identification of their writer(s) is simply not possible with the little evidence left after several centuries. This forces us to discuss these nameless authors in a useful way that focuses beyond identification. Whatever their names, they can be understood to have worked as compilers, copyists and writers using a shared historical culture to preserve the town's history and express its identity. Whether part of a concrete collaborative authorship or more generally influenced by the format and contents of historiographical and administrative traditions, their authorship had an important collective element. For some this collective authorship took shape through their function as civic officials, in which capacity they continued the work of predecessors in the town registers and represented the views of the governing elite. For other more occasional writers, such as those citizens producing commonplace books, it was a non-professional, private activity, but it similarly originated from a sense of belonging to a larger group of urban citizens and their shared ideas and written sources.

It is still extremely valuable to discuss the social background of the (groups of) authors, even when anonymous, because every individual and group in society will have their own views, stories and agendas to influence the way they express

[507] An example stressing human agency in the creation, Karin Czaja, 'The Nuremberg Familienbücher: archives of family identity', in Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Uses of the written word in medieval towns. Medieval urban literacy II* (Turnhout, 2014), esp. pp. 328-329.

historical culture.[508] A guild member of one of the lower guilds would not have produced the same view of historical culture as a notary with a university education working for the town government. This is not to say individual authorship did not exist in the Middle Ages, Anthonis de Roovere, for instance, made a name for himself as a rhetorician and author in late fifteenth-century Bruges. At the same time, rhetoricians also represented their chamber or town at regional and international competitions, and the chambers as collectives were given assignments for the production of plays for royal entries and other urban ceremonies. Many of the writers we found were of a (higher) middle class origin and worked in a writing profession or were part of wealthier urban families whose members fulfilled civic office. As a large part of the writers had close connections to the town government, they would have shared the historical culture and perspective of the governing class.

In this chapter diverse categories of possible authors have been explored. Following from the research done on town chronicles in Italy and Germany, which is summarised by Schmid in *EMC*, clerks, notaries, urban clergy and individual burghers were discussed as possible types of authors. The literary societies of the rhetoricians were discussed as places to find individual burghers who would have a high interest in writing and history.

I found that in England, Holland and Flanders there was a similar emphasis on texts from writing professionals. In all three regions literacy and pragmatic writing grew fast during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and these developments concentrated in towns. The town government was often actively involved in the creation of historiographical texts, as we have seen in examples from Bristol, Leiden and Haarlem. Even when there is no direct evidence of a commission from the town government, sources with an administrative content, found in town archives, written by town clerks can be assumed to be written within a social context and on the basis of a historical culture which were similar to those of the urban governing elite. The Chronicle of Rotterdam, Ghent *memorieboeken,* Coventry Annals, Lincoln Roll and many other magistrate lists and custumal texts are penned down by the town clerk and represent views on urban identity and urban historical culture that the town government would have approved of.

[508] R. Barth, *Argumentation und Selbstverständnis der Bürgeropposition der städtischen Auseinandersetzungen der Spätmittelalters* (Köln, 1975), pp. 15–20.

However, there are also writings with historical texts not directly related to the town government in all three regions, such as much of the work of the Flemish rhetoricians, many of the London Chronicles, and the Chronicle of The Hague. There were individual writers of historical texts, such as poets from Holland or wealthy patricians and merchants in Ghent or London, interested in the towns' annotated magistrate lists for their own family collections of useful knowledge. The literate middle and higher classes had the time and money to invest in this. This interest is most evident in Flanders, where it shows in many of the literary works and political interests of rhetoricians. Guilds in England, but also the Low Countries, played a somewhat similar role in organising plays and tableaux for royal entries or urban feast days. In addition there were many songs, plays and oral stories that were told and sang by lower or middle class people, not preserved in the written sources here, but similar examples of a shared collective authorship.

Just a few of the manuscripts studied here seem to have authors that set out consciously to write history in a medieval chronicle tradition. Robert Ricart of Bristol, the anonymous author of the Chronicle of Haarlem, and Anthonis de Roovere and some other rhetoricians in Flanders seem to have been the exception. They used national chronicles as sources, and stayed in contents and format close to this original, as well as using the word 'chronicle' and writing prologues.

The changes from the thirteenth century in literacy and use of documents meant that fifteenth-century towns in England, Flanders and Holland were literate places. Many of the sources come thus also from a pragmatic literate tradition of recording useful information rather than an attempt to write history. Records were kept both in town registers and individuals' commonplace books because information, from a historical nature and many other matters, seemed worthy of remembrance. The next chapter will consider what the contents and political context of these writings was.

Chapter 4: Contents

In this chapter I will explore the combination of national and urban elements in urban historical culture and discuss how we can distinguish an urban perspective in sources that also contain elements of national narratives. I will also use case-studies to consider the reasons behind the use of national elements in urban sources. In the previous chapters national chronicles were not considered urban historical writing, even when written in a city. A Chronicle of Holland written in the city of Haarlem does not thereby become an urban chronicle, although it indicates a wider interest in history by townsmen. The contents of a text are thus crucial in understanding it as an urban source. Several of the definitions explored in Chapter 1 define urban chronicles as having (almost) exclusively local contents, which would exclude most of the sources discussed in this thesis as urban historical writing.[509] The Bruges and Ghent versions of the *Excellente Chronike van Vlaenderen* corpus, for example, contain many more entries on national and dynastic than purely urban events. In this chapter I will explore manuscripts' geographical focus, temporal structure and use of national narratives to identify how national elements are used within an urban perspective.

The consideration of chronicles in categories of either 'national' or 'local' stems from a long scholarly tradition of studying medieval history writing with the assumption of a contradiction between the history and culture of the court and towns. This view has been changing in the last decades. In a 1994 article Walter Prevenier suggested that maybe 'there are no clear divisions between noble and urban consumers of culture'.[510] Christian Liddy's work on English towns is another example of reconsidering the town-crown relationship and finding a much more equal and shared cultural experience.[511] More scholars in the last decade have cautioned against presenting national and urban elements as a dichotomy.[512] This is not to say

[509] Chapter 1, pp. 28-30.
[510] Prevenier, 'Court and city culture', p. 23; see also Graeme Small demonstrating the same point for historical writing in Valenciennes. Small, 'Chroniqueurs', pp. 278–280.
[511] E.g. Liddy, 'Rhetoric of the royal chamber'; Christian D. Liddy, 'Urban politics and material culture at the end of the Middle Ages: the Coventry tapestry in St Mary's Hall', *UH* 39:2 (2012); Liddy, *War, politics and finance.*
[512] Attreed, *The king's towns*; Dumolyn et al., 'Rewriting chronicles', p. 90, nt. 20; Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide'; Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration', pp. 125–127.

that certain elements, such as king lists or mayoral lists, can not be identified as features with a specific national or urban perspective.

The reality of identity and historical culture is evidently too complex to be shoe-horned into either national or urban moulds, extending the hybridity found in the previous chapters also to the contents of the sources. Urban sources do not necessarily contain only urban information. Just as many sources reflect views of certain social groups within a specific town, a town itself exists within a larger political entity and in relation to other towns and authorities. Texts can be expressions of both local and national identities and elements of a national historical culture can be used in an urban context and vice versa. We have seen in this thesis that the writers of these types of texts were sometimes involved in both urban and courtly spheres of influence. Similarly, when discussing the contents, it will be clear that urban and dynastic or national narratives do not represent a contradiction, although attention can be drawn to narrative lines, sections, or structures in the text that portray a specifically dynastic and national, or urban, focus. The 'urbanness' of a source needs to be assessed holistically. Temporal focus, geographical focus and detail, start and end points and political perspective are all different ways to express the urbanness of a source. I will use all these elements to explore what makes these texts urban.

Identifying how and why national narratives and elements are used in manuscripts that have a clear urban character is the main focus in the first half of this chapter. A town's status, its relationships with other towns in the country and with the national authorities could be expressed through the use and adaptation of elements of national narratives, whether these were origin myths or a dating mechanism of regnal years. A comparison between the three regions will show differences in the use of national elements by urban sources and the emphasis of urban foundations in national chronicles. English cities would look to London while there was no clear capital in the Low Countries. In Holland there was an interest in what happened in other cities, and a cooperation with other towns in political representation, whereas urban rivalry was more common in Flanders. When conflict between towns occurred in Holland and England it was because of national conflicts, the Hooks-Cods conflict and Wars of the Roses. The degree of urbanisation as well as structure of political representation in Flanders, Holland and England can explain these differences.

Geographical focus

Quantitative analysis

One straightforward way of analysing the focus of historiography is to consider its geographical focus quantifying the percentage of the source occupied with urban, national or international events. A quantitative comparable approach is only meaningful if sources are comparable in other respects. This case-study therefore analyses magistrate lists, as they are the largest group of comparable sources in this thesis if we distinguish on format. The Ghent memory books, which take the format of lists of aldermen, are a manuscript tradition that has widely been identified as urban history writing. Even these generally accepted urban sources, however, contain elements of national narratives and discuss national events. The extent of this will be explored here through a case-study of two of the fifteenth-century *memorieboeken* in comparison with two similar sources in format from England. From Holland no sources in a similar format are known, making a meaningful comparison impossible. Ghent, SA, 441, the second oldest *memorieboek*, and MS Harley 3299, both fifteenth-century examples of memory books, are compared to English magistrate lists, namely the Coventry Annals and the Lincoln Roll.[513]

For these comparisons I have in the first instance simply counted both the number of entries of a local, national and international focus, as well as the number of lines these take up. From those two numbers an average percentage is taken to indicate the spread of the geographical emphasis.[514] Assigning entries to these categories is done based on their geographical location. Local entries are mostly about the *schepenen* or mayors; building work in the towns; visits of royalty, bishops or other important figures; and local unrest. National comments include battles and other events within the count(r)y, as well as events in other Flemish/English cities. Dynastic information, usually births, coronations, marriages and deaths in the royal

[513] Ghent, SA, Fonds Gent, 345; also fifteenth-century, is similar to London, BL, Harley MS3299 and would thus give a similar result; the oldest memorieboek is Ghent, UL, MS2554, but a large part of it is fourteenth rather than fifteenth-century, which is the temporal focus of this study.
[514] Some entries could obviously be in more than one category, but this will still give a general picture about the amount of space given to urban, national or international events. International is used here to mean everything outside the direct territory, e.g. a war with Scotland is international news for England, and the Burgundian Duke in Brabant is likewise an international affair for Flanders, even though a focus on personal dynastic unions might see some of this as national.

or ducal families, is included in the national category. Entries are counted as international when they recount an event happening abroad and war or peace agreements between countries.

	urban	national + dynastic		international
		national	dynastic	
Ghent memory book, SA 441	62.5% (66% / 59%)	20.5% (20% / 21%)		16.5% (13% / 20%)
		11%	10%	
Ghent memory book, Harley 3299	58% (59% / 57%)	32.5% (31% / 34%)		9.5% (10% / 9%)
		26%	6.5%	
Coventry Annals	44.5% (40% / 49%)	47% (48% / 46%)		8.5% (12% / 5%)
		39%	8%	
Lincoln Roll	33.5% (33% / 34%)	50.5% (52% / 49%)		16% (15% / 17%)
		35%	15.5%	

Table 1 This table shows the percentages of the four magistrate lists that recount urban, national or international events. It shows the average percentage above (% number of entries / % number of lines).

The two Flemish *memorieboeken* turn out to have a larger geographical focus on their town than their English counterparts. 58-62.5% of the text in Ghent, SA, 441 and Harley 3299 is about Ghent, while the Coventry Annals spend 44.5% and the Lincoln Roll 33.5% of their contents on their respective towns. Consequently, the situation is reversed when the national entries are counted, with ca. 21-33% for the Ghent sources, and as much as 47% of the Coventry Annals and 50.5% of the Lincoln Roll dedicated to national events. The category of international entries is smallest in all four texts, with Ghent, SA, 441 and the Lincoln Roll both using ca. 16% of its content to report on international issues, whereas Harley 3299 and the Coventry Annals do this less, with around 9%. In this count the distinctively dynastic entries, such as royal marriages are counted as national entries. If it would be considered a separate category (see the second line in the middle column of the table), the dynastic entries would take up 6.5% and 10% respectively in Harley 3299 and Ghent, SA, 441, 8% in the Coventry Annals, and 13% in the Lincoln Roll. Although these numbers are in a similar range as percentage of the entire text, they do take up almost half of the national entries of the Ghent, SA, 441 manuscript. In the other Ghent *memorieboek* and the Lincoln Roll this is about a quarter, and even less in the Coventry Annals.

All these four sources show that the combination of both national and urban (and international) information was very common. Between ca. 38% and 66% of the contents of the above four sources is occupied with events that are geographically not local and do not have the town as its focus. That seems like a lot for sources we regard as clearly urban in character. Concluding from this small sample comparison, the Ghent sources show a greater emphasis on their own town than the two English sources do. An initial hypothesis from this quick comparison is that English sources are intertwined with national narratives to a higher degree. The percentage of entries with a national focus is actually larger in the Coventry Annals and Lincoln Roll than the percentage of purely local annotations. The writers of the Flemish memory books were less concerned with dynastic and national events. We will pick up the comparative point again at the end of this chapter.

Geographical detail

The format of magistrate lists is not the only format that demonstrates the combination of national and urban elements in historical writings in towns. The chronicles of Haarlem, Rotterdam and The Hague demonstrate that even when the format of sources seemed to imply they were of a similar sort, the contents can be very different. These three chronicles from the County of Holland based on similar sources, that is to say Chronicles of Holland, and with a similar chronological structure show a difference in geographical spread of the contents. This means we have to not just use the geographical location but also the locational specificity, or geographical detail, to identify sources as urban.

The Chronicle of Haarlem is exceptional because it exclusively contains entries that directly involve either the town or the people of Haarlem. The perspective of the town and people of Haarlem is taken in describing all events, such as a campaign:

> In the year of our Lord 1272 Floris, prince of Holland, ordered a strong campaign at the hand of Wouter, bailiff of Kermerland in which expedition and journey half of the armed men of Haarlem with their standard bearer were beaten by the Frisians.[515]

[515] *'Inden jare ons heren M CC lxxii Florijs joncheer van hollant heeft geboden een starcke crochtige heervaert bij wouters hant van kermerlant baliu In welker heervaert ende reise die helfte vanden wapentuers van haarlem mit horen bannier drager vanden vriesen verslegen was.'* Haarlem, Register 928, f. 36v.

Most of the time this meant an emphasis on the positive role that the people of Haarlem played in the history of Holland. After a long description of the conflict with Guy of Dampièrre, Count of Flanders, in 1304, the writer concludes the entry with

> So truly through the stable loyalty of the burghers of Haarlem is the County of Holland freed from the invasion of the Flemish people, and was it possible for the honourable William to become the eighteenth count with a victorious glory.[516]

In contrast, the Chronicle of The Hague only contains a few handfuls of purely local comments in a large chronicle which discusses (inter)national events much more. Antheun Janse has identified this manuscript in the Royal Library in The Hague as a copy of the well-known Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht by Johannes Beke with several continuations.[517] Around 1393 an anonymous author, probably Utrecht city secretary Jan Tolnaer or someone close to him, translated Beke's famous work into Middle Dutch and continued it to his own time.[518] Several continuations (and continuations and adaptations of those continuations) were written in the 1420s and 1430s, which are known collectively as the Dutch Beke Continuation (*Nederlandse Beke-Vervolg*).[519] MS 130 C 10 in the Royal Library in The Hague contains the Dutch version of the Beke and a Continuation until the year 1426.[520] When the text of the Beke Continuation, also known from seven other manuscripts, ceases on folio 144v, a new quire starts with a further continuation for the years 1425-1478, unique to this manuscript.[521] Janse named this 'a Chronicle of The Hague' because of its strong emphasis on events in the town of The Hague. Only a small amount of the total 241 short entries are exclusively focused on The Hague.[522] Several of these have a clerical interest. Changes in the liturgy are for example noted and for the year 1456 we are told that 'on Saint Petronella Eve [30 May] six Turks

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516 *'Aldus wairlic bijder gestadiger getruheit der poirters van haarlem is die graefscap van hollant gevriet van inloep der Vlamingen Ende die hoechgeboren willem mit eenre segebairliker glorie dien xviii grave mogentlijc geworden.'* Ibid., f. 38v.
517 Janse, 'Haagse kroniek'; Beke, *Chronographia*; Beke, *Croniken.*
518 Janse, 'Nederlandse Beke', pp. 116–149; Smithuis, 'Urban historiography and politics'.
519 For more detailed description: Janse, 'Utrechts naar Hollands', pp. 183–202.
520 The Hague, RL, MS130 C 10 is manuscript J1 in Bruch's edition; Beke, *Croniken*, pp. 1–242, 247–446.
521 Janse, 'Haagse kroniek', p. 14; although it probably shares a source with the Kattendijke chronicle there is no direct relationship between the two manuscripts. Ibid., pp. 19–23.
522 Janse gives 17 entries specifically focussed on the Hague in the appendix and mentions a few more in the main text that are less exclusively urban, e.g. the burial of Jacoba van Beieren in the town. Janse, 'Haagse kroniek', pp. 13, 15.

and a Moor were baptised in The Hague'.[523] But not only church-related events were recorded. On folio 153v the writer notes the building of a new school in 1475 in Church Street and can even tell us that the children's first school day there was on St George's day.[524] The fact that these local notes are detailed and unique shows the writer's local knowledge and interest. Other entries on events in the locality of The Hague, such as a lightning strike and subsequent fire of the church in 's-Gravenzande, a town near The Hague, and well-known regional events that happened to take place in The Hague, such as the burial of Countess Jacoba van Beieren in the chapel in The Hague in 1436, add to the urban colour of the text. Events in the County of Holland and surrounding principalities are also discussed in the chronicle, but never in such detail. The urban focus is demonstrated through the depth of local knowledge and geographical detail of the text, rather than an overall narrow geographical range.

The Chronicle of Rotterdam resembles the The Hague Chronicle with a low percentage (ca. 17%) of purely local entries.[525] The Haarlem Chronicle therefore seems of a very different character at first glance. However, the manuscript context might clarify this. It needs to be remembered that the Chronicle of Haarlem, which does not discuss any national and international events that the city or people of Haarlem not directly took part in, has survived in a manuscript where it directly follows a Chronicle of Holland. The latter text provides the reader with an overview of the history of the county and the dynasty of Holland from its origin until the end of the fourteenth century. The urban text that follows focuses on how the lives and deeds of some of the counts of Holland related to the city of Haarlem and on the people of Haarlem involved in battles and crusades, as well as urban events such as a flood and a fire; all matters too local to have been mentioned in the previous Chronicle of Holland. The two chronicles are written in the same hand and everything suggests that they were copied into the register at the same time and were meant to complement each other. So if the textual context of the Haarlem Register is taken into account, then the Chronicles of Rotterdam and The Hague are less different in geographical focus than it first seemed.

[523] Ibid., p. 32.
[524] Ibid.
[525] The entries by sixteenth-century clerk Dirk Pel are not taken into account here. This percentage is calculated in the same way as the example above, from an average of the percentages of the number of entries and the number of lines.

This exercise demonstrates the limitations of a quantitative approach and a simple geographical framework in determining whether sources can be called urban. Definitions identifying local history writing by almost exclusively local contents are thus of very limited use. In some cases a qualitative analysis of the local and national entries can identify a text as specifically urban. When the local events are of a qualitatively different character, as in the case of the The Hague example, which were much more detailed, this signifies a familiarity with the town and thus an urban origin. Other aspects of these manuscripts, such as their textual context and temporal structure will be discussed next to understand what makes a source urban and how we need to understand the interaction between urban, national and international elements within these texts.

Temporal context

Time keeping

The contents of a text consist of more than the stories told; in this section we will discuss the method of time keeping. The temporal framework of texts provides clues about the context writers used to remember events. Whether they structured writing by a local system of timekeeping, that of mayoral years, or a national one, that of regnal years, can demonstrate something about the context within which writers experienced and remembered time and history. This aspect of textual context is most interesting in English sources, as the system of regnal years was commonly used. In Flanders and Holland the years of a comital or ducal reign were never used in a similar way to keep track of time and calendar years were common.

The quantitative analysis of the Lincoln Roll showed national and urban events were mentioned almost in equal amounts in this annotated mayoral list. The temporal framework in this roll confirms the conjunction of national and urban elements throughout this manuscript. The top of the Roll is now in very bad condition with the parchment crumbling, and the very beginning of the text has not survived. From the sections of the text that are still legible, it is clear however, that the lost text was the first part of a king list. The list takes the form of a short sentence per king, starting with the monarch's name, specifying the relation to the previous king, e.g.

'his brother', and the number of years he reigned in Roman numerals in a column on the right. In a few occasions some additional detail is added and so we find for example

> Cole that mayd Colchester was kynge…xiii yere; Constantyn the Roman that weddid saint Elyn Coles doughter reigned…v yere; Constantyne saynt Elyn son that was Emproure reigned…xx yere.[526]

Although the first unknown number of names are now missing, the framework is explained in two sentences that break up the king list at significant moments. The first, after a list of seventeen still legible kings and one queen ending with a King Kymbelyn, states 'The some of reignynge of kynge from the fyrst commynge of Brwt vnto the Incarnacion of oure lord Jhesu Crist, MC xxxii yere'.[527] The 'incarnacion to Jhesu Crist' is referenced in King Kymbelyn's reign, meaning the list must have originally started with King Brutus, the mythical Trojan founder of Britain.[528] The last king mentioned in the original hand is Henry III, although Edward I until Henry VIII, in whose reign the roll must have been written, are added in a similar and contemporary hand. The mayoral list itself starts at the beginning of a new membrane with a title in a large text hand:

> This Roll belongs to me, the noble Thomas Tournay who wrote this. Remember, these are the names of the mayors of the city of Lincoln and her baillifs and sheriffs from the year 34 Edward III (1360).[529]

The roll starts with mayor Peter Balassis and the names of the two bailiffs for 1360.[530] In black ink, the furthest left column states the regnal year, followed by a column of mayors and one with the bailiffs' names. The historical annotations to

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[526] Hill, 'Three lists', p. 225.

[527] The second mentions the sum of reigns from Christ to 'the commynge of Saint Austen that broght fyrst Crystyndom in to this land'. No number of years or reigns actually follows this statement. Ibid., pp. 224–225.

[528] The list is (loosely) based on the Brut (chronicle) tradition. Matheson, *The prose Brut*, pp. 2–3.

[529] *'Ista Rotula pertinent michi Thome Towrnay Generose qui scribi fecit. Memorandum hec sunt nomina maior Civitat Lincoln ac suorum balliuorum ac vic anno regni regis Edwardi tercii tricesimo quarto.* Lincoln, Dioc/Miscellaneous Rolls/1, membrane 4; Hill, 'Three lists', p. 228. Little is known about this Thomas. He might have been a member of the Tournay family of Caenby, ibid., p. 217, nt. 4.

[530] Two additional membranes on which the mayors for the years 7 Edward II (1313/14) - 32 Edward III (1358/59) are given in a late sixteenth-century hand have been inserted between the king list and the start of the original mayoral list. Lincoln, Dioc/Miscellaneous Rolls/1, membranes 2-3; Hill, 'Three lists', pp. 226–228.

these years are written between these lines in red ink, providing a clear visual contrast between the actual list and annotations. Names and annotations are written in the same hand and the spacious set up of the list allows for easy insertion of the comments, making clear these were written together. The Lincoln Roll does not visually interrupt its list for new kings, but incorporates comments about the new reigns in the same style as other chronicle entries, although the first year of a new reign is signified by a 'Anno primo' in red rather than black ink. There is no clean transition from a regnal list to a mayoral list. The king list continues in a way throughout the entire mayoral list through the counting by regnal years. The English kings are thus a framework around the town officials, both in setting out the context prior to the start of the mayoralty, as well as continuing during it. The king list and the column at the side provide a visual structure to the rest of the text on the roll.

Despite this regnal way of time keeping, the character of the roll as list of civic officials makes it an urban source. The title signifies that the focus of the roll is the civic officers, the reference to the king being simply functional. The way kings' and mayors' names appear next to each other reflects a logical combination of the local and national authorities present in the lives and laws of the inhabitants of Lincoln at the time, rather than presenting a conflict of opposing narratives. The time structure of the manuscript thus provides the same conclusion as the contents in which national events and information specifically about the city of Lincoln, as well as international entries, occur side by side.

The textual context of other English mayoral lists confirms that the urban and regnal framework are not a dichotomy, and that these features are not unique to the Lincoln Roll. A temporal framework of regnal years and the inclusion of king lists are in fact very common elements in urban registers.[531] The Bristol *Kalendar* even

[531] E.g. the king lists in the Colchester Oath Book and the regnal years in London Chronicles, Oxford, BodL, MS Gough London 10; Oxford, BodL, Rawlinson B359 (also includes calendar years). Descriptions of these in Chapter 2. Bristol, CC/2/7, fols. 15v-16v also includes two-line verses on the English kings. The Coventry Annals also starts with a regnal list. Another example is on f. 17 of the Black Book of Winchester, William Henry Benbow Bird, ed., *The Black Book of Winchester: (British Museum, additional ms. 6036)* (Winchester, 1925). This list starts with Aluredus, said to have been the first king of the entire kingdom of England, and continues to Henry VI in one hand. Consecutive monarchs are added until Mary I in later hands. Two local comments on St. Swinthunus interrupt the list. The Great Domesday Book of Ipswich from 1520 contains seven-line couplets on each English king starting with William the Conqueror. Suffolk Record Office, C/4/1/4, fols. 237v-239v. Richard Percyvale, C. H. Evelyn White (ed.), *The Great Domesday Book of Ipswich; liber sextus* (Ipswich, 1885), pp. 30–36.

includes more dramatic half-page coloured drawings of most kings at the start of their reign, not only in the general chronicle, but also into the mayoral list.[532] However, the manuscript also includes a drawing of the first sheriff (on the occasion of the 1373 charter) on f. 100r in a similar style. William the Conqueror and the Coronation of Henry III are included as full-page drawings, possibly because of their closer link to Bristol as Fleming suggested, but maybe also more practically because they formed visual markers of the start of new parts of the *Kalendar*.[533] William the Conqueror (f. 21r) is the first king to be depicted and signifies the pre- and post-Conquest division in the chronicle of Part One and Two. Part Three, which has the structure of a mayoral list rather than a continuous narrative chronicle, starts with the first year of Henry III's reign on f. 60r, next to the drawing of the new king's coronation. Both regnal and calendar years are used in the mayoral list from that point. Further obvious dynastic elements in the *Kalendar* are the rhymed verses recounting 'howe many kinges anoynted have been in Englond as well before the Conquest as sithen'.[534] This is an elaborate king list with two Latin sentences following the name of each king and a note on the length of his reign. This all suggest that the structure of regnal years and the reigns of the English kings was a framework significant to Ricart's view of history. There is no doubt about the urban origins, focus and intentions of this book. It is after all *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, providing the historical and administrative background to the highest urban office. For its author, Robert Ricart, including the national narrative in this register, both in the contents of the chronicle parts and a scheme of illustrations of monarchs did not diminish that urban character.

The English kings and regnal years listed in administrative sources provided a temporal framework for mayoral lists, and for history in general. This framework was both practical and ideological. It provided a chronological structure that was practical, because royal writs, charters, and many other administrative records were dated in this way. It was also a historical framework that extends further back than the starting points of the mayoralty or the town liberties. The monarchy will always predate the civic officials listed and form a bigger background story to the history of the town. But even in England the regnal years are not always present in urban texts. The fragmentary Chronicle of King's Lynn, for example, provides only the calendar

[532] See Fleming, *Kalendar*, pp. 23–26 for a detailed discussion.
[533] Ibid., pp. 24–25.
[534] Bristol, CC/2/7, f. 15v.

year next to the mayor's name for that year and the Coventry Annals use no dates at all but simply list the mayors' names.[535] Moreover, the mayoral years often got preference over regnal years in instances where they are both used, in the sense that the start of the year in these town records is taken from the election of the new mayor.[536] This was often in the summer or autumn, so out of sync with both the calendar and the regnal years, which also changed start dates with every reign.[537] There was obviously no fixed format mayoral lists had to adapt to. Using regnal years and mayoral years together was however, clearly not a contradiction. The temporal structure, just like the geographical focus of the contents, illustrates how late medieval English citizens could easily blend a national and an urban identity.

The urban narrative is not a narrative that seeks to discredit or oppose the king or the kingdom. Both national and urban authorities exist together and often strengthen each other. Occasionally conflict did arise from questioning the extent of either authority in civic offices, rights and privileges, but this should not be confused with an urban narrative fuelled by antagonism against the institution of the king. The only occasions in which rights to be king are questioned are regarding the identity of the legitimate holder of the throne, for example in the Wars of the Roses. Cities strive to make the relationship with the ruler as favourable for the town as possible. This means economically favourable privileges, such as the right to hold a fair, exemption from tolls etc., but also a limited involvement of money and citizens in times of war.

The sources from Holland and Flanders use mostly calendar years.[538] Counting in ducal or comital years was simply not a custom in these counties. Lists of counts and genealogies were not uncommon in Flanders and Holland, but are not as prominent and closely connected with the urban sources as the king lists are in the English sources.[539]

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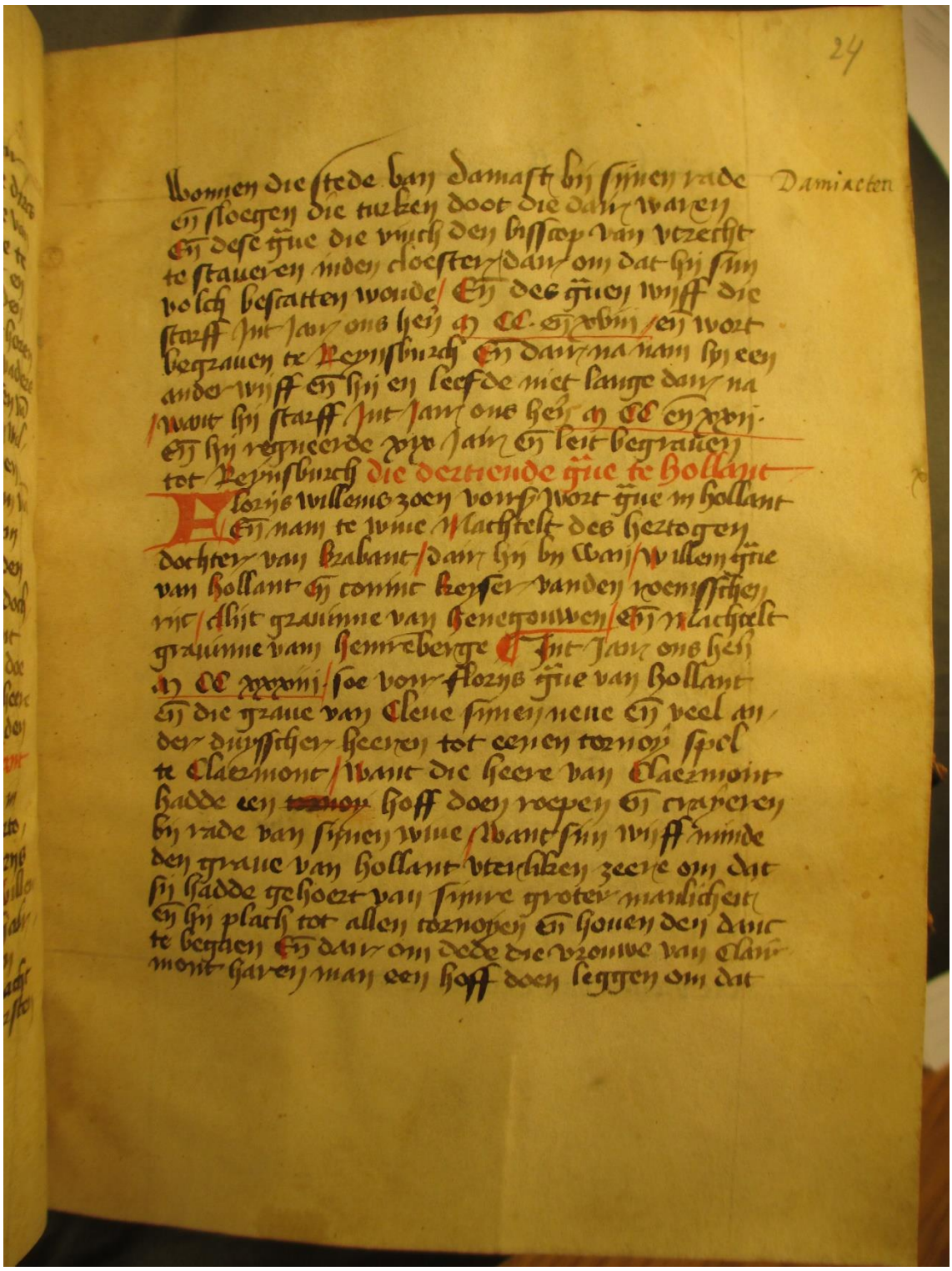
[535] The English calendar year began 25 March. Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. xvii.
[536] Liddy, *Contesting the city*, pp. 91ff.
[537] Gransden, *Historical writing*, p. 227; Steele O'Brien, 'The Veray Registre', 175, 'in the tyme of John Metcalf'. Black book of Winchester uses mayoral years: e.g. 'tempore N.N. maioris', or 'in [regnal year] when N.N. was mayor'.
[538] There was variation in the calendars followed by different authorities in different parts of the medieval Low Countries. Starting the new year at Easter was most common. E.I. Strubbe and L. Voet, *De chronologie van de middeleeuwen en de moderne tijden in de Nederlanden* (Brussels, 1991).
[539] Dordrecht has a register with a *Gouds Kroniekje* and a list of the Counts of Holland. Dordrecht DIEP 1-652. https://bit.ly/2QYYqkn <last accessed 17/12/2018>.



Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Register 928, f. 24r, page from the Chronicle of Holland showing 'the thirteenth count of Holland' in red. With the kind permission of Noord-Hollands Archief.

However, some sources from the Low Countries have a particularly clear dynastic structure, which is almost always based on the dynastic structure of the regional chronicles used as a source. A perfect example is the Chronicle of Holland that appears next to the Chronicle of Haarlem in Register 928 in the Haarlem archives. In this Chronicle of Holland every paragraph is dedicated to the life of a Count of Holland with red subheadings such as 'the sixth Count of Hollant', visually highlighting this structure in the text. The Chronicle of Haarlem that follows mentions several counts, but does not have a dynastic structure. Paragraphs start with 'In the year of our Lord', followed by the calendar year in Roman numerals. More neutral chronology is the structure of this text, as well as of the Chronicles of Rotterdam and The Hague.

The Ghent memory books, comparable in format to the Lincoln Roll described above, simply state the calendar year at the top of the page followed by the benches of aldermen. The dynastic influence in the memory books is restricted to comments on births, deaths and marriages in the chronicle entries amidst much other information. The urban Continuations of the *Excellente Cronike* do use a dynastic structure, in so far that they start and end at dynastically important moments and much of the text is divided by comital or ducal reigns. For example, the continuation by Anthonis de Roovere ended with the death of Mary of Burgundy (1482), but the death of Charles the Bold and marriage of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York were also common end points.[540] Although section headings in the text often refer to the duke ('How the duke went to Bruges'), the structure of the text at a lower level is chronological, with paragraphs starting with a factual indication of time (e.g. 'On the sixth day of April', or 'In this time'). As Demets and Dumolyn have shown, many manuscripts of the so-called Bruges branch of this tradition were created within an urban society very critical of the Burgundian Duke.[541] This did not stop their interest in a chronicle with a regional focus and a dynastic structure and they communicated an urban message within this framework.

The unproblematic co-existence of a national and urban historical culture is apparent from the Flemish sources, as it was from the English ones. Bruges writers questioned the form and extent of the Burgundian Duke's authority, not the fact that

[540] A more urban point to end this chronicle was the Bruges revolt in 1436. Demets, 'Manuscript transmission', pp. 133–134.
[541] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing'; Demets, 'Manuscript transmission'.

a dynastic authority existed.[542] Therefore, working with sources that told Flemish history with a dynastic structure was not a problem, and was even used by reflecting on the relationship between towns and counts in the past.

Start dates

A text's temporal framework is not only the way of time keeping, but also worked out through its start and end date. The end date is less interesting from the point of a historical framework because in most medieval sources it is the year contemporary to the writer. The end points of the *Excellente Cronike* mentioned in the previous section proves exceptions exist and some sources took a significant moment in history to end their narrative. In the next chapter I will also discuss how many historiographical texts were written in times of crisis or upheaval which can create a time frame. The year a certain text starts with can reveal the intended scope and purpose of the text and the view on history of the writer. In opting for a start date with significance for the urban history, the writer superimposes a particular urban perspective on the past for his readers.

The Coventry Annals, also discussed in the example at the start of this chapter, are an exception in that they simply took the form of a list of mayors' names and annotations without providing any dates in regnal or calendar years. Apparently the writer considered the mayor's name a clear enough reference. However, a regnal focus is still part of the document as it features two genealogical texts in verse on the roll's recto side claiming Edward IV's right to the thrones of England, Wales, Spain and France.[543] The first and longest of these texts starts with Brutus, the second features a genealogical tree, with William the Conqueror. Moreover, the dorse of the roll, the side with the mayoral list, also starts with a paragraph calculating the number of kings that had ruled Britain after the Conquest (Edward IV was the sixteenth). This provides an earlier history and context to the roll, which ends and was arguably written in 1462, just after Edward IV's ascension to the throne.[544]

However, this dynastic context is not the only framework of the mayoral list. The short introduction to the list itself reads 'The namys of the mayres of Coventre

[542] Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'.
[543] For a more detailed description of the roll see Louis, 'Yorkist genealogical chronicle'.
[544] Chapter 2, p. 87.

and of the xij men that purchesyd the fredome of Coventre.'[545] Twelve names then follow. This 'fredome' refers to the royal charter of 1345, which combined the Earl of Chester's and Priory of St Mary's halves of the city into a single commonality with the right to be a corporation and to elect a mayor and bailiffs annually.[546] This also explains why the mayoral list starts with John Warde. Warde was the mayor in 1346, the year of the first mayor of Coventry and clearly a significant date in the town's history. So despite the king lists there is an evidently urban background to the Coventry Annals. The timeframe of the text creates an urban perspective on all the events that are recounted, whether they are local or deal with the national Wars of the Roses.

Custumals and magistrate lists often begin with the year of the first mayor, first bench of aldermen or after a significant change in the way the town administration was structured. Ricart says he wants to 'shewe who was the first Maire made' and begins his mayor list with this Adam le Page in 1217.[547] The Colchester Oath Book (as well as the Red Paper Book) was started on account of the New Constitution the town received in 1372 and begins with a copy of related documents. Similarly, most London Chronicles start with the year 1189, which is popularly believed to have been the year of the first mayor, although 1209 might be more historically correct.[548] The choice of 1189 is significant, however, because that year was the boundary for 'time immemorial', the start of legal memory as set by Edward I. The London Chronicles thus took this 1189 date, which sets the limits of 'time out of mind', the furthest date one could go back to with the use of (legal) documents, as the year of their first mayor. It stressed the antiquity of the mayoralty to demonstrate that it was already in function from this earliest possible date and such antiquity of its institutions would provide the city and its officials with great civic authority.

Other formats of history writing also chose significant moments in the history of the town. The Chronicle of Haarlem covers the time from the late eleventh century until 1328. The introduction singing the praises of the town ends by saying the town is so agreeable and beautiful that the counts of Holland were pleased to

[545] Fleming, *Coventry*, p. 28.
[546] W.B. Stephens, ed., *A history of the county of Warwick: volume 8, the city of Coventry and borough of Warwick*, vol. 8 (London, 1969), pp. 256–263; Liddy, *Contesting the city*, pp. 51–52.
[547] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 4.
[548] McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 16–18.

have a court there. The first entry then is on Count Floris II, who was probably the first count to keep court and also live in Haarlem. Although this is not strictly a change in local administration, it is a significant change in the status and running of the town as the location of the prince's court. The Chronicle of Colchester begins with 216 AD when 'Cole, Duke of the Britains, began to build the city of Kaircoel, which is Colchester', an obvious start for an urban history. Fittingly, this chronicle ends with the entry on 1089 in which 'King William the younger gave [to Eudo?] the city of Colchester, with the castle, to possess in perpetuity etc.'[549] Several entries for later years (1145, 1175 and 1239) had preceded this final entry, but the perpetuity of this entry seems to secure the future of the town.

The significance of starting dates sometimes remains unclear. The Chronicle of Rotterdam starts with the famine of 1315, which seems to have no particular meaning to the fifteenth and early sixteenth-century people from Rotterdam.[550] It is possible this was of greater importance to the structure of its older source or maybe these temporal boundaries were only chosen because of the obtainable sources. That pragmatic reasons, such as the available sources, did sometimes influence the contents of the sources is also illustrated by the so-called Olivier van Dixmude chronicle. It starts with the year 1366, which is the year that the earliest council list starts.[551] When continuing an older text, such as a magistrate list or national chronicle, that text can determine the timeframe and political context.

That the implications of timeframes were understood by readers and writers is demonstrated when changes in the habit of certain starting dates are evidently related to an important political or governmental moment. The Ghent *memorieboeken* start with the benches of aldermen for the year 1301, the first year they were elected and installed according to the new Charter of Senlis.[552] There is no variation at all in this habit until the second half of the sixteenth century. But MS 16889 in the Royal Library in Brussels is a *memorieboek* written in the 1550s and

[549] Benham, *Oath Book*, p. 28. Eudo Dapifer was steward of both William the Conqueror and William Rufus, see also Chapter 5, p. 225.
[550] In the fourteenth century it obviously did have a major influence on townspeople all over Europe. William Chester Jordan, *The great famine: Northern Europe in the early fourteenth century* (Princeton, 1997) The writers of the Chronicle of Rotterdam remain interested in prices of food stuffs in their own times, which could explain their interest in the famine.
[551] Trio, 'Olivier van Diksmuide', p. 219.
[552] This charter changed the way aldermen were elected by a combined body of electors chosen by the city and the count's commissioners. Jacoba Van Leeuwen, *De Vlaamse wetsvernieuwing: een onderzoek naar de jaarlijkse keuze en aanstelling van het stadsbestuur in Gent, Brugge en Ieper in de middeleeuwen* (Brussels, 2004), pp. 32–36; Boone, *Gent*, p. 34.

60s that starts at 1540. In that year Charles V issued his decree, the *Concessio Carolina*, as punishment for the city of Ghent after recent rebellions.[553] The measures included the removal of all urban administrative records from the town, showing how important the emperor considered this written record for urban identity. Starting the lists of aldermen in this year rather than the traditional 1301 reflects Charles V's new framework on Ghent history. A later seventeenth-century manuscript tellingly only included two lists of aldermen, those of 1301 and 1540.[554] These dates were clearly experienced as significant breaks in tradition. The writers saw no point in referencing earlier history and reminding readers of a tradition they were no longer part of.[555]

In the discussion of the combination of urban and national elements within our sources, the aspect of starting dates is a strong urban element, as the significance of these starting dates is frequently found in the urban political-administrative context. Although few start with the town's origin, such as the Chronicle of Colchester, the origin of the current form of government was often the starting point, thus stressing the continuity until the year of writing. The understanding of periods and breaks in the course of history for urban writers was thus related to urban (and often administrative) events. This reminds us of the pre- and post-Conquest division in several of the English king list mentioned above, in for example the Bristol *Kalendar*, the Coventry Annals and the Colchester Oath Book. The Conquest was a major political event leaving signs in history writing of the rupture it caused in political and social life. On a less dramatic scale, the changes in city administration, often due to royal charters and privileges, caused a periodisation in urban historical culture.

Using national narratives

The hybridity of formats is reflected in the number of ways national and urban elements are brought together. The geographical focus, temporal framework and textual context can all be discussed without thorough reading and interacting with the contents of the texts. Analysis of the contents is however evidently essential in

[553] Haemers, 'Social memory', p. 461.
[554] Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, pp. 86–88.
[555] There are also a few London Chronicles starting later than the traditional 1189, showing a focus on Tudor history. McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 35–37.

addition to the study of those more easily recognisable features. The texts that are closest in form to the more traditional chronicles are the most obvious examples to study how towns used national narratives to their own needs. These urban texts use a national chronicle as their basis in relatively obvious ways. Nevertheless, the national texts have been changed, reduced, adapted or continued to function within the civic values, aims and narratives of the town.

Urban continuation

One way of turning a regional chronicle into a civic text was to add a continuation and update the text with information in which urban aspects played a significant role. We see such continuations in Holland, England and Flanders. Clear examples of this are the Chronicle of The Hague, discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter, and London Chronicles following a *Brut* Chronicle, for example Oxford, BodL, Rawlinson B173 discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

A Flemish example is the similar way inhabitants of Bruges and Ghent continued the popular regional chronicle the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen*. These continuations had an urban character, which gave these fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Excellente Cronike* an urban flavour.[556] For the earliest history of the county until the fifteenth century, the existing text of the well-known dynastic chronicle (*Flandria Generosa C*) was usually copied. New continuations were then written in the fifteenth century, to bring the chronicle up to date. The most significant of these for the city of Bruges were versions by rhetorician Anthonis de Roovere, who covered the years 1436-1482, and an early sixteenth-century continuation by Rombout de Doppere, whose continuation covered the subsequent years from Mary of Burgundy's unexpected death in 1482 until the death of her son in 1506.

Urban adaptations

In contrast to the Chronicle of The Hague, urban manuscripts of the *Excellente Chronike* tradition were not only copied and continued, but earlier history was also adapted in accordance with contemporary views. Copies written in the fifteenth and

[556] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing'; Oosterman, 'Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen'.

early sixteenth centuries were often strongly politically coloured, which is not unexpected in this turbulent time for Flemish towns. Descriptions of earlier rebellions were for example appropriated to justify contemporary political decisions in the second half of the fifteenth century. The adaptations and continuations were heavily coloured by the urban environment the author lived in, but the majority of the text remained undoubtedly based on the much older regional texts. I will come back to this in the next chapter, where the function of this chronicle will be discussed in more detail.

Adaptations were also not always in written form. The very effective way in which the Bristol *Kalendar* 'urbanises' the *Brut* chronicle is the most obvious example of this. In the summarised *Brut* chronicle, the descendants of Brutus, founder of Britain and London, are highlighted together with the towns they found through larger font, underlining and signposts in the margins. When the narrative comes to Kings Brennius and Belinus founding Bristol, Ricart then adds the following details for which we do not have any other source: 'and set it vpon a litell hill, that is to say, bitwene Seint Nicholas yate, Seint Johnes yate, Seint Leonardes yate, and the Newe yate.'[557] These geographical details function as a caption to the drawing of Bristol below it on folio 5v.[558] The inclusion of a drawing of Bristol that takes up three quarters of a page in the middle of the text when the foundation of this city is mentioned leaves no question about the origin of the text. The new information added to the *Brut* abbreviation by Ricart is very minimal, but the effect is substantial. The few lines with geographical details, helped by the beautiful drawing of the town, make the rest of the *Brut* into the context for Bristol's origin story.

Urban selection

Careful selection of which parts of national chronicles to copy and include is another method to urbanise historical text. This traditional way of writing medieval historiographical texts by compiling pieces from older chronicles appears in all three regions. The Chronicles of Haarlem and Rotterdam from Holland, the Excellent Chronicle tradition and Ghent memory books from Flanders are all examples. An English example is the London *Liber Albus.* This custumal includes pieces of explicit

[557] Bristol, CC/2/7, f. 5r-v; Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 10.
[558] Reproduced in Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 30.

historiographical information, such as a *Brut* legend. However, even the collection of customs, ordinances, charters and laws that is described within the register is chosen very carefully with an agenda in mind. The main themes in the *Liber Albus* are the city's legal history, keeping the peace in the city, London's relationship with the crown, and controlling urban trade and food and drink supplies.[559] In the fourteenth century London has seen many periods of urban unrest and revolt, which had by times resulted in the king withdrawing urban privileges or appointing a royal warden instead of the elected mayor. The careful selection of customs, laws and charters included in this register meant some of these politically painful episodes were 'forgotten' and older urban successes in keeping the king's peace were celebrated.[560] Such a creation of a selective memory, here described for a mostly practical text, was equally applied in more historicised writings.

Urban perspective

Other urban texts retold national events within an urban perspective. Although a product of an urban craft guild and thus unmistakably a reflection of urban historical culture, the notes in the guild book of the Bruges Cloth shearer's guild are for a large part about national and dynastic events.[561] This does not seem to fit with the usual picture of a strong urban identity and ongoing tensions between the strong-willed Flemish towns and the Burgundian Dukes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The fourteen chronicle-style entries seem initially to be of both local and national significance. They mention the burial of Maximilian of Austria, election of Charles V as emperor, the cancelled visit of Mary of Hungary, the entry of Phillip II, the birth of a new prince, the entry of the Count of Anjou and celebrations after the peace between Spain and France, in addition to local processions. However, after a closer look it is evident that all these entries are written from a deeply local Bruges point of view. For example, the election of a new emperor is mentioned, but very briefly, only to set the scene for a quite elaborate account of the celebrations in the city of Bruges after the news. 'When the news reached Bruges great festivities and triumph took place with beautiful celebrations and plays for three days. And a fine general

[559] Carrel, 'London *Liber Albus*'.
[560] Ibid., pp. 182–183.
[561] Bruges, CA, 324; Schouteet, 'Kroniekachtige aantekeningen' gives an edition.

procession was ordered…'[562] It then continues to narrate the route and order of the procession with a particular emphasis on the role of the guilds of the town. 'And every guild carried as many torches as they carry candles on the Day of the Holy Blood'.[563] Not so much the dynastic event, but the town's view of and response to it, is what colours the writer's historical view and what he considers useful to record for his fellow and future guild members. The role of the cloth shearers guild is never specifically mentioned, but sounds through in the focus on the role of all guilds in the many celebrations and processions recorded. By recounting the place of all the guilds the entries read more like a record of Bruges' urban history than specifically the guild's history.

The *Boeck van Brugghe* adopts a similar approach to national and dynastic events and reports them in a similar way. The town´s perspective on all events is recorded. For example, it mentions battles and troop movements, but would report when the soldiers came in or exited the city, rather than when the battle took place.[564] Similarly, with peace agreements, it recounts the moment such news reached the city of Bruges rather than the moment of creation:

> Item on the 7th day of November, anno [14]89, at 6 o'clock in the evening, there was made known within the city of Bruges by the aldermen that they had received certain news, in letters, from France, about peace and joy, which was made known to all the bell ringers of the parish churches, the four orders and all monasteries and chapels, that every one of them would toll and ring their bells of joy.[565]

The moment the national or international news interacted with the people of Bruges is more important than the actual date of the events. These two sources exemplify how news is clearly not taken from written chronicles, but recorded as experienced in the city by contemporaries. The inclusion of dynastic or national events in urban

[562] Schouteet, 'Kroniekachtige aantekeningen', p. 68.
[563] Ibid. The Holy Blood (of Jesus) is a famous relic in Bruges, thought to have been brought back to the city by the Count of Flanders in the twelfth century when returning from the second Crusade, and still centre of an annual procession.
[564] E.g. Bruges soldiers leaving and coming back victorious from a siege in February 1488, Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, pp. 193–196.
[565] *'Item voord noch up den 7sten dach in November, anno 89, tsnavens ten 6 hueren, doe zo was bin der stede van Brugghe te kennen ghegeven van den goede lieden van de wed, hoe datse ontfangen hadden zeker tydynghen, by brieven, commende huut Vranckerycke, van payze ende van blyschepen, twelc men gaf te kennen alle de clocke luuders van den prochye kerken, de 4 oordenen ende alle cloosters ende cappellen, hoe dat elc zoude luuden ende beyaerden van blyschepen.'* Ibid., p. 315.

historical writing holds thus no contradiction to late medieval Flemish citizens as it might seem to hold to us, because urban writers appropriated the national elements in their own way. Although not all urban texts show this urban perspective as explicitly as the writers from Bruges, it is possible the inclusion of similar national events in other expressions of urban historical culture needs to be understood in a similar way.

It is clear that urban historical culture did not mean a contradiction or exclusion of national historical narrative. These manuscripts have shown how national and local information and ways of time keeping exist together in a variety of ways. The distinct urban character that helps us identify these sources as urban expressions can be found in different forms, sometimes it speaks loudest from the time frame and start date chosen, sometimes from images or drawings, sometimes from the geographical detail included in the text or the clear urban perspective in which events are regarded. Writers and readers had both an urban and national identity, which were not in conflict with each other, not even in Flanders, where it might be most expected due to the tensions between Burgundian and urban authorities. Custumals included both local and national laws, all relevant to urban life, as were both the dynastic and local authorities. There is not a single element which makes these sources 'urban', but a multiplicity of elements that mark the local focus of these texts and reflects the complexity of urban historical culture in late medieval towns.

Reasons for using national elements

After discussing the variety of forms in which national and urban elements are connected in urban texts and thus in urban historical culture, in this section I will discuss why this might be the case. First, there is the practical issue of the availability of sources. Narratives and written historical sources were easiest available for the larger territorial and dynastic unit the town was part of, the Kingdom of England or Counties of Flanders or Holland. Geoffrey of Monmouth, Henry of Huntingdon and Johannes Beke were the obvious relevant authorities. Their writings started strong historiographical traditions, such as the *Brut* Chronicle, the Beke Continuations and *Gouds Kroniekje,* which constituted an authoritative voice regarding the region's history, as the anonymous *Flandria Generosa* traditions did in Flanders. These

sources provided the existing historical framework and were an integral part of the urban writers' historical culture.[566] There was no need to disregard or contradict this well-known historical framework to find an urban one; instead these national narratives provided the historical background and credibility for any urban history. Urban and national identities could, as they can now, exist together without conflict; moreover, the towns could select, adapt and appropriate the sources to serve them well.

Secondly, the national or dynastic framework was not only convenient in lieu of the existence of a more elaborate urban history. National elements were also used consciously, as they served a purpose in ascribing the town political and social significance. The above examples have shown that urban writers often not simply copied national sources, but selected, adapted and continued them, demonstrating an intentionality in the use of these national elements. Scholars of medieval Flemish cities, especially Haemers and Dumolyn, have stressed the agency of the urban population in political conflict, but also more specifically in creating oral and written sources expressing their view on politics and history.[567] The Flemish urban population appropriated political language used by the court (their antagonist) to strengthen their own discourse.[568] We can imagine a similar appropriation of historical narratives, where origin myths, past events and historical persons were unproblematically borrowed from originally dynastic or national sources and used within an urban context to strengthen political or social arguments.[569]

The use of national elements also created a position of status for a town, through writing itself into or connecting itself with the national or dynastic narrative. This point can be demonstrated well using the Chronicle of Haarlem. Even though all entries in the Chronicle of Haarlem have a strong direct link to the city or its inhabitants, this does not exclude national and international involvement, on the contrary. Several battles in different parts of the Low Countries, as well as a crusade, recounting the locally famous account of the siege of Damietta in Egypt, are

[566] Woolf, *Social circulation*, p. 273 discusses the interconnectedness of local and national historical culture.
[567] E.g. Haemers, 'Social memory'; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems'; Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing'.
[568] Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet'; Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, 'Reclaiming the common sphere of the city: the revival of the Bruges commune in the late thirteenth century', in Jean-Philippe Genet (ed.), *La légitimité implicite au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2015).
[569] In the next chapter I will discuss the political arguments in these sources in more detail. Because conflict was about the extent of power, not the institution, dynastic narratives were not contradictory.

described. These war efforts of the men of Haarlem are clearly part of the deeds that earned the city and her burghers so much praise and glory. The connections with national authorities (the Count of Holland) and even international authorities (in the form of the pope, patriarch or emperor), is what gives the city such status. The Chronicle of Haarlem in Register 928 recounts the immense gratitude of Emperor Frederick towards Willem, son of Count of Holland Floris III (and the later Count Willem I).[570] Strangely enough the manuscript does not include the second part of the legend, in which Haarlem receives its coat of arms from the count, emperor, pope and/or patriarch (depending on the manuscript version).[571] There is however a half page left empty which seems to have been intended for the inclusion of the coat of arms or its origin story.

More locally, the citizens of Haarlem are also portrayed as true protectors of the County of Holland. A compelling account of the Battle of Zierikzee in 1304, where the Count of Holland and Bishop of Utrecht fought the Count of Flanders for Zeeland, is given over more than two pages. The major role of the citizens of Haarlem cannot go unnoticed:

> And so, truly through the steady loyalty of the citizens of Haarlem was the County of Holland freed from the invasion of Flemings. And was it made possible for the honourable Willem to become the eighteenth count with a victorious glory.[572]

Haarlem thus gained importance and appropriated the status of *primus inter pares* over other cities in Holland by stressing a good relationship with the count and confirmation of its status by other rulers.

Medieval towns and town officials also derived their legal authority from connections with the national ruler. Cities' rights, charters of incorporation and privileges creating and subsequently enhancing urban autonomy and authority were granted to them by the king or count. The authority that the mayor and aldermen held was bestowed upon them by the territorial ruler. Representatives of

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[570] This is historically incorrect in several ways, as Willem I (count 1203-1222) was only born in 1167 and could thus have not been on a crusade in 1162, the year Register 928 dates the siege. Floris III, Willem's father, was Count of Holland in 1162 (r. 1157-1190) and Frederick I emperor (1122-1190). The historical date of a battle at Damietta is however 1218-19. Van Moolenbroek, 'Ketting van Damietta', pp. 114–126, 129–132.

[571] Ibid., pp. 132–136.

[572] *'Aldus wairlic bijder gestadiger getruheit der poirters van haarlem is die graefscap van hollant gevriet van in loep der Vlamingen Ende die hoechgeboren willem mit eenre segebairliker glorie dien xviii grave mogentlijc geworden.'* Haarlem, Register 928, f. 38v.

the territorial ruler played a direct role in the election of town officials in the Low Countries, although the towns also had a level of influence and control in these, the specifics of which changed frequently for most towns depending on times of tension and reconciliation with the ruler.[573] Towns were in a legal sense royal (or ducal or comital) creations and could not survive without the cooperation and granting of privileges by the ruler. Urban officials were 'as much royal officers as urban officials' as they were expected to keep the king's peace and collect his taxes.[574] However, this relationship was not simply a one-way street as the ruler also needed his towns to provide political stability, access to money and resources, and military aid.[575] The political and legal position, as well as social status, of towns were intricately connected to the relationship with the national political entity and its ruler. Stressing the relationship and authority of the ruler could thus strengthen the town government's status, not diminish it.

A remarkable tapestry in the town hall in Coventry is an example of another form of historical culture using historic links with higher authorities.[576] The iconography of the lower scenes of king, queen and Virgin Mary represent the terrestrial court, the upper three scenes with saints and the Trinity, the heavenly court. St John the Baptist and St Katherine hold a prominent place between the saints, reflecting the patron saints of the local fraternities. When the mayor and the town government sat at the dais the king and Holy Trinity would overshadow them, representing the origin of the civic authority, which was granted by the monarch, coming ultimately from God. It also recalled more concretely the years that Coventry had been the *de facto* capital of the kingdom and place of residence for precisely this

[573] See Van Leeuwen, *Vlaamse wetsvernieuwing* for developments throughout fifteenth-century Flanders; for cities in Holland: J.L. Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (Dordrecht, 1931); J.J. Temminck, 'De ontwikkeling van de autonomie van de stad Haarlem in de middeleeuwen', *Holland* 1:4/5 (1969).
[574] Liddy, *War, politics and finance*, p. 14.
[575] Lorraine Attreed, 'The politics of welcome: ceremonies and constitutional development in later medieval English towns', in Barbara Hanawalt and Kathryn Reyerson (eds.), *City and spectacle in medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, 1993); Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, 'Les bonnes causes du peuple pour se révolter. Le contrat politique en Flandre médiévale d'après Guillaume Zoete (1488)', in François Foronda (ed.), *Avant le contrat social. Le contrat politique dans l'occident médiéval XIIIe-XVe siècle* (Paris, 2011); Christian D. Liddy, 'Political contract in late medieval English towns', in François Foronda (ed.), *Avant le contrat social. Le contrat politique dans l'Occident médiévale XIIIe-XVe siècle* (Paris, 2011); Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration', pp. 125–127; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns', pp. 369–393.
[576] Liddy, 'Urban politics and material culture'.

monarch, Henry VI, between 1456 and 1460.[577] This deliberate use of historic dynastic connections by the Coventry town government reasserts rather than diminishes the authority and status of the urban governing elite.

Urban origin myths

Origin myths are very specific and interesting texts, which play an influential role in identity formation and hold strong political connotations. It is therefore interesting to study these foundation stories separately where they occur in urban historical culture. Origin myths offer a possibility to discuss contemporary political situations in implicit ways. Biblical, Roman and Trojan ancestry were common themes in European medieval origin myths. Wilma Keesman has written about the Trojan origins that became popular in many European regions to show equality or superiority to other peoples and dynasties.[578] Much is written on the political context of origin myths of England and territorial entities of the Low Countries.[579] Most of this research is on national mythology, and thus explores for instance the origin of the county of Flanders or the kingdom of England (or all of Great Britain). However, that urban origin myths were not uncommon can be seen for example in Brabantine historiography where Antwerp is founded by Brabon, of Trojan descent, and Louvain by Julius Caesar.[580] Already mentioned is the Trojan origin in the form of the *Brut* chronicle tradition used by several London Chronicles as well as the Bristol *Kalendar*. The king lists in, for example, the Lincoln Roll, are part of the same

[577] The first arrival of Queen Margaret (1456) and the Coventry parliament (1459) are recorded in the Coventry Annals. Fleming, *Coventry*, p. 33.
[578] Wilma Keesman, 'Troje in de middeleeuwse literatuur. Antiek verleden in dienst van de eigen tijd.', *Literatuur: tijdschrift over Nederlandse letterkunde* 4:5 (1987).
[579] Susan Reynolds, 'Medieval *origines gentium* and the community of the realm', in Susan Reynolds (ed.), *Ideas and solidarities of the medieval laity: England and Western Europe* (Aldershot, 1995); Keesman, 'Troje in de middeleeuwse literatuur'; for Brabant: Tom A.L.H. Hage, 'Van zwanen en Trojanen: laatmiddeleeuwse origografie in Noord-Brabant.', in Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, Jan A.F.M. Van Oudheusden, and Robert Stein (eds.), *Cultuur in het laatmiddeleeuwse Noord-Brabant: literatuur, boekproductie, historiografie* ('s-Hertogenbosch, 1998); for Flanders: Kelders, 'Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen'; Anke Bernau, 'Myths of origin and the struggle over nationhood in medieval and early modern England', in Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (eds.), *Reading the medieval in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2007); Gervase Rosser, 'Myth, image and social process in the English medieval town.', *UH* 23:1 (1996); Marie-Françoise Alamichel, 'Brutus et les Troyens: une histoire européenne', *RPH* 84:1 (2006); for France: Colette Beaune, *The birth of an ideology: myths and symbols of nation in late-Medieval France* (Berkeley, 1991).
[580] Hage, 'Van zwanen en Trojanen', pp. 83–84; Keesman also mentions the writing of Jean Molinet, who ascribed Trojan ancestry to Metz, Tongeren and Terwaan. Keesman, 'Troje in de middeleeuwse literatuur', pp. 264–265.

tradition. Roman ancestry is used in the Colchester origin myth. Using this other literary and historical tradition might have given the Colchester writer more liberty to shape his story as befitted him. As we will see below, the physical remains of the Roman past in the city, another non-textual form of historical culture, might have contributed to this choice. Roman ancestry was also described to some towns in Holland in the Chronicles of Holland and the Roman foundation of the city of Utrecht by a senator exiled by Emperor Nero is often repeated in this tradition.[581]

Many of the processes involved and literary tropes used in national origin myths were equally valid for urban foundation stories. Urban writers had to reconcile the authorities on the subject.[582] When their town was not mentioned or mentioned only very briefly, they added to these facts or borrowed some elements, to provide a coherent early history for their own town. In the following section I will use the example of the Colchester Chronicle to demonstrate how towns appropriated national origin myths to form their urban foundation stories. The Colchester example will demonstrate how urban writers put their own city at the centre of the narrative through references to well-known Trojan, Roman or Christian story lines in late medieval historical culture.[583]

Colchester

Not all urban origin myths are copies of national narratives in which just a small part is dedicated to the town, as in the example of Bristol. The short chronicle *De Colocestria et Coele* in the Colchester Oath Book gives an origin myth in a very different format.[584] However, similar processes of appropriation of national narratives can be recognised in this text. The first 23 entries cover the early history of the city of Colchester. They span from 219 AD, the year King Coel started to build the city, to 330, the year of the death of Constantine the Great, grandson of Coel via his daughter Saint Helena. The seven entries that follow cover the years 1071-1239. The first of these, dated 1145, is almost a conclusion of the previous text by ending the story of Saint Helena with the translation of her head from Rome to the monastery in Bury St Edmunds. These later entries are not in chronological order,

[581] Tilmans, 'Autentijck ende warachtig', pp. 72–75.
[582] Reynolds, '*Origines gentium*'.
[583] Rosser, 'Myth, image', esp. pp. 7-8.
[584] Chelmsford, D/B 5 R1, f. 20r-v; Benham, *Oath Book*, pp. 27–28.

for example, the near destruction of the castle in 1175 comes before the build of the castle in 1076. These later entries focus on the castle and chapel as well as the granting of the town by both King William the Conqueror and William Rufus to their steward Eudo Dapifer.

This text provides the city of Colchester in a few lines with a very powerful origin. King Coel founded the city and married his daughter Helena to the Roman Constantius to lift his siege on the town. The successful political careers of both these men can be followed through the text. Coel, first *Dux*, leader, of Colchester gains Essex and Hertford (218 AD) and even becomes *Rex Britonnum fortissimus*, the most powerful King of the Britons, after defeating the tyrant Asclepiodotus in 290. Roman *Dux* Constantius laying siege to Colchester in 260, goes on to become 'Caesar of the Gauls' (288) and a year later is declared Emperor Augustus. Coel's daughter Helena is equally important from a Christian as well as political perspective giving a divine blessing to this city. She becomes well-known as Saint Helena, who retrieved the Holy Cross, and as the mother of Roman Emperor Constantine who brought Christianity to Europe. As the city of the King of all the Britons Colchester becomes the 'capital' of Britain, ignoring any other towns, including London, in these simple lines. It is also placed at a central position in the Roman Empire as the home base of Emperor Augustus Constantius and his son Emperor Constantine. This Roman political context had obviously faded in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when this was copied. However, Roman ancestry remained important in the mythology and history of all of Britain, and of Europe, and was frequently used to prove antiquity, and therefore status.

This story was confirmed by archaeological remnants in the city. It is specified that the Castle was built on the foundations of the palace of Coel. These foundations were in fact from a Roman temple, but the physical and visible remains of the past, part of the local historical culture, would have certainly increased the credibility of this origin story for the fifteenth-century population.[585] Not only do these entries place Colchester in a central position in Britain and the Roman Empire, it also gives the town a very significant place in Christianity: as the birth place of Saint Helena and Emperor Constantine, who brought Christianity to Europe.

This foundation story incorporates elements from national chronicles. A King Coel, his daughter Helena and her son Constantine are mentioned in national

[585] Crummy, *City of victory*, pp. 143–148.

histories, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittanniae* and the *Brut*, although not always linked to Colchester. The late medieval Oath Book adds a very specific timeframe, additional stories about their lives, deeds and deaths.[586] The Colchester chronicle is most similar to Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, which mentions Constantine's death in York, the link to St Silvester and uses the phrase 'flower of Britain' for Constantine which we also find in the Colchester chronicle.[587] King Coel's defeat of Asclepiodotus comes from Geoffrey of Monmouth, although there Coel accomplishes this and dies before Constantius marries his daughter, whereas in the Colchester version he lives for another 30 years.[588] However, other elements of the Colchester chronicle remain unaccounted for.[589] It is very possible that many of the facts and stories are taken from written or oral lives of St Helena, who was a well-known saint in medieval England. Stories of Helena's discovery of the Holy Cross and move to Jerusalem for example were widespread. It is possible that the short chronicle was drawn up from a combination of histories, saint's lives and local oral tales. Interestingly, there is quite a lot of attention for Constantine, and many details of his political and religious life, such as the churches he built, the synod of Nicea he initiates, and the gift of the dominion of the city of Rome to Pope Silvester. Few of these feature prominently in the known stories of St Helena, but this Pope St Silvester had a tradition of saints' lives as well, which may have been another source. Philip Crummy suggests that it might have been compiled for the dedication of St Helen's chapel, as it is the most recent entry, and one of relatively little significance.[590] This does not explain the lack of additional information about the chapel and the absence of any entries in the last century before 1239, considering most chronicles are more elaborate as they approach contemporary times. It is known that the Abbey of St John of Colchester also had

[586] Roman emperor Constantius did in fact die in York in 306, and his son Constantine (whose mother was indeed called Helena) was with him in Britain at the time. Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth connected these facts. The Chronicle of Colchester adds the circumstances of the wedding of Constantius to Helena and identifies Constantines mother Helena with King Coel's daughter with the same name.
[587] Rosser, 'Myth, image', p. 8; Henry of Huntingdon, Diana E. Greenway (ed.), Historia Anglorum*: the history of the English people* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 58–63.
[588] Geoffrey of Monmouth, Michael D. Reeve and Neil Wright (eds.), *The history of the kings of Britain. An edition and translation of* De Gestis Britonum (Woodbridge, 2007), Liber V, pp. 77-78, 94-97.
[589] The prose Brut is quite similar to Monmouth, Heather Pagan, ed., *Prose Brut to 1332* (Manchester, 2011), cap. 43-45. Antonina Harbus, *Helena of Britain in medieval legend* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 64–90.
[590] Crummy, *City of victory*, p. 144.

foundation stories and chronicles and this might have been the origin of the Colchester Chronicle's sources. But except for shared attention for Eudo Dapifer, they do not seem to overlap at all in any direct way, so exact sources remain currently unknown.[591]

Elements and people from the national and international past are used by the Colchester writer to create a specific urban foundation myth. The fact many elements are borrowed and echo to some extent well-known information from respected authorities such as Geoffrey of Monmouth or Henry of Huntingdon meant the story resonated with people's historical culture and increased the credibility. The visible archaeological remains in Colchester would also have contributed to this, as they were also part of the existing historical culture of the citizens. This short chronicle demonstrates simultaneously that national sources were not simply copied, but could be extensively changed to suit a writer's and a town's purposes. Appropriation and combination of various elements worked to enhance the antiquity, and thus status, of Colchester. Very different from the Bristol *Kalendar*'s foundation story, is the lack of any reference to other British towns. Not even London is mentioned. Only York is mentioned as the place of death of Emperor Constantius. Apparently the relationship with the king and the local authorities of the castle and abbey was of more importance than any relation with London or other towns. I will come back to this point in the next chapter.[592] We see again the unproblematic combination of national and local elements used to shape the urban identity of the city and its relationships with other local and national authorities. The emphasis of the text on the distant history and foundation story enhanced the town's authority and status in a way much more difficult to achieve through recent events.

Bristol and York

Cities made conscious use of national and urban foundation narratives integrating

[591] Ibid., pp. 143–151; W. Gurney Benham, 'Legends of Coel and Helena', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 25:1 (1919), pp. 229–244; Annals of Colchester from St John's, see Graeme Dunphy, ed., *EMC* (Leiden, 2010), p. 61; and for edition see Felix Liebermann, *Ungedruckte anglo-normannische Geschichtsquellen* (Ridgewood, 1966). Liebermann's edition has excerpts from the year 524 AD and London, BL, Harley MS1132 has entries from the third to thirteenth centuries, but there is no direct relationship discernible between these and the text in the Oath Book.

[592] See pp. 225-26 for a discussion of a conflict between local authorities as a possible background to this chronicle.

them in urban ceremonies to communicate a civic message.[593] Both Bristol and York used their mythical founders in encounters with the contemporary king. King Ebrauk and King Brennius founded York and Bristol respectively according to the well-known medieval *Brut* chronicle and its local adaptations.[594] These two mythical kings, descendants of the famous Trojan Brutus, were used in performance during royal entries in the towns in the fifteenth century.[595] We have accounts of the entry of Henry VII in Bristol in 1486 where 'I Brennyus king' played a part as a way for the population to use his status as royal and direct descendant from the great Brutus to address the visiting king about urgently needed financial support.[596]

> This Towne lefte I in great prosperitie […]
> but I haue ben so longe Awey
> that Bristowe Is fallen in to decaye
> Irrecuperable withoute that A due Remedy
> By you ther hertes hope & comfort in this distresse.[597]

Even though Robert Ricart's addition to the *Brut* narrating the foundation of his town was only a few lines, it was obviously part of the inhabitants' historical culture. Bristol found its place within the national narrative, stating a shared ancestry with the Londoners and kings of early England (Brennius calls Henry VII his cousin), but Bristol simultaneously identified itself as an autonomous town, confronting the king with its own demands and using the status that comes with its long ancestry to negotiate with the king on an (almost) equal footing.

York, receiving Henry VII in the same year, used a similar approach. King Ebrauk was used to welcome the monarch into the city. Although the power of Henry VII is never questioned and Ebrauk provided him with the keys of the city, this is done in a context where the power and status of Ebrauk (and thus of his descendants, the citizens of York) is stressed.

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[593] Some more visual examples of civic foundation stories of English towns are mentioned by Rosser, 'Myth, image', pp. 12–15.
[594] The Roman name for York was Eboracum, thus linked to King Ebrauk. In the *Brut* chronicle in the Bristol *Kalendar* (f. 3v) Ebrauc is the fifth king (great-great-grandson of Brutus) and founds both Ebrauc (York) and Edinburgh.
[595] In York other kings and mythical figures were also planned to be used, such as the earlier kings Henry, but also Jason, Julius Ceasar and King Arthur as well as biblical kings. The latter again confirmed a line of descendants from Brutus. Unfortunately, the description we have is in the future tense and there is no source to tell us whether the entry was held according to this plan, but it gives an idea of the view of the town. Attreed, 'Politics of welcome', pp. 221–223.
[596] Mark C. Pilkington, ed., *Bristol* (Toronto, 1997), pp. 10–14.
[597] Ibid., p. 11.

Of right I was regent and rewlid the rigion,
I subdewid Fraunce and led in my legence;
To you Henrie I submitt my citie key and croune
To reuyll and redresse your dew to defence.[598]

Ebrauk had not only keys to give, but also a crown, which in a similar way as Brennius called Henry his cousin, reduced the difference in status between King Henry and the towns. Ebrauk referred to King Henry's 'duty', Brennius even specifically points out the Navy and clothmaking industry as possible remedies for the economic decay in the town, both bold requests easier brought through such a spokesperson. These mythical kings bridged the gap between an urban and a national narrative. A purely local history would not have had the same effect. The towns gained status and negotiating power through connecting themselves to the Trojan ancestry of the *Brut* narrative, an ancestry Henry VII used himself in royal propaganda.[599] Ebrauk and Brennius are examples of a political appropriation of a national origin myth for urban purposes.

Urban nature of national origin myths

The examples of Colchester and Kings Ebrauk and Brennius demonstrate the power origin stories have to give a town status through its antiquity. But origin myths also tell us a lot about the place of the town in its surroundings and the relationship with other towns in the region and the dynasty. Towns appropriated national elements in their own way, but we can see regional differences. None of the urban historical texts from Holland or Flanders include specific local origin myths, whereas several English urban sources do. This can partly be explained through the character of the national chronicles of the region. This chapter has until now focused on national elements in urban texts, but national chronicles also contained urban elements. I will discuss the urban nature of some national histories of Holland, Flanders and England, especially in regard to their account of the earliest history of the region. The foundation of cities was an important part in at least some of the national earliest histories of Holland and England, although not in the same way. The urban nature of the regional chronicles made these easy to use as sources for urban writers and influenced their urban texts. Similar concepts and attitudes can be found in later

[598] Attreed, *York house books*, p. 482.
[599] Attreed, 'Politics of welcome', p. 223.

parts of urban texts. It also confirms the point made before in this thesis that a lot of history writing, even of a national or dynastic nature, was done in an urban context.

Communal urban identity in Holland

The Chronicle of Holland tradition based on Johannes Beke and the *Gouds Kroniekje* displays a strong urban identity in writers, as well as a communal sense of identity as people of Holland. Urban texts, such as the Chronicle of Rotterdam express a similar attitude to urban identity in Holland even though it does not include the city's or region's foundation myths.

Several Chronicles of Holland, especially the *Gouds Kroniekje*, and the fifteenth-century Dutch translation of the Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht by Johannes Beke, all contain strong traces of urban consciousness. These regional chronicles formed the basis of fifteenth-century history writing in Holland, as almost all chronicles from the century after their appearance are heavily based on them, particularly for the early history of the county. Johannes Beke wrote from a regional and dynastic focus in the late fourteenth century, but when his work was translated into Middle Dutch, and continued into the fifteenth century, more urban elements were added to the additions and continuation. The *Gouds Kroniekje* introduced more origin myths of Holland and a larger urban emphasis to historiography in Holland. For example, when the earliest Counts of Holland start their reign, the *Gouds Kroniekje* adds that they are paid homage to in all the towns of Holland. This comment is absent in all earlier sources of the *Gouds Kroniekje*.[600] Beke's dynastic focus is moved to the background and the people of Holland, a chronological structure and a more elaborate early history of the land and the cities (not the dynasty!) is added.[601] These elements are incorporated in many manuscripts based on the *Gouds Kroniekje*, such as Johannes a Leydis' chronicles. In several political circumstances the cities of Holland are mentioned as an important player, but as a community of cities, not the specific cities.

The foundation of cities is an important element in the narrative of the creation of the county in these Chronicles of Holland. One copy of the *Gouds Kroniekje* starts as follows:

[600] Janse, 'Gelaagdheid', p. 153.
[601] Janse, 'Historie van Hollant', pp. 19–38; Janse, 'Gelaagdheid'; De Vries, 'Local histories'.

> I have long been asked to make and describe the history of Holland, how the land was first formed, began and inhabited and who they were who made and built the cities, how they got their names and how the land was afterwards kept by Count Dirk, the first Count of Holland until the mighty Duke Philip of Burgundy reigned in Holland.[602]

The foundation and naming of cities is mentioned early and holds centre stage in this view of Holland's early history. The people who 'started, began and lived in' the land created Holland, but then the cities receive attention before the dynasty of the Counts of Holland. The counts do not create, they 'keep' the land, and then only after the land is established by the people of Holland and the cities are built. This very much introduces an urban history: not of one specific town, but the history of an urbanised county. It is a narrative of the foundations of the main towns of Holland, and the creation of a people of 'Hollanders', more than the tale of the dynastic lineage. The first Count of Holland only appears in the chronicles around the end of the first millennium.[603] This in itself shows the importance of urban culture in Holland. Most Chronicles of Holland describe the foundation and earliest history of several cities of Holland and Zeeland, among them Vlaardingen, Leiden and Haarlem.[604] This shows their urban consciousness, although they are no urban chronicles because they lack a clear preference for a specific town. These national chronicles' earliest histories create an image of an urban society, but without any rivalry between the towns.

Rotterdam

The Chronicle of Rotterdam, written by town clerks in a town register, represents a specific urban identity. This is clear in the contents of the chronicle, in which events in Rotterdam are described in more geographical detail. But although the events in

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602 Utrecht, UL, MS1180, f. 1r. *'Langhe so is mij ghebeden dat ic doch woude maken ende bescriven die historien van Hollant hoe dat dat lant eerst begrepen begonnen ende ghewoent wort ende wie sij waren die die steden begrepen ende tymmerden hoe sij hoer namen creghen ende hoe dat lant na beheert wort van graeff Dirick die eerste grave van Hollant tot dat die machtighe hertoghe Philips van Bourgondien regnierde in Hollant.'*.

603 The Chronicle of Holland in Haarlem Register 928 identifies the year 863 as the creation of the County of Holland and thus the start of the comital dynasty. Janse, 'Historie van Hollant', p. 26.

604 The foundation of the city of Utrecht is usually also given, as the historiography of Utrecht and Holland was often combined, e.g. Beke. In the later fifteenth century, Chronicles of Holland became more focused on just Holland and excluded most Utrecht-based stories. Janse, 'Utrechts naar Hollands', pp. 183–202.

Rotterdam show knowledge of more detailed local information, they do not seem to be valued above similar events in other towns of Holland. An account of a city fire in 1464 specifies details about the specific street and houses it occurred in:

> on the fifth day of May on a Saturday afternoon Rotterdam was on fire from the monastery on the Eastend westwards along the High Street until Harper Geerytszoon's house, where Willem of Remerzwale, the sheriff, now lives.[605]

Just before this on the same folio, fires in other cities are mentioned, but without such detail as street names:

> In the said year [1463] in this same summer around XVC houses burnt in the city of 's Hertogenbosch, and the city of Naarden [burnt] all together to the ground, that little was left.[606]

This shows a larger factual and geographical knowledge of Rotterdam; however, purely local events happening in other cities were still regarded worthy of noting down. Many events, such as sieges connected to the Cods-Hooks conflicts are described elaborately even when they occur in Leiden, The Hague or other cities in Holland. Also interesting in this respect is the account of the inauguration of Duke Philip the Fair in Rotterdam in 1497. The new Duke was on a tour of the cities in Holland and the Chronicle of Rotterdam recounts that after he was inaugurated in Dordrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam and The Hague, it was Rotterdam's turn. The writer describes the scene of the procession at the Duke's entry, but interestingly at the key moment it was not a person from Rotterdam to inaugurate the duke, but rather a representative of the Estates of Holland.[607] Apparently the citizens of Rotterdam did not seem to feel a conflict between their identities as citizens of Rotterdam and of Holland.

When describing events in other towns of Holland accounts are never negative, although sometimes short. However, some events further away, for example in

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605 *'upten vijfften dach van meye tsaterdaechs na middach brande Rotterdam van tclooster upt Oosteynde westwaerts langes die Hoochstraet tot Harper Geerytszoons huys toe, daer nu in woent Willem van Remerzwale, the schout,'* Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', p. 25.

606 *'Int jaer voirs binnen denselven somer brande in de stad van tsHertogenbusse omtrent XVC husen ende die stede van Naerden all tsamen off datter luttel bleef.'* Ibid., pp. 24–25.

607 Ibid., p. 89.

Guelders or Flanders, are written in a more critical way.[608] The rebellious episodes in the Flemish cities against the Burgundian rulers, especially Maximilian, are recorded in relatively long entries. In these notes the writer is opinionated, favouring the Duke and looking negatively upon the rebellious Flemish citizens. The Rotterdam writer judged the captivity of Maximilian in Bruges in 1488 to have been done 'unfairly', and performed by 'incompetent persons', who 'weren't worthy of sweeping the ashes out of his room'.[609] Clearly the Rotterdam writers were no big supporters of the Flemish towns.

This does not mean however, that the Chronicle of Rotterdam was always positive about the Burgundian Dukes. At Charles the Bold's ceremonial entry into Holland, he raised the anger of the writer. After inaugurations in several towns of Holland, Charles held court in The Hague. There he also handed out local offices and functions to his servants and whoever asked and paid for them. These 'little offices' and civic positions like the sheriff's office, were the right of the towns themselves to hand out, as granted by privileges, but the Duke gave them away nevertheless, angering the local population. 'Quade, domme knechte/sitten nu te rechte/ om hoir groet present/ goede, vroede lieden/moeten hem gemieden/te doegen hoir judgment.'[610] The author is very clear about the negative consequences of this, not only for his city, but for the county of Holland, and concludes the entry with 'In this way was the law broken at this time.'[611]

The urban consciousness that speaks from the Chronicle of Rotterdam is very interesting when studied within the political context. Apparently Rotterdam citizens did not derive their identity from rivalry with neighbouring cities. More tension can be felt when towns and rulers from outside the County of Holland are discussed. Being a citizen of Holland and a citizen of the town of Rotterdam were both identities that shaped the writers' historical culture and political awareness. When the writer of the Chronicle of Rotterdam mentions 'our ships' he refers to the fleet of Holland and Zeeland, not just the vessels from his city.[612] The urban Chronicle of Rotterdam

[608] Dirk Schoenaers, '"United we stand?" Representing revolt in the historiography of Brabant and Holland (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries)', in Justine Firnhaber-Baker and Dirk Schoenaers (eds.), *The Routledge History Handbook of medieval revolt* (London and New York, 2017), pp. 104–129.
[609] Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', pp. 82–83.
[610] [Bad, foolish servants/ are now judging/ because of their large presents / good, pious men/ have to endure them / and obey their judgement.] ibid., pp. 42–43.
[611] Ibid., p. 43; see for similar sentiments, Van Gent, *Pertijelike saken*, p. 95.
[612] Ten Boom and Van Herwaarden, 'Rotterdamse kroniek', p. 71.

appropriated many elements and stories from Chronicles of Holland. Other cities within the county are discussed frequently, even if there are no obvious consequences for Rotterdam of the events described. Entries concerning other cities in Holland seem to be more positive than entries about 'international' events from areas such as Flanders, Guelders or Brabant. The combination of urban and regional information seems to be entirely natural to the writers of the Chronicle of Rotterdam and the urban consciousness recognisable in the national chronicles would have made it even easier to combine both urban and national narratives to reflect their identities.

Royal foundations and urban hierarchy in England

The *Kalendar* instructs 'euery Bourgeis of the Towne of Bristowe' to 'rede the olde Cronycles of Brute' to 'knowe and vnderstande the begynnyng and first foundacion' of the town.[613] Origin myths are very significant stories for urban identity, and Ricart, writer of the Bristol *Kalendar*, recognised that. The *Brut* chronicle paints a picture of England in which the towns are the very embodiment of the country and take central stage in the origin of the entire country, which might explain why it was commonly used as a source by urban writers.

The Bristol *Kalendar* contains an abbreviated version of an English *Brut,* very closely related to the Anglo-Norman *Brut* chronicle.[614] With more than 240 extant manuscripts, this was a very popular chronicle, and its appearance in the *Kalendar* demonstrates why this was such a popular text for urban audiences. The first pages read as a list of kings in charge of city foundations. We hear of the foundation of New Troy (London), York, Edinburgh, Carlisle, Winchester, Canterbury, Bath and Leicester, all founded by kings of Trojan lineage, Brutus' descendants. This storyline leads to the lives of the kings and brothers Brennius and Belinus, who were known

[613] Bristol, CC/2/7, f. 3v; Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 8; Lucy Toulmin Smith, in her edition of the Bristol *Kalendar*, incorrectly states that Ricart appears to have followed Geoffrey of Monmouth ibid., p. 6.

[614] Identified by Matheson, *The prose Brut*, p. 14; see also Fleming, 'Making history', pp. 291–293. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittaniae* is one of the *Brut's* sources, but less closely related to Ricart's *Kalendar*. Pagan, *Prose Brut*, pp. 40–52. The origin myths in Bristol's *Kalendar* are taken from the Anglo-Norman *Brut*. The English *Brut* shows fewer similarities. See Lazamon, W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (eds.), *Brut or Hystoria Brutonum* (Harlow, 1995); of Monmouth, *The history of the kings of Britain. An edition and translation of* De Gestis Britonum.

from the popular *Brut* as founders of the town.[615] After the brothers returned from conquering Rome and much of the continent, 'then Brynne first founded and billed this worhsipfull Towne of Bristut that nowe is Bristowe'. Here follows the large drawing of Bristol and the sentence describing the setting of the town. The connection with the line of descendants from Brutus and the list of other towns being founded only add to Bristol's grandeur and antiquity rather than detract from it. In combination with the rest of the register which contains much urban information, these few lines are a significant and conscious adaptation to make Bristol fit in with the hierarchy of British towns in the well-known national legend. The *Brut* gave Bristol a direct link to a founding hero of Trojan origin, a status comparable with the other main towns in the country, and a direct link with London, the most important city of all, as well as with the ruling dynasty.

Very different from the regional chronicles from the Low Countries is the focus on dynastic founders. Whereas the *Gouds Kroniekje* made clear the cities were founded by the local people before the comital dynasty arrived, English cities revel in the royal descent of their founders, Colchester's King Coel, Bath's King Bladud, York's King Ebrauk etc. The importance of urban centres in the (history of) the kingdom is however clear through the attention in the *Brut* to urban foundations. Bristol might derive its status from its royal founders, similarly, the kings in the Bristol version of the *Brut* Chronicle are mostly remembered for their legacy of city building. The urban character of the *Brut* makes it an easily relatable and usable source for urban writers.

Urban rivalry in Flanders

Flemish regional histories were much less urban in character and the regions' earlier history has a dynastic focus. The *Flandria Generosa* tradition includes a regional and dynastic origin legend featuring the first *forestier* Liederic of Buc, not an urban one.[616] There are exceptions, as one of the Bruges corpus of *Excellente Chronike* manuscripts recounts an elaborate version of Liederic's foundation of not only the county but also several cities including Bruges. The people offered their

[615] Bristol, CC/2/7, fols. 3v-5v; Ricart, *Kalendar*, pp. 8–10.
[616] The legend even has connections to France, Burgundy and England. Kelders, 'Geschiedenis van Vlaanderen'; Kelders stresses the dynastic (Burgundian) perspective in the text. Kelders, 'Laverend', pp. 97–121.

land to him before he was granted the area by his father in law, the Frankish king.[617] The general lack of urban character in the regional chronicle traditions is intriguing, considering the region was one of the most urbanised regions of Europe. Urban foundation stories were apparently not part of this urban identity. The start dates discussed earlier in this chapter, commemorating significant urban charters, privileges or changes in urban government can be considered more significant origins for the urban historical culture of the Flemish writers.

The Ghent memory books, Bruges' guild register entries and the *Boeck van Brugghe* all pay very little attention to the other towns in Flanders. The three big towns, Bruges, Ghent and Ypres, were occupied with their own events as well as the relationship with the Burgundian Duke and any battles, agreements or revolts were reported from this perspective. Although the Three Members worked together in formal political representation, they also competed heavily with each other and all had a different relationship with the duke. There was no communal urban interest as there was in Holland, nor a direct link to the dynasty for urban foundations.

Regional differences

There are significant differences in urban elements in the national histories of Holland, Flanders and England. Chronicles of Holland discuss the foundation of its cities rather than focus on the foundation of its dynasty, as England and Flanders do. However, national narratives from Holland and England incorporate urban foundations and the role of cities more prominently than Flemish ones. Only from England do we have explicit origin myths included in urban historical texts. Urban historical texts in both England and Holland relate to other towns in the region, whereas in Flanders this happens a lot less. The differences in the degree of urbanisation and the system of urban political representation in these regions account for such variation in the urban consciousness in traditions of national narratives.

The Chronicles of Holland describe the foundations of the towns of Holland by 'the Hollanders', the people of the area, whereas the *Brut* narrates a story of a royal dynasty founding new cities. This puts not just the urban foundations, but also the dynasty at the centre of the story. In contrast, the comital dynasty of Holland only

[617] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', p. 41.

appears later in the story to maintain the cities. Also, both create a certain urban hierarchy for the region. London's pre-eminence is explained or justified by the fact it was the first city founded by Brutus himself, as a new Troy, and cities such as Bristol use comparisons to London as well as the larger hierarchy to show they are on a par with the other cities in the kingdom. Although there is little concrete urban rivalry found in the urban historiography in Holland, we know from other sources a hierarchy of cities existed also here.[618] The Chronicle of Haarlem for example works on its status within Holland by starting with recounting the time that Haarlem functioned as the location of the counts' court.

The late medieval Kingdom of England was a large area with a strong and present royal government. Although not in the same league as London, there were several large cities, such as Bristol and York, which were very aware of their prominent place in the kingdom.[619] These larger towns did have a political voice, because the townspeople could provide much-needed taxes, military support, economic wealth through their trade, and political stability to the monarchy. Negotiations happened between (the representatives of) the king and the specific town. The urban voice in the royal government and parliaments was however very small (with the exception of London), as the land-owning nobility was of far greater importance to the political situation of England.

The situation in Holland was different. The County had a higher degree of urbanisation and had many, although smaller, cities. Although the comital court was in The Hague, this was not in itself a large town, nor more important, because the Burgundian and Habsburg Dukes almost never resided in Holland in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[620] The political voice of the cities of Holland was institutionalised and communal, and thus stronger than in England. The representatives of the collective of cities had a role in the Estates in negotiations with the duke.[621] This did not include individual negotiations from towns about specific rights and privileges, but it gave the towns of Holland more political power than the English cities had. The urban identity of citizens in Holland can thus be understood to be in part related to a specific town, but also partly to a general

[618] Bos-Rops, 'Noblesse oblige'.
[619] E.g. Liddy, 'Rhetoric of the royal chamber'.
[620] The Hague did not have city rights and was a relatively small town, but as the place of the court it held a relatively powerful place among the towns of Holland.
[621] Hoppenbrouwers, 'Middeleeuwse medezeggenschap', pp. 133–159, esp. pp. 147-151; Van Gent, *Pertijelike saken*, pp. 39–45, 92–96.

communal urban identity, as opposed to the noble or rural identities in the county. Because the political power was shared, there was less rivalry between towns. And because the political power came from a distinct urban voice rather than attempts to negotiate with a monarch on the basis of dynastic connections, the relationship between urban foundations and the dynasty was less present in historiography in Holland than in England.

The different urban landscape of Flanders with its three major cities meant that Ghent, Bruges and Ypres were less dependent on each other to negotiate with the duke. Politically the power of these three cities was institutionalised through the Three Members,[622] but in reality it meant Ghent, Bruges and Ypres represented mostly themselves and tried to get the best deal for their citizens, not for all Flemish citizens. Negotiations were not based on status derived from antiquity and royal connections, nor on communal cooperation, but rather on current economic power, which meant dynastic or urban origin myths had less significance for Flemish urban historical culture. The political power of the towns was based on their size and influence and the privileges and institutionalised rights these cities had in urban government.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that national elements, either texts copied from national chronicles, or dates and lists from national history, are used frequently by urban writers. We find these national elements in the written contents, but also in the textual layout and the temporal structure of the document; the manuscript needs to be studied in all its aspect to understand its urban perspective. A geographical focus on the locality is rarely part of an urban chronicle, as was often assumed in earlier definitions of town chronicles. The national narratives were as much part of the historical culture of urban writers as urban historical tales were. However, it has been shown that towns did not merely copy national or dynastic traditions but changed and used them to suit their urban context. We can conclude from this that these writers' urban and national identities did not clash, but were interlinked.

National elements were used in urban historiographical texts to enhance the antiquity and status of the town. Particularly in England and Holland, this approach

[622] Prevenier, 'De leden'; Boone, *Gent*.

was used both to establish a hierarchy of towns within the country and to comment on the relationship with the national authority. Origin myths were often used as a way of stressing antiquity and status as well as connecting the city to a dynasty or other towns in the region to establish the political power the contemporary writers wanted to stress.

The differences in the degree of urbanisation and the system of urban political representation meant historiographical traditions were different in Flanders, Holland and England. The urban nature of national chronicles of fifteenth-century Holland and England meant they were easily adapted into urban texts and created the background for the urban origin myths in English towns. The general urban character of historiography in Holland reflected communal forms of urban representation in contact with the Burgundian Duke. In Flemish sources the focus is more on the legal and political privileges and rights which underwrote contact with the duke. This is for instance seen in the time frame urban sources were given, for example, Ghent memory books starting consistently in 1301. There was much more rivalry between Flemish towns, as they did not need each other politically due to their much greater size and economic influence. English towns emphasised the connections with the royal dynasty in the past in written historical culture. Good relationships with the king, past and present, meant status and a safe political position in the country. The popularity of the *Brut* Chronicle, which combined dynastic and urban foundations stories, reflects this.

Where Chapter 2 showed that the formats of urban historical texts were hybrid and fluid, this chapter confirmed that the contents are also a mix of purely local, national and international information and elements. The geographical focus of the sources can vary greatly, as can the ways in which national or urban elements appear, such as geographical detail, starting dates or images. This hybridity and lack of 'purely urban' focus is however no different to sources that have long been accepted as (traditional) town chronicles. German and Italian urban chronicles were equally not entirely focused on their town. Van Houts summarises how it was common practice among German chroniclers 'to put their local account into a wider regional or even national framework. Many of them also fitted their chronology into that of the Christian church by prefixing to their local chronicle an already existing world

chronicle.'[623] One of the examples Schmidt describes in his book *Die Deutschen Städtechroniken* is the Augsburger Chronik, written by Burkard Zink between 1450 and 1468.[624] In the four books that span his work he incorporates the private history of his own family, familiar to the Italian *ricondanze* style chronicles, as well as copies of older anonymous chronicles. Zink's political scope is 'Christianity' or the Holy Roman Empire, and battles, rulers and city alliances outside Augsburg are a large part of his work. Despite the title and a clear recognition of this as an urban chronicle in the literature, it also incorporates national and dynastic elements in contents and structure.

The geographical focus is not an accurate way to decide the urbanness of a text, but neither is any other single element. Every source needs to be viewed holistically and in its context. Urban historical culture is able to hold many elements of national narratives (and vice versa) but will use those elements to suit the town's present and future. In the next chapter we will go into more detail of the political situation and argumentation in those texts.

[623] Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, p. 15.
[624] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, pp. 29 ff.

Chapter 5: Function

In this chapter the function of the texts will be discussed. This includes questions touching upon the intention of the author, as well as the reception and use of the source. Considering most texts have only survived in a single manuscript, with little evidence about use, authorship and ownership, we will only be able to find elements of answers on these tangential subjects. Nevertheless, elements from previous chapters can be called upon to discuss this: form, language, decoration, authorship, and contents all provide clues for the function of these texts. Recurring themes from the last chapters are the strong connection to the town administration and context of pragmatic writing, links to political ideology, interest in origin myths, and national narrative and temporal elements.

Very few sources include a description of the aims of the work. This chapter will start with discussing these sources which provide rare explicit information on the function of these texts. Building on knowledge and themes from previous chapters, other possible functions of urban historical texts will then be discussed. Two main functions of many urban manuscripts that I will cover are the enhancement of status and legal and administrative uses. In a third part the focus is on the contribution of political ideology to the function of urban historical writing in England, Holland and Flanders, using sources that speak more explicitly about the political situation in the fifteenth century. Reception of these texts did not occur in isolation and the last section will discuss other forms of urban historical culture playing with similar themes and providing vital contexts for the understanding of these texts.

In this chapter the remembrance of both practical legal records and legendary or historical narratives will be shown to have originated from similar situations. Celebrations of urban pride or political arguments in times of urban crisis used similar elements. In both situations records of legal rights and privileges as well as origin myths and histories stressing urban antiquity were used. The theme of fluidity is carried onwards from previous chapters, as there is no absolute link between certain forms or contents and particular functions. Besides, we can ascribe several possible functions and influences to a text, as an author could write from a

complexity of conscious and unconscious ideas and contexts. We have no tool to ascertain his definite intention, but can highlight possible functional and influential aspects in the manuscripts.

These rare texts functioned in a wider context of late medieval urban historical culture. The collective nature of authorship and the strong dependence on traditions of history writing, record-keeping and historical narratives mean these texts did not stand by themselves and cannot be understood in isolation. Moreover, written evidence of historical culture, although most informative to historians, need to be perceived within a context of other forms of historical culture that influenced them and the audience's perception. In previous chapters performances and ceremonies, architecture, coats of arms and oral traditions which used similar tropes and narratives have already been mentioned in some examples and in the final part of this chapter I will consciously consider the relationship between other forms of historical culture in towns to the written evidence.

Prologues

Most urban historical texts tell us very little explicitly about their function. The exceptions are the prologues of the Chronicle of Haarlem and the Bristol *Kalender,* and the preface in John Carpenter's *Liber Albus*. The sixteenth-century edition of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* also has a prologue, but it is not written in an urban context and contains unsurprising traditional elements: it attributes the writing 'to the honour of prince Charles of Austria', king of Spain (and his many other titles) and was written, according to the author, to keep himself and the readers as good Christians away from idleness.[625] Before analysing context and contents to see what is to be deduced about the use and purpose of these texts, we will start with these prologues to see what these texts stress themselves as their purpose.

The anonymous writer from Haarlem emphasises the importance of history in his first lines. He describes how he gathered and summarised from books and trustworthy people the history of the town and inhabitants of Haarlem so it would

[625] *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen Print*, f. 2r-v. The dedication to a patron and idea that the devil makes work for idle hands were common elements in medieval prologues, as were references to earlier sources, a justification of the work and a modesty trope urging future writers to correct mistakes. ; Bernard Guenée, 'L'historien et la compilation au XIIIe siècle', *Journal des Savants* 1:1 (1985), pp. 119–135; Levelt, *Jan Van Naaldwijk's Chronicles*, pp. 74–76.

'not be left unwritten'.[626] Remembrance of urban history seems thus to have been the motivation for this work. The text tells us it was written to inform the citizens of the town of the glory and praise their predecessors deserved and so that

> unknowingly, writers of books and histories would not throw the strong and powerful endeavours and deeds of the said town into oblivion and the works of the victorious people would not perish in an eternal silence.[627]

After this introduction a poetic section showing rhetorician's influence praises the many good characteristics of the city through connecting good traits to every letter of the name 'Harlem'. 'For the H Locus honorandus, for the A Amandus' etc.[628] As the chronicle ceases with the year 1328, and was thus possibly initially written around that date, we can assume that this section was added when the text was later copied into Register 928 in the fifteenth century. It enhances what seems to be the general purpose of the text: to praise, make known, and remember the glorious deeds of the city.

The rest of the text of the Chronicle of Haarlem confirms this function set out in the introduction of the text. All the entries have a clear direct link to the city, and show the inhabitants and city of Haarlem in a positive light. It is proudly noted that the Counts of Holland had first chosen this city for their court (before they moved to The Hague in the middle of the thirteenth century), which, considering the 'beauty and pleasantness' of Haarlem should be no surprise. Many entries tell how the men of Haarlem bravely helped the Count of Holland in military expeditions in Holland and abroad. The whole chronicle remembers and praises Haarlem's brave and patriotic inhabitants, and so enhances the status of this city.

The Bristol *Kalendar*'s prologue starts with a Latin section which stresses the aim of the writing: 'for perpetual remembrance' of the town's liberties, customs and privileges.[629] This relates mainly to the calendar and custom in the second half of the book. Examples later in this chapter show how a legal memory served medieval towns. Ricart's prologue then continues in English, stating as its function: 'in maynteyneng of the said fraunchises herafter more duely and freely to be executed

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[626] Haarlem, Register 928, f. 32r.
[627] *'op dat mit onwetenheit bescrivers der boeken ende der hijstorien die stercke ende mogende gesten ende daden der jegenwortdiger steden der vergetenheit niet soude wesen des segebaeres volcs mit eenre ewiger swigenisse verderven soude'* ibid.
[628] Ibid., f. 32v.
[629] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 1, see p. 151.

and excercised, and the perfaitter had in remembraunce'.[630] The first and second parts will show, he tells us in this prologue, 'the begynnyng and furst foundacioun' of the town as well as 'al the kynges that were in Englonde' and the foundation of Bristol Castle and St Augustine Abbey.[631] The third section 'to shewe who was the first Maire […] And how many Maires haue been sithen in this worshipfull Towne. And whate actes and gestes hath happened to be donne in euery Maires yere'.[632] These three chronicle-style sections were indeed written and provide the reader with the expected historical overview of England's and Bristol's past.

The contents of Parts Four till Six are not executed according to Ricart's promise in the prologue, as Peter Fleming has shown in detail.[633] However, it is very interesting to see how practical the town clerk's ideas were for the use of the *Kalendar*. Part Four would describe, according to the prologue, the proceedings surrounding the elections, inaugurations and execution of the offices of mayor and other civic officials. Ricart expresses his hope that

> all such worshipfulle persones as hereafter shall be callid and electid to the seide officez, at theire ceasons of leysoure to rede or do to be redde and overseen this present boke, so that by the ouersight of the same they may the better, sewrer, and more diligenter, execute, obserue, and ministre their said Officez.[634]

The intended purpose of Part Five is equally practical: 'to shewe by Kalendar where and in whate Bookes a man shall fynde, rede, and see many and diuerse fraunchises, libertees, aunciant vsages and customes'.[635] Because Bristol

> hath alweis vsed comenly to execute his fraunchisez and libertees accordinge in semblable wise as the noble Citee of London […] it is therfore necessary and conuenyent to the officers of this worshipfull Toune of Bristowe for to knowe and vnderstande a parte of the auncient vsages of the saide noble Citee.[636]

For this reason a custumal of London is provided in Part Six. In reality Part Four

[630] Ibid., pp. 2–3.
[631] Ibid., pp. 3–4.
[632] Ibid., p. 4.
[633] Fleming, *Kalendar*, pp. 4–7; see for an extensive description of all parts also Fleming, 'Making history'.
[634] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 69.
[635] Ibid., p. 5.
[636] Ibid., p. 6. It was common for cities to adopt customs (and custumals) from older cities, Cuenca, 'Town clerks', p. 15.

gives details about the appointment and oaths of civic officers and a summary of the civic calendar, but does not provide any further overview of the city's customs, and Part Five is only an *inspeximus* of the 1373 charter, which gave the town county status, and a table of contents of the 1189 charter rather than a calendar of the full town archive.[637] However, it is clear that the three last sections of Ricart's *Kalendar* were designed from a practical point of view to help town officials in their work. We know that the *Kalendar* was indeed used for a long time in the town government, as the mayoral list was continued into the nineteenth century.

The description of the first foundation of the town and the lists of both kings and civic officers show the long continuity and ancient history of the town, strengthening its independence, antiquity and status. The entirety of the *Kalender* makes a strong case for the town's autonomy from the king and the significance of the urban privileges, as well as stressing how Bristol is on par with London in its governing customs. Robert Ricart does mention the commission by Mayor William Spencer, but the intended and actual design of the book and contents of its prologue do not suggest any short-term (or personal) legal and political goals.[638] Ricart speaks to future town officials in his prologue rather than to a royal representative.

Equally practical functions speak from the preface of the *Liber Albus*, written in 1419. The register contains information on civic offices, customs, charters, trade regulations as well as a short eulogy to the city and an account of the *Brut* legend. To protect the civic officers of London against the 'fallibility of memory and the shortness of life', it was deemed highly necessary to bring order in London's customary law, written but dispersed and difficult to find, or not previously written down at all.[639] Town clerk John Carpenter sets out to pursue this goal, but in the introduction to Book Four he admits that it is too much work to copy all relevant documents in the 'inextricable labyrinth' of the city records, and he will provide a calendar to the main documents instead.[640]

These introductions highlight remembrance as a key purpose. Remembrance serves as an umbrella term, because stories, facts and legal documents can be remembered

[637] Liddy, *Contesting the city*, chap. 3.
[638] Fleming, 'New look', pp. 22-23; for more detail on the commissioning by Spencer, see Fleming, *Kalendar*, pp. 2–4.
[639] Carpenter, *Liber Albus*, pp. 3–4.
[640] Ibid., p. 452; Carrel, 'London *Liber Albus*'.

for several reasons. The *Kalendar* is a 'Remembratif' of the town's history and antiquity in its earlier sections and of its legal rights in Parts Four-Six. Remembrance of legal history as well as the antiquity of the city of London was also a key purpose of the London *Liber Albus.* Remembrance of the urban history of Haarlem and the glorious deeds of its inhabitants is similarly given as the function of the Chronicle of Haarlem, and this form of remembrance also aids the status of the town, as well as simply enhancing, through knowledge of the local history, the strength of urban identity. As long as the memory of historical and legal information is kept alive, it shapes the urban authority and urban identity.

Status and praise

The increase in urban writing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries can be understood as a sign of growing urban pride, self-confidence, and identity. In times of civic prosperity, which could easily coindice with moments when administrative habits were replaced because of population growth or new privileges, key texts were reproduced in new urban registers, as well as buildings and town walls renovated and urban insignia shown.[641] More specifically 'urban' structures, such as purpose-built town halls, more elaborate urban archives and an increased number of urban officers, all contributed to a stronger urban identity and growing urban self-consciousness. Urban history and expressions of urban historical cultures would have been an important part of celebrating and strengthening this urban status.

Enhancing and promoting the status of a town was a major function of many urban historical texts, particularly poems. Within the scope of this thesis, the majority of examples of this genre of the *laus urbis,* poems singing the praises of a town, are found mostly in Holland. The inclusion of six odes to cities in a manuscript with a copy of Johannes a Leydis' Chronicle of Holland from ca. 1514 is a particularly good example of this.[642] Only the second version of A Leydis' Chronicle of Holland contains these Latin poems made by 'poeta quidam nostris temporibus' (a certain poet of our times), an anonymous contemporary of A Leydis who can potentially be

[641] Britnell, *Growth and decline*, pp. 120–124; Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy', pp. 224–225; Robert Tittler, *Architecture and power: the town hall and the English urban community, c.1500-1640* (Oxford, 1991).
[642] Leydensis, 'Chronicon Hollandiae comitum', pp. 7–8, 65, 136, 203, 251.

identified as the young Cornelius Aurelius who later in life wrote a large Chronicle of Holland, the *Divisiekroniek*.[643] Literary similarities in these poems on Leiden, Haarlem, Deventer, Delft, Den Haag, and Amsterdam have caused Frans Slits to conclude they must have been written by a single poet.[644] The choice of these towns is curious. Deventer, which lies outside Holland, was included, as well as The Hague, which was legally a village rather than a city, even though (or because) it was the place of the comital court. Dordrecht, often seen as the first city of Holland, however, was not.[645] With the exception of Deventer, the poems are added to the chronicle entries recounting the foundation of the respective towns in Holland. The lack of a separate section in the chronicle on Dordrecht's foundation might thus explain this city's absence. The Deventer poem does have a reference to etymological explanations of its name.[646]

These poems contain several elements typical for the genre of odes of cities.[647] They start with greeting the city; 'ave' and 'salve' are used often, for example for Delft: 'salve antiqua polis, Delff terra veterrima salve/o salve nostrae gloria quarta plagae' [Greetings ancient city, greetings Delft, ancient land/o greetings fourth glory of our country].[648] The majority of the poems consist of a tribute to the town, singing the praises of its inhabitants, buildings, landscape, and any other characteristics that the writer thinks worthy of highlighting. The poet for example describes the beauty of Delft's churches and its decorated altars, not to be seen anywhere else: 'Tantum templorum formam non mirror eorum,/ Plurima visa illis sunt mihi pulchra magis./ Quantum depositis in eis ornatibus aris,/ Aras ornatas illis magis atque decoras/ Conspexi nulla, scit Deus ipse, plaga.'

He also sings the praises of the inhabitants of Delft, both sexes of which stand out through their affable behaviour and impressive forms of expression, as well as their piety and devotion.[649] The other towns have all similar descriptions,

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[643] Aurelius is assumed to be the author of the early sixteenth-century *Divisiekroniek*, but better known as poet. He knew Johannes a Leydis, lived around Leiden, and had been to school in Deventer, which can all be linked to these poems. Tilmans, *Aurelius en de Divisiekroniek*, pp. 23, 123; Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*, p. 251.
[644] Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*, pp. 247–251.
[645] Bos-Rops, 'Noblesse oblige'.
[646] The Deventer poem is added to an entry on the life of St Lebuinus, who died at Deventer.
[647] Compare Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*, p. 217.
[648] Delft was the fourth town in the chronicle to receive a poem. The below quotations are all from this poem Leydensis, 'Chronicon Hollandiae comitum', p. 136.
[649] *'Sunt utriusque tibi sexus praestantis alumni,/ Formae habitu comes eloquioque graves./ Devotique Deo fidi mortalibus aevo/ Humani, vacui fraude doloque, pii.'*

commenting on the good behaviour of their inhabitants, the great skills in war of their men, the beauty of the landscape. The writer pays attention to the choirs of Amsterdam, the beautiful forest of Haarlem, the good roads, squares and beautiful houses of Leiden. The Hague is the largest, best, prettiest and most fertile village in the world.[650] Three of these six poems end with a short closing prayer. To continue the example of Delft: 'I pray save Delft from all dangers, blessed God, Virgin Mary, protect this place.'[651]

Special about the six odes in A Leydis' Chronicle is that they also reflect the communal urban identity we have seen in the Chronicles of Holland in Chapter 4. After the greeting, the Delft poem continues: 'Delft, I believe that almost all the praises that I have given to the other cities, can also be given to you.'[652] Part of praising a city is singling it out over its neighbours, but this writer wants to do every city justice and give them equal treatment, before he praises any specific features. The poems on Leiden, Amsterdam and The Hague all contain similar phrasing, so it almost becomes singing the praises of all cities of Holland together.

This type of the *laus urbis*, especially in Latin, became more and more common into the sixteenth century. Many humanist writers were inspired by authors like Petrarch to practice this genre and it was common in Italy and Germany.[653] This 'poeta quidam' may already represent more a humanist than a medieval tradition. However, very similar city poems did also exist in the late Middle Ages as Dirk Matthijsz' poem of Haarlem, now thought to have been written in the early fifteenth century, has similar sections and also fits into this genre.[654]

The introductory lines of Matthijsz' poem recount how the writer, presumably as travelling poet, has travelled East, West, South and North, but not seen a nicer town than Haarlem. He then wants to prove this to the reader in the rest of the poem. Three sections follow this introduction, describing the beautiful setting of the town, the good character traits of the inhabitants, and the Damietta legend that explains the coat of arms of Haarlem, before a closing prayer completes the

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[650] Deventer, although not in Holland, is mentioned in a similar way, although the poem is far shorter than any other. Its beer and the strategic place at the river for trade are specifically mentioned.
[651] '*Delff precor a cunctis salva, Deus alme, periclis,/ Protege et usque istum, virgo Maria, locum*.'
[652] '*Quas reliquis laudes dedimus Delff urbibus omnes / Illas paene tibi censeo posse dari.'*
[653] Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*, pp. 215–303.
[654] Van Anrooij, 'Middeleeuwse sporen', pp. 15–16; Utrecht, UL, MS1180, fols. 91r-93v. All the quotes below are from the edition in Mathijszen, Van Mander, and Rutgers van der Loeff, *Drie lofdichten*, pp. 12–17. The poet is known because of a line added to the end of the poem: 'Diric Mathijsz dichte dit.'

poem. Haarlem is praised through the description of its excellent surroundings providing in all the needs of the population. The inhabitants also receive praise. The women for their good manners and beautiful faces, and the men as born fighters, who 'fight as lions' whenever Haarlem's banner is unrolled. After this follows a description of how Haarlem got its coat of arms, through their excellent performance at Damietta, in the 'heathen land'. This section is the longest and takes up 68 of the 152 lines, 45% of the poem. Dirk Matthijsz narrates how the people from Haarlem sailed to Damietta when they heard the Emperor laid siege before the town. An iron beam closed off the city's harbour, making an attack impossible, but the men from Haarlem found a solution. They attached a metal saw to the bottom of their ship and sailed to Damietta at night with a favourable wind, breaking the beam and conquering the city. The Emperor heard about the heroic role of the men of Haarlem.

> And [the Emperor] consulted his wise men
> what to give those of Haarlem to praise them
> What best to present them with
> so it would be remembered for the longest time.[655]

The thank-you gift is not just supposed to show gratefulness, but also to praise the city and to commemorate the great deeds of the men of Haarlem for as long as possible. At least, that is how the poet interprets the function of this coat of arms. This legend and the coat of arms did their work of enhancing the status of the town for a long time, considering the poet composed this in the early fifteenth century, and the text was copied into this manuscript in 1483.[656]

This Ode to Haarlem praised the city, but it also had an important function in commemorating its history. The poem in the Utrecht manuscript is preceded by a coloured drawing of the coat of arms.[657] Through this visual representation the writer of the Utrecht manuscript seems to stress the function of remembrance, reminding the reader of its historical meaning. From now on everyone just seeing the heraldry will be reminded of the Damietta story and the greatness of Haarlem.

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655 *'Ende ghinc te rade mit sinen wijse,/ wat hi die van Haerlem gave te prijse/ Of wat hi hem beste mochte scencken/ Dat men lancste mochte ghedencken.'* Mathijszen, Van Mander, and Rutgers van der Loeff, *Drie lofdichten*, p. 16.
656 And we know the legend was popular in Haarlem in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Van Anrooij, 'Middeleeuwse sporen'.
657 Utrecht, UL, MS1180, f. 91r.

The *Gouds Kroniekje* that precedes the poem (in the same hand) is also decorated with coats of arms of the Counts of Holland and Burgundian Dukes, although the manuscript does not contain other urban ones. The decision to include the Ode to Haarlem could thus stem from the writer's interest in heraldry. The two texts following this poem are no homages to towns, but narrate recent history connected to the Cods-Hooks tensions, to which Dirk Matthijsz' work makes little reference.[658] The attention of this poem is on the distant history that proved the greatness of the city and its inhabitants, not on the recent political situation. Only in its closing prayer Mary is asked to keep Haarlem safe 'from party, from war, and from uproar'.[659] A focus on memory is also found in the poem on Dordrecht recounting the 1481 attack on this city, which follows in the manuscript. At the end of the poem the reader/listener is reminded of the message of the story: 'Remember this day that you became tame/ and was made obedient as a lamb.'[660] An important part of the function of these poems was to keep the memory alive.

It was common for these homages to include descriptions of the urban history, origin legends and etymological explanations.[661] The latter were particularly clear in the six odes in A Leydis' chronicle, the Damietta story is an evident use of history for Haarlem. We have seen in Chapter 3 that Haarlem also used this story in other forms of historical culture, such as a childrens' parade to consciously enhance the status and identity of a town, among its inhabitants and even in the whole region. Through all of this, we might get a sense of Haarlem's urban pride, and see a city wealthy enough to spend money on 'propaganda' to enhance its status within the County of Holland. The six odes in Johannes a Leydis' chronicle and Dirk Matthijsz' Ode to Haarlem include the praise of the location, landscape, inhabitants and history of the particular town. Their main function seems to be to simply praise the city and thus increase its status and compare it favourably with other towns. Flanders and England also knew some examples, such as a poem of Ypres that praised the town, but which has sadly not survived, and an homage to

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[658] Jan van Egmond was a Cod leader, who took the city, which was at that moment ruled by the Hooks. The riot in Haarlem was not a direct confrontation between the two factions, but came amidst the tensions when knights, who had plundered the nearby town of Hoorn showed up in Haarlem to sell the goods.

[659] *'Van partij, van oerloch ende van misbaer.'* Dirc Matthijsz, line 148, Mathijszen, Van Mander, and Rutgers van der Loeff, *Drie lofdichten*, p. 17; Utrecht, UL, MS1180, f. 93v.

[660] *'Ghedenct desen dach ghi sijt worden tam/ Ende onderdanich ghemaect als een lam.'* Ibid., f. 95r; see P. Schotel, *1481: Dordrecht veroverd door Jan van Egmond: een episode uit de tijd van de Hoeken en de Kabeljauwen* (Dordrecht, 1981) for more information.

[661] Slits, *Het Latijnse stededicht*, p. 217.

London.[662] These poems do not generally comment on specific current affairs and would do little to contribute to any political discussions.

Pragmatic context

The manuscripts and social contexts described in previous chapters unearthed the large influence of the town administration in the creation of these urban historical texts. It has become clear that many sources were begun during a year of change in the town government, for example through a royal charter changing the way magistrates were elected. The Colchester Oath Book and Red Paper Book were started at such a time after a new urban constitution was adopted in 1372. This might have been a proud moment for the city, a time of 'civic enthusiasm' according to Britnell, but there is obviously also a more pragmatic administrative or legal reason behind this show of urban pride.[663] There are several instances where town registers contain specific didactic information, highlighting their practical use as record or reference books. The Colchester Oath Book for instance contains lists of Saxon and legal terms, and mnemonics for legal dates, as well as two king lists.[664] Just as regnal lists provided a historical and political record but were also useful for referencing documentary evidence, lists of mayors or *schepenen* would have fulfilled the same function.

The two main formats of sources that come from an administrative context and tradition of record-keeping are magistrate lists and custumals which include historical information. Some custumals, the Red, Black or White town books we know from so many late medieval towns, were written with a clear purpose in mind. These registers were symbols of civic pride as well as an attempt to organise the growing number of records and documents that were part of late medieval town administration.[665] These custumals collected copies of documents, lists and narratives to form the town's (or a town institution's) historical and legal record.[666]

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[662] Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems', p. 7; Dunbar, *Poems*, pp. 177–178.
[663] Britnell, *Growth and decline*, p. 123.
[664] Benham, *Oath Book*, pp. 11–15.
[665] Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration', pp. 110–112.
[666] Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 16 calls *Stadtbuch* also *Protokolbuch, Rechtsbuch* and *Gedenkbuch* (Memorial). Lowagie uses the term political-administrative memory in his description of Flemish urban archives. Lowagie, 'Political implications', p. 212.

Historical information was included as evidence or to provide context to legal information. The great value attached to such a political-administrative memory created by the town is seen in a particular incident in thirteenth-century Ipswich.[667] When the town register was taken by the common clerk John le Blake, there was urgent action to rectify the lack of written memory for the town as soon as possible and the story is recounted in multiple town registers as warning for future generations.

The magistrate lists were generally kept over a long period of time, and added to every year or couple of years. Their typically annalistic form represents their main function: to keep a record of the mayors, aldermen, or other officials important to the city as well as some main events. There is no particular situation or event in mind to keep this record for, apart from the idea that it is valuable for a town to know its past. One of the writers of an Italian *ricordanza* formulated this as 'things of the past that I see can be necessary'.[668] I have explored this tradition of recording useful and necessary information in Chapter 3. We can see this in magistrate lists. In Chapter 2 I have mentioned the examples from Bruges and Dordrecht which only included administrative entries, such as the death of an alderman. The Ghent *memorieboeken*, but also the Coventry Annals and Lincoln Roll all contain similar notes of a practical nature. That this type of entry was not only of practical use to a contemporary recorder, but was considered part of the valuable information that these annotated magistrate lists contained, can be seen in manuscript Ghent, SA, 441. Several fifteenth-century hands are recognisable in this *memorieboek* which covers the years 1301-1463. Until 1398 the lists of aldermen are in a single hand and this same hand also wrote some of the historical annotations. More entries were added later in the century, however, and several of those later additions are of a similar mundane administrative tone. The later hand notes, for example in 1320 and 1334, that the benches of aldermen were changed around by the Count of Flanders and in 1379 an entry is added that 'In this said year both the head aldermen died'.[669] Such entries seem to us most useful for the contemporary user rather than one writing decades, or possibly even a century, later. The fact that they were copied in shows they were still important to late

[667] Cuenca, 'Town clerks', p. 20; Schmidt, *Deutschen Städtechroniken*, p. 16.
[668] Ciappelli, *Tuscan family books*, p. 23.
[669] The bench of the 'schepenen van de gedeele' became the bench of the 'schepenen van de keure' and the other way around. Ghent, SA, Fonds Gent, 441, fols. 13v, 27r, 38v.

medieval users and less different from the more historical annotations than the modern reader might think at first glance.

We are again reminded of the close connections between administrative and historical writing and the large influence of the traditions of record-keeping explored in earlier chapters. It confirms that this type of historical writing, in the format of magistrate lists, had a very direct administrative purpose for the town government. Sources of other formats, such as the Chronicles of Haarlem, Rotterdam or The Hague, do not generally mention such practical entries. The layout of magistrate lists reflects their main aim of recording the lists of names. Many *memorieboeken* and London Chronicles show that notes were only added in the margins or at the bottom of the page, while the lists took centre stage. In the Lincoln Roll the names were written first at a fixed distance from each other all the way through, and only afterwards were the notes written in red in between them or in the margins. The notes were of secondary importance, and the planned design of names in a continuous list decided the format. The Bristol *Kalendar* is made to a design that included more obvious space for historical notations. Only two years were covered per page of the mayoral list, keeping ample space for historical notes. Most years for the first centuries were not annotated, although the space for them was left empty. But again, the rarity of the annotations demonstrates they were not the most significant element of the book. And indeed, Ricart's characterisation of his work as 'Kalendar' or 'Register' highlights its main administrative purpose.

These lists of civic names resemble the tradition of recording king lists in England and dynastic lists in the Low Countries as well as the medieval monastic tradition of lists of abbots or bishops. The successive rulers were a clear structure for historiography as a sign of the continuity and antiquity of the dynastic claim and national stability. Together with the custom of dating in regnal years, we can see the king lists as a structure for placing and understanding oneself in a larger chronological and historical timeframe. Referring back to the lineage of kings reiterates the legitimacy of the current monarch, in the same way that keeping track of a mayoral or aldermen list that starts at the first mayor confirms its legal title.[670] The magistrate lists in the cities can be seen as having the same function of showing continuity and antiquity of urban office, and thus power, as well as providing a

[670] David Dumville, 'Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists', in P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (eds.), *Early medieval kingship* (Leeds, 1977), pp. 72–104.

practical frame of reference for administrative work and dating. The practical action of recording, whether it be lists of kings, lists of magistrates, or other documents, for the purpose of documentation and future evidence, lies at the root, at least in part, of many urban historical documents.[671] This in itself can show a strong urban identity and pride as well as giving a basic account of the city's past and continuity of power, but form and motivation come from a pragmatic rather than chronicling tradition.

Legal memory

Town clerks did not only keep general urban records for the remembrance of significant names, events, and documents. They were also involved in the urban courts and many of them had some legal background. Many of the historical writings that survived in town archives were also part of the town's legal memory for the defence of the town's rights and privileges, or a record in case that proof was ever needed. The occurrence of history writing in towns has often been explained by scholars as expressions of urban pride (e.g. Britnell on Colchester mentioned above), or, quite the opposite, as those of urban crisis.[672] Both situations could indeed understandably create an urge to write. In this section I will discuss examples of writing from times of political upheaval and (administrative) change. Such an atmosphere produced administrative accounts to preserve the legal memory as well as writings from a political ideological perspective to defend, legitimise, commemorate or try to make sense of events.

Such texts suggest a state of uncertainty of the town's authority against other national and urban authorities. Urban crisis can occur because of conflicts with the 'state' or national ruler, which was the case in the Flemish urban rebellions in the fifteenth century. The Burgundian Dukes and Duchesses have been known to take away urban privileges as punishments at certain stages, as we recall the sour note of disapproval in the Rotterdam Chronicle recounting Charles the Bold handing out small offices.[673] We can also think of Coventry, having to pay fines for supporting the wrong side in the Wars of the Roses, and Bristol, York and other towns experienced

[671] Pollmann, 'Archiving the present', esp. p. 249.
[672] Van Houts, *Local and regional chronicles*, pp. 46–47.
[673] See chapter 4, p. 201. This also happened in England, for a London example: Carrel, 'London *Liber Albus*', pp. 181–182.

similar situations.[674] The fear that a ruler could take away privileges was also reflected in the habit of having every new king, count, or duke confirm existing urban privileges.

Record-keeping also focused on keeping the legal memory of the rights of the town in regard to other local, most frequently ecclesiastical, authorities such as abbeys or cathedrals within or adjacent to the town.[675] Relations with rival towns were also influential in writing historiographical texts. Towns used these to protect local liberties such as freedom of tolls or the right to hold fairs, but also to prove greater antiquity or past deeds that place a town higher in the 'national hierarchy' than rival towns. In the Chronicle of King's Lynn, for example, we read of a conflict with Cambridge about the tolls and annual fairs.[676] In the instance that the town itself was involved in a conflict with another town or the ruler, the town clerks' knowledge of the town records and the written memory he produced would be essential in the preparation for judicial defences.

Use of history in urban conflicts

Anonymous town clerks from cities as Colchester, Exeter, and Ghent all used the great antiquity of their city to argue the judicial power it had. Antiquity in itself carried authority and thus status, and if that antiquity was peopled by Trojan princes or Roman Emperors, even better. This celebration of famous founders and distant pasts proved the town's antiquity and thus enhanced a town's status. History was also used to justify political authority or specific legal issues by providing historical context to claimed privileges and customs.

From Hereford, a negotiation document specifying the town's and the cathedral's proof of their respective claims on authority in parallel columns, is a perfect example of the way history was used in a practical way in the Middle Ages.[677] Several types of documents, such as charters, a Domesday book, and a book from the Exchequer, were used to strengthen their arguments, as well as the collective memory of the townspeople. Both parties claimed the greater antiquity, which

[674] Fleming, *Coventry*, p. 23.
[675] Lorraine Attreed, 'Urban identity in medieval English towns', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32:4 (2002) describes local conflicts about urban space and jurisdiction in Exeter, Norwich, York and Shrewsbury; see also Rosser, 'Conflict and community', pp. 32–36.
[676] Flenley, *Town chronicles*, p. 190.
[677] Rosser, 'Conflict and community', pp. 28–29.

automatically implied more authority, and supported their case with legal documents on customs and liberties.

In the mid fifteenth century, Exeter's mayor John Shillingford made a similar argument at an arbitration case in London with explicit use of the town's history to support his (the town government's) case against the cathedral and bishop:[678]

> The saide Maier Baillifs and Communalte seyn that the saide Cite of Exceter of right olde tyme y called Penholtkeyre the most or one of the most auncion of this londe of whas begynnyng no man can fynde ne rede, the whiche cite afore the encarnation of Christ was a cite walled and suburb to the same of most reputacion worhsip defence and defencible of all these parties […] The whiche cite sone apon the passion of Crist was by Vaspasian biseged by tyme of viij deys; the whiche opteynyd not the effecte of his sege and so wende forth to Burdeaux and fro Burdeaux to Rome and fro Rome to Jerusalem and there he with Titus byseged Jerusalem and opteyned and solde xxx jywys for a peny as his appereth by Croniclis: and alwey the saide Cite of Excetre hole and undevided yn worship as hit is abovesaide yn to tyme of the comyng thider of the Bisshop and Chanons. Afore whas comyng there that now is a Cathedrall Churche and a paleis was a Monastere and a cite of blak monekys of the order of Seynt Benet y-founded by Kyng Athelston. The whiche monastere and cite, now Cathedrall Churche cimitere and paleys, is and alwey hath be yn and of and parcell of the saide cite and under the jurisdiction and power of the same.[679]

According to the city's account, the cathedral was not only built a long time after the city of Exeter was founded, but was not even the original ecclesiastical institution in the town, as it was built on the site of a Benedictine monastery. The greater antiquity of the city is considered a valid argument to give the city's jurisdiction authority over that of the cathedral. The foundation of Exeter is even said to be so long ago that there are no documents about it. However, chronicles are mentioned as a source for the description of the failed siege by Emperor Vespasian. Although this emperor defeated Jerusalem, Exeter withstood him for eight days. This piece of urban pride enticed even the Chancellor in charge of the arbitration process to a joke, but Shillingford replied somewhat hurt that he had just 'putte yn to prive [proof] what the cite was of olde tyme'.[680] Books and chronicles are repeatedly mentioned in the

[678] John Shillingford, Stuart A. Moore (ed.), *Letters and papers of John Shillingford, Mayor of Exeter 1447-50* (London, 1871). Short overview in Rosser, 'Conflict and community', p. 32. See also Lorraine Attreed, 'Arbitration and the growth of urban liberties in late medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 31:3 (1992).
[679] Shillingford, *Letters and papers*, pp. 75–76.
[680] Ibid., p. 12; Rosser, 'Myth, image', p. 12.

arbitrations in Hereford and Exeter, and both distant and more recent history was consciously and effectively used in argumentation.[681] To write down history was to turn it into legal evidence, and to give it authority.

A similar urban conflict might lie at the foundation of the chronicle in the Colchester Oath Book.[682] In the last chapter the origin myth in this chronicle was discussed, demonstrating how the connection to King Coel, Roman Emperor Constantine and St Helen brought the town antiquity and status. But the chronicle also contains more recent history. The Colchester Chronicle paints a picture of the Roman origins of the town, but then jumps seven centuries ahead to discuss the building of the castle and the renovation and consecration of the chapel originally said to have been built by St Helen in the fourth century. The significance of the particular events that the chronicle reports may have been related to tensions between the authorities of the castle and abbey and the authority of the town government.

According to the chronicle, the city is clearly of more ancient foundations than both the castle and the chapel. After the entry relating Constantine's death in 330 the translation of the head of St Helen (whose death in 322 was also narrated) to the monastery of Bury St Edmunds in 1145 forms the bridge to the entries of later date. Subsequent entries, not all in chronological order, discuss among other things the destruction and foundation (in that order) of the castle by Eudo Dapifer. Dapifer is granted the city twice, in 1072 and 1089, by Kings William the Conqueror and William Rufus. It is remarked that in 1076 Dapifer restored the chapel of St Helen, and the next entry recounts how the chapel was dedicated. However, this latter entry is dated 1239, so although in subject close to the previous entry, it is not related to it (or to the translation of St Helen's head in 1145) in time:

> 1076 Eudo Dapifer built the Castle of Colchester on the foundation of the palace of Coel, formerly King, and restored the chapel of St. Helen which, as it is said, she herself built and dedicated to St. John.
> 1239 Which chapel was dedicated on St. Katherine's day, in honour of St. Katherine and St. Helen, by Roger, Bishop of London, in the presence of William, Abbot of St. John.[683]

[681] One example is this response by Shillingford: 'Y saide nay, and made a longe rehersall therof fro kyng Edwardis tyme ynto this dey, how and under what fourme hit was don of olde tyme', Shillingford, *Letters and papers*, p. 13.
[682] A similar conflict existed in York between the city authority and St Mary's Abbey, Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration', pp. 119–121; Liddy, *Contesting the city*, chap. 3.
[683] Benham, *Oath Book*, p. 28.

Although these entries refer to an ancient origin of the chapel, as it was built by St. Helen, this foundation took place after King Coel first founded the city and after Emperors Constantius and Constantine reigned and spread Christianity.[684] The renovation and dedication also place the origin of the building as it was known at the time of writing at a more recent moment in time. Similarly, the granting of the town to Dapifer and his construction of the castle places the (royal) jurisdiction of the castle at least 700 years after the town's foundation, again confirming the antiquity and authority of the city authorities.

Direct evidence that such tensions were playing up between the town and local ecclesiastical authorities earlier in the fourteenth century is found in the Oath Book. An agreement between the Bailiffs, Burgesses and Commonality of Colchester on the one side and the local Abbot and Convent of St John on the other from 1338 is copied on f. 148.[685] A disagreement about taxes and tolls on the lands and possessions of the convent seems to have been ended through mediation. So it is possible to read in this chronicle an assertion of antiquity by the town government in a climate of conflicts between local authorities.

The fact that Bristol Castle and several friaries and abbeys are missing from the city map in the Bristol *Kalendar* is explained by Peter Fleming as the result of a similar unease between local authorities.[686] This anachronistic plan of Bristol is depicted next to the foundation story of the town, although it depicts a much more contemporary situation, showing two main streets in a cross, with the four described gates at its corners and the High Cross, erected allegedly to commemorate the 1373 town charter, in the centre. We can assume the contemporary reader will have recognised this as Bristol's town centre and presumably the town's oldest parts. Fleming interestingly suggests the 'tight focus on the town as contained within its first circuit of walls' also excluded areas that challenged the authority of the town at the time, such as the Abbey of St. Augustine and other friaries as well as the royal Bristol Castle.[687] These would have been major architectural and social structures so their exclusion is noteworthy. That tensions between these local authorities existed

[684] Crummy, *City of victory*, pp. 143, 151.
[685] Benham, *Oath Book*, pp. 188–189. St Helen's chapel was part of the Abbey of St John.
[686] Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 30 for the map; Fleming, 'Making history', pp. 304–305; Liddy, *Contesting the city*, pp. 54ff.
[687] Fleming, *Kalendar*, p. 32; for background on conflict between the town and Abbey: Peter Fleming, 'Conflict and urban government in later medieval England: St Augustine's Abbey and Bristol', *UH* 27:3 (2000).

is evidenced in *The Great White Book,* in which we can read the Bristol's mayor's and common council's account of the dispute between the city and abbey in the 1480s and 90s.[688] The assertion of the town's jurisdiction over the other local authorities can thus be assumed a function of the drawing and, by extension, the *Kalendar*.

The sources from the Low Countries reveal different forms of local conflict. Rather than disagreements about urban jurisdiction between the town government and ecclesiastical authorities, issues between several political factions within the town's governmental elite were common. In Flanders urban factions existed and were in conflict in more or less violent ways during the fifteenth century, disagreeing about the extent of popular involvement in urban government and the level of cooperation with the Burgundian Dukes.[689] In Holland internal urban conflicts that occasionally turned violent were connected to a longstanding conflict between the factions of the Cods and Hooks.[690] These internal conflicts within the urban governing elite were closely related to conflicts between towns and the territorial ruler. Urban authority was also questioned at the level of interaction with the Burgundian Duke. Towns made conscious use of the past in their argumentation during these conflicts and in negotiations with their territorial ruler.

An example of a text using history in conjunction with verbatim copies of administrative documents in a particular conflict comes from Ghent. The Diary of Ghent (at least the first part) is thought to have been produced by the town government to make an historical argument related to a specific conflict with the Burgundian Duke.[691] It was probably intended as political-administrative *aide-memoire* for the members of the Ghent diplomatic mission in peace negotiations with the duke in Lille in 1452. The first part until 1452 contains more than a hundred transcribed records which take up ca. 80 % of that section of the text.[692] This abundant use of administrative documents, brought together in an historical

[688] Ralph, *The Great White Book of Bristol.*
[689] Jonas Braekevelt et al., 'The politics of factional conflict in late medieval Flanders', *Historical Research* 85:227 (2012); Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'; Jelle Haemers, 'Factionalism and state power in the Flemish Revolt (1482-1492)', *Journal of Social History* 42:4 (2009).
[690] Van Gent, *Pertijelike saken*; Marsilje, 'Factietwist'. See Chapter 1, pp. 60-62.
[691] This argument is true for the first part of the text until 1452. The continuations until 1470 (in the same hand) and from 1477-1515 (in a second hand) cannot as easily be directed to a specific use. The latter parts cover an account of the peace negotiations as well as other (local) events for the years 1453-70 and 1477-1515. *Dagboek van Gent*; Van Gassen, '*Diary of Ghent*'.
[692] Van Gassen, '*Diary of Ghent*', pp. 5–8, however, the other parts contain fewer transcribed records and more 'chronicle-style' entries.

account, does indeed suggest a practical and diplomatic use. The contents and time frame seem to confirm this, since the text starts with Philip the Good's plan for a salt tax, the proposal that sparked the revolt in the city of Ghent in 1447, and the first part ends around the time of the negotiations.[693] The Ghent city council would have prepared for the peace negotiations with Duke Philip the Good after years of conflict, and Van Gassen has even identified payments in the city accounts to a clerk and a notary for writing jobs related to the Lille negotiations.[694] Although Van Gassen identifies a lack of a strong Ghent-focused ideology in this text which raises questions about its diplomatic use, whether this particular manuscript was used by the Ghent representatives in Lille or was a copy and continuation from an earlier preparation document, it does provide an example of manuscripts created by the town government for specific (court) cases in which history was deliberately used to strengthen the argument.[695] In this case it was not an origin myth or proof of great antiquity, but a detailed account of recent political and administrative history that was used to convey the urban stand point.

These examples from England and the Low Countries show that remembrance and historical writing, both in the form of retelling the distant and recent past and verbatim transcriptions of administrative records, were used by towns to argue their case in political and judicial situations. The antiquity of the city authority over other local authorities was an important part of the argumentation in Colchester, Hereford and Exeter. The Diary of Ghent used accounts of more recent political history in its appropriate historical context to make a case. Certain urban historical texts can thus be understood to function as an urban legal memory.

Political ideology

The texts written to argue a specific juridical position in a court case or negotiation process, such as the example of Mayor Shillingford of Exeter above, demonstrate how closely connected history writing is to the political situation at the time of writing. In the Italian city states history writing was employed very consciously to

[693] On this uprising, see Jelle Haemers, *De Gentse opstand, 1449-1453: de strijd tussen rivaliserende netwerken om het stedelijke kapitaal* (Kortrijk-Heule, 2004).
[694] Van Gassen, '*Diary of Ghent*', pp. 11–12.
[695] Ibid., pp. 4–5. Van Gassen describes how an earlier original written by two different intellectual authors has been lost and was copied into this manuscript; Lowagie, 'Political implications', pp. 212–215.

rewrite the past in a way that favoured the new regime after a change in local government. After the Sforzas had taken over power in Milan they provided their historiographer with documents and information to aid him in the rewriting of Milan's past.[696] Such a new urban historical culture would legitimise the power of the Sforzas and publicise (or ignore) the events they wanted. History writing was an important device in the understanding of the past and in contemporary politics, whether the text was written specifically to get a political message across, or simply against the backdrop of the current political situation. However, many sources not written for any explicit political or legal use also express a political ideology. This is especially relevant as the fifteenth century was a time of political conflict on a national and urban level in all three of the regions I discuss here. The English Wars of the Roses, the tensions between the Hooks and Cods factions in Holland, and the Flemish urban revolts against their territorial ruler have shaped the experiences, memory and historical culture of the fifteenth-century urban writers. In this section I will discuss how many urban historical texts serve to express a certain political ideology, whether through explicit reference, recording events from a certain perspective or simply omitting sensitive parts of the city's history.

England

In England the fifteenth century saw the so-called Wars of the Roses in which Lancastrian and Yorkist kings succeeded each other rapidly and armies brought together by a divers set of loyalties travelled the country.[697] Cities were forced to pick sides whenever an army, monarch or pretender to the throne requested access to the city, lodging, or support in men or money.[698] Whenever a Lancastrian or Yorkist king gained the throne, the cities that had offered support to the opposite side could expect punishment in the form of fines, taxes, withdrawing of privileges or other measures. It is argued that the Bristol *Kalendar* represents an example of a chronicle written in this atmosphere, where the town (and the mayor) in hindsight had supported the wrong army in the Wars of the Roses. When Ricart wrote this, the Yorkist King Edward IV was on the throne (again). Ricart does rather nonchalantly

[696] Ianziti, *Humanist historiography*, pp. 61–102.
[697] See Chapter 1, pp. 53-54, there note 121 for selection overview works on Wars of the Roses.
[698] Attreed, *The king's towns* gives a detailed overview of financial and military support requested from towns.

mention Bristol's lodging of Queen Margaret and the Lancastrian army before the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471:

> And the same time londid in Devon Quene Marget with Edward hir son, gedering grete people came to Bristowe, and met with kyng Edward at Teuxbury, where the Kyng had the fielde; and there were slayne Edward sonne of Kyng H., therle of Devon, the lord John of Somerset, the lord Wenlok, and many othir knyghtes; and was behedid Duk of Somerset, the lord of S. Jones, with many othir knyghtis; and Quene M. taken.[699]

Other than this reference, the *Kalendar* does not comment on Bristol's involvement in the conflict. A few battles are mentioned very briefly, without any political preference. For example, in 1461 the battle of Towton: 'And this same yere vpon Palme Sonday was the bataille of Ferybrigge, othirwise callid Saxonesfielde, whiche lyethe bitwene Shirbor and Datkastur, in the whiche batailhe was ovircome Kyng Harry the vj.'[700] However, Bristol plays a role in the two next entries. For 1461 the *Kalendar* continues: 'This noble prince kyng Edwarde the fourthe in the furst yere of his reigne came furst to Bristowe, where he was ful honourably receyvid in as worshipfull wise as evir he was in eny towne or citee.' But apparently the people from Bristol were not confident that this new king looked favourably upon them, for the next year they sent their mayor to have their civic privileges confirmed.

> This yere the said Philip Mede Maire, bi assent of al the Counseile of Bristowe, was sende vnto the Kynges gode grace for the confirmacioun of the fraunchises and preuilegis of the saide Towne, whiche Maire spedde ful wele with the kynges gode grace, confermyng and ratefieng al the libertees of the said Towne.[701]

It was not uncommon for English towns to have their charters and customs confirmed whenever a new monarch ascended the throne, and in a time of such political conflict, this would be a logical move for a city anxious to keep its autonomy and good relations with the monarch. It is therefore hard to argue this suggests a guilty conscience of a Lancastrian city now wanting to come into favour with the new Yorkist king. A later visit is also mentioned and the payment of a considerable sum of money to the king on that occasion, but precise circumstances are

[699] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 45.
[700] Ibid., pp. 42–43.
[701] Ibid., p. 43.

unknown.[702] What the entry about Mayor Philip Mede's journey to the king does tell us, is the crucial importance of Bristol's liberties to the city, and for the writer. We see how a new monarch creates insecurity, money is spent by the town government on royal visits and gifts, to gain confirmation of - and additions to - the city's privileges. These are the sort of topics you expect a town clerk to know and worry about. According to the prologue, Ricart intended his book to serve a practical function for town officers, and this is confirmed in the type of information he chooses to include.

At the same time, writing the historical annotations in the mayoral list was also creating a memory of the town that could be used for other, political and legal, purposes. It is by no means impossible that later town officials would refer back to these entries to defend Bristol's stance in what we now call the Wars of the Roses and the king's response to that. Peter Fleming has suggested that a specific function of the *Kalendar* was clearing the name of William Spencer, the mayor who commissioned the book.[703] Although Fleming demonstrates that Spencer was accused of being a traitor to Edward IV around this time, I cannot find anything related to him, his pardons or his court cases in the text of the *Kalendar*. It seems to me there can be little doubt that the battles and regime changes related to the so-called Wars of the Roses had an effect on the selection and tone of the *Kalendar*, whether Spencer had any direct influence over this or not. It makes sense to stress Edward IV's visits and the gifts he received rather than the monetary and military help King Henry VI was given in the decade before. However, as the Wars of the Roses received relatively little attention compared to the scope of the register, their interpretation would not, in my opinion, be the main function of Bristol's *Kalendar*.

Another English source showing the political position of its town in this conflict is the Coventry Annals. The last year recounted in the Annals is 1462, which is very probably the year they were written. This date suggests a re-use of the roll after the genealogy written for Edward IV's visit on the other side of the parchment roll just the year before, in 1461. The year 1461 has by far the longest entry in the Annals and is the only entry that includes a copy of another document, in this case Prince Edward's letter. It comes as no surprise that this text, written under King Edward

[702] Ibid., p. 45; Fleming, 'Making history', p. 313.
[703] Peter Fleming, *Bristol and the Wars of the Roses, 1451-1471* (Bristol, 2005), pp. 15–26; Fleming, 'Making history', pp. 309–316.

IV, after his visit to the city the year before, portrays a Yorkist view. However, this only becomes evident in the text of 1461; the accounts of battles before then are short and factual and lack any political opinion. The description of the second Battle of St Albans, however, is different:

> The same yere was the Journey of Saynt Albons & ther the qwene and the lordys of the North fett away the kyng and slow mony men and be hedyd *traytourly* the lorde Bonevyle and Syr Thomas Kyryall and went in to the north Agayn *Robbyng and Spoylyng*.[704]

Here the political opinion of the writer is obviously not in favour of the Lancastrian Queen Margaret. The objectivity of earlier comments can be explained by the close relationship Coventry had with Queen Margaret and King Henry VI in previous years.[705] Margaret had spent much of the years since 1456 in and around Coventry, and the court had resided here for a considerable period of time. Rather than rewriting this history, the writer of the 1462 Coventry Annals simply fails to mention most of this. The only reference to this episode in Coventry's history is the 1456 entry: 'Then came qwene Margaret first in to Coventre'.[706] The large festivities accompanying this, and the other visits, suggested by the 'first', are simply ignored. The (new) Yorkist preference of Coventry becomes unmistakable in a further event in 1461. 'Also the same yere the Prynce sent a letter unto the Mayre and the eldurmen of Coventre.'[707] It asked the city to be for his 'welle beloved' knight Sir Everingham and others 'helping and faverable in alle that ye can and may and faylyth not so to do as ye wolle onswer to my lore and to us at your peril.' This letter was written at the battlefield of St Albans on 17 February 1461 and brought to Coventry by a delegation headed by Everingham's priest, who brought the news that 'the ffelde ys wonnen wit us on the north party'. Now the Lancastrians had won, they wanted to know whether they could 'come to thys Cyte whedur he schalle come safe and be safe therynne […] for he wylle come to helpe to kepe the cyte when the northeryn men comyn downe to you fro the felde and entrete thayme to do yow favour.' Evidently, Coventry's Yorkist sympathies were already known or supposed at this time and the Lancastrians were not sure where they stood. The mayor's

[704] Fleming, *Coventry*, p. 34. My emphasis.
[705] Ibid., pp. 6–8.
[706] Ibid., p. 33.
[707] This and the following quotes from 1461: Ibid., pp. 34–35; for a discussion of the events ibid., pp. 11–17.

response merely confirmed these sympathies, seemingly not impressed by the threat of the Northern armies.[708] 'And then the mayre onswerde thus and sayde Yf he wylle come on hys owne peryll he may and whedur he come or not y trust to godd to kepe the cyte to the kynges behove.'

The next sentences demonstrate another line of political interest in the Coventry Annals. The writer does not stop after this official conversation is set out, but continues to include the commons:

> when the lettre was redde in Saynt Mary halle the Comyns were so meved ayens the preest and hys men had not the mayre conveyed thayme owte of the fraunches thay wold A smytt of the prestes hed and hys men also.

This was not the mayor acting by himself, but on behalf of the people of Coventry. The priest and his men have to be brought out of the city. The commons make clear that within these boundaries they, and their representative the mayor, are in charge and do not like to be intimidated. Because this was written from hindsight with the knowledge that the Yorkists were the winning party (in 1462), and the Yorkist enthusiasm thus very possibly embellished because of this, I like to agree with Peter Fleming's conclusion on this outburst of violence in St Mary's Hall, namely that we have no reason to doubt that the confrontation happened, even though the extent of it is unclear.[709]

This is not the only place where the involvement of the commons is specified in the Annals. Earlier in 1461, it is recounted how 'the lordys and the Comyns of the Southe [had arisen] and Chosen the Erle of Marche to be Kyng'. This formulation stresses again how it was not just the nobility or urban governmental elite deciding on political matters, but that the Yorkists took the will of the people into account. The writer thus suggests a wide support for King Edward IV and tries to take away any suggestion of tyranny or unlawful claims of the throne. Several other rebellions either in Coventry or other places in England are mentioned in the Annals, in 1372, 1381, 1400, 1422 and 1450. An entry from 1390 describes another local uprising by saying 'the commyns threw lovys at hys hed in Saynt Mary hall'.[710] The anger of the people, in this instance perhaps about the price or measures of bread, is apparently

[708] Another interesting feature of the Coventry Annals is that it discusses the Wars of the Roses in terms of Southern and Northern armies. Fleming, *Coventry*, p. 26.
[709] Ibid., p. 15.
[710] Ibid., p. 30.

expressed by the people throwing loaves at Mayor Harry Kele in the guildhall. The Coventry Annals highlights these periods of disturbances of the normal order with the majority of comments on the subjects of battles and fights, executions, uprisings, and monarchs dying or starting a new reign. Although the mayors are without doubt central to this mayoral list, and most of the entries discuss actions dominated by the king, queen or nobility, the common people are not entirely absent from the mind of the writer; the memory of their rioting forming a threat to the urban governing elite possibly still present in the writer's mind. From a political viewpoint, the commons are most clearly used to stress the popular support of Coventry and in fact the whole South for the new Yorkist King, and it shows a writer who knows how important the commons' support can be for urban and royal authority.

Flanders

The fifteenth century was also a time of (urban) crisis in Flanders. The late Middle Ages in Flemish towns were characterised by revolts and conflicts with the Burgundian and Habsburg Dukes, in their function as counts of Flanders. The *Boeck van al 't ghene datter geschiedt is binnen Brugghe* is a text that arises from such a rebellious town. It describes the turbulent years 1477-1491 in the city of Bruges. After Charles the Bold's sudden death in 1477 his daughter Mary of Burgundy granted the cities more rights and privileges to assure their support. Within the Flemish cities new administrations with more participation of the guilds took the place of the old Burgundian regimes. However, in the following years Mary and specifically her new husband Maximilian of Austria tried to reduce the urban privileges again. The political opposition between the Burgundian 'state' and the towns became even more poignant after Mary's sudden death in 1482 which left Maximilian regent of the Burgundian lands for their young son.[711] The *Boeck van Brugghe* begins as follows:

> Item on the 14th day of February Anno [14]77, the commons of the city of Bruges went up to their houses.
> Item on the tenth day of April anno [14]77, they came to the market with open standards, banners and pennants, and they left again the seventeenth

[711] Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet', pp. 3–5 for a short overview of those years; see also Haemers, *For the common good*; Haemers, 'Factionalism'; Jan Dumolyn, 'Privileges and novelties: the political discourse of the Flemish cities and rural districts in their negotiations with the dukes of Burgundy (1384–1506)', *UH* 35:1 (2008).

day of April.[712]

The book thus begins tellingly with two entries recounting the people of Bruges gathering in their guild houses and on the market with open standards and banners, clear signs of unrest among the population. The account of the year 1477 was written at least as late as 1482, after Mary of Burgundy's death, because the writer mentions her with the addition 'may God bless her soul'.[713] The 1480s were a particularly chaotic time politically for the County of Flanders and the city of Bruges, with the imprisonment of Duke Maximilian of Austria in 1488 as its apogee. From the year 1485 onward the writer of the book makes some comments that suggest that by now he was writing contemporaneously to the events rather than in hindsight. He breaks up the story in June 1485 to include a text about 1477, telling the reader apologetically that he only received this text on 9 December of that year, suggesting he was writing the June entries (and possibly the earlier parts) in December 1485.[714] In later years comments are included in a similar way a short time after the events, because the writer, as he assures us, had not known of them earlier.[715] This makes it likely that he was writing relatively contemporaneously to the events, gathering information as he went along, from at least late 1485 onwards.[716]

The writer, evidently a citizen of Bruges, must have felt the turbulent events of the early 1480s were a reason to start recording what was happening in his town, and the events of February 1477 represented the start of this unrest. The first two years of the *Boeck*, written in hindsight, pay most attention to the coming and going of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian, but for later years an increasing number of smaller, local events are included, such as fires, processions, crimes and executions. The political conflicts between the factions in the town and between the city and Maximilian are also given attention, as well as peace treaties and the many war efforts and movements of troops in and around the city of Bruges. The writer does

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[712] *'Item up den 14sten dach van Sporkele anno 77, doe trac tghemeente van de stede van Brugge elc up huerlieden huuzen. Item den tiensten dach van April anno 77, doe quamen zy ter merct met hopenen standaerden, bannieren ende pingioenen, ende den seventhienden dach van April doe zo ghingenze weder of.'* Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, p. 1.
[713] Brussels, RL, MS13167-69, f. 23r.
[714] Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, p. 74.
[715] Ibid., pp. 256, 299, 310, 312, 316, 387.
[716] In 1490, when describing an execution of two men, namely 'Petyt Jennyng, who was called Karkele guy, and the other Jacob, but the writer did not hear his surname', the impression is given this was written soon after the witnessed events, ibid., p. 356.

not reveal his own opinion about the conflicts. Both Maximilian and the representatives of the city are usually mentioned with positive adjectives and certainly never in a negative way. From the death of Mary of Burgundy, Maximilian is described as Philip's 'natural' father and legal guardian, and while recording the time that Maximilian was imprisoned by the Bruges city authorities the writer is extremely factual and avoids any positive or negative adjectives.[717] He describes the 'discord that was between the Duke Maximilian and the good city of Ghent, and the good city of Bruges' in detail but without political opinion.[718]

The short factual way of recording means there is no clear political discourse discernible in this book. Very rarely does the writer mention things done according to old customs, by which he means in a proper way, but not in occasions related to the conflict between ruler and town.[719] More than anything he seems relieved when the conflict is solved and everybody returns home peacefully.[720] The text ends in 1491, although we cannot be sure that more pages did not once exist.[721] It is not surprising that citizens in times of political and military conflict start keeping a diary or record events in some way, especially someone who was obviously very interested in the events in the town and had such an eye for detail. Personal recording might not have been the sole reason for his writing. Remembrance for future generations and an attempt to place all events in their context could have been other functions of the text.[722] This can be seen more clearly in another record of Flemish urban rebellion, the book of Jan de Rouc.

Jelle Haemers has published an edition of the extant fragments of the eyewitness account by Ghent citizen Jan de Rouc.[723] De Rouc, a member of the tick weavers' guild, wrote about the rebellious events in Ghent in the 1470s and 1480s. The only fragments that have survived are his account of 1477 and 1481, of which extracts were copied by his son Jan de Rouc Junior in 1539 in the face of new conflicts between the town and their ruler. The dates of writing tell us that both the

[717] E.g. entries of 21 and 30 June 1485, *'der natuerlicken vader van onzen jongen erfachtegen heere ende princhе, den grave Phylips', 'voorvoocht ende monboor van zynen zeune, onzen erfachtegen princhе.'* Ibid., pp. 75–76.
[718] 9 February 1488, ibid., p. 181.
[719] Dumolyn, 'Privileges and novelties'; 25 March 1488, Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, p. 55.
[720] 17, 22 and 25 March 1488, Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, pp. 206, 208, 209.
[721] The text currently ends at the bottom of the last page of the volume (the fly leaves are added later), so further pages might be lost.
[722] See also Pollmann, 'Archiving the present', pp. 241–249.
[723] Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet', pp. 12–21, edition on ppp. 29-32; Haemers, 'Social memory', pp. 455–462.

original writing of Jan de Rouc Senior and the copying by his son are directly related to urban crises in Ghent. The political ideology of De Rouc Senior that can be deduced from the extracts gives the picture of a middle-class craftsman, who was politically engaged and active, but not part of the urban governing elite.[724] The copying of the extracts by his son is most interesting in the light of the function of the text. Although it is impossible to check whether this was the main original purpose of the writings, Jan de Rouc Junior seems to have taken the document as an instruction manual for political ideology and action. In 1539, the year of copying, conflict between Ghent and the Emperor flared up again. However, Jan Junior also comments he found this text, which he calls his father's 'memorie', in his father's house, which does not contribute to Haemers' idea of an active social memory being consciously communicated to the next generation. Although I fully agree with Haemers that the account shows not just Jan Senior's personal view but also the ideological view of the social groups he was part of, such as members of his guild or even middle-class craftsmen in Ghent in general, this does not prove he wrote it for a broader public. Whether the extracts express the essence of De Rouc Senior's writing or the specific selection of his son is impossible for us to say. The writing of Jan de Rouc Senior and his son both illustrate how urban crises could be an incentive for townspeople to record and consult historical events. It also demonstrates how recordings of historical events were used by townsmen to make sense of political events and to develop political ideology. Whereas the writing of Jan Senior mostly shows an urge to record for remembrance in chaotic times, the copying by his son illustrates how the past was accepted as an important influence and example for political situations.

This account shows how historical sources were used to remember and reconstruct not only an ideology, but also specific political arguments for the justification of urban revolt. De Rouc's account of 1477 provides a detailed record of how urban privileges and promises by Mary of Burgundy justified action by the Ghent population. His account celebrates the power of the crafts guilds and we can perhaps detect some pride when he recounts how the aldermen could not make the protesting craftsmen leave the square and act as they wanted. The language used is a lot more detailed and political than that in the *Boeck van Brugghe*, where we are

[724] Jan de Rouc Junior fulfills the office of schepen for two years, but as one of the minor schepenen, a function without much actual political power. Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet', p. 15.

not told why the guilds marched upon the market with open banners, or what the content of Mary of Burgundy's oath was a few days later. The 1477 extract ends with the installation of a new town government as requested by the guilds and is thus a victorious account of popular rebellion in Ghent. Jan Junior might have copied it for this reason. This function of historical accounts as justifications of contemporary politics is not unique to De Rouc's text. In the continuations and adaptations of the *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* there are also direct connections with the rebellious years of the second half of the fifteenth century.

Legitimisation as function is exemplified by the changes in some Bruges copies of the *Excellente Chronicke van Vlaanderen* in the light of the events of the 1480s.[725] When recounting the Flemish origin story of *forestier* Liederik de Buc who conquered the land from giant Finard, the latter is called a 'tyrant' in the Bruges continuations of the *Excellente Cronicke*.[726] This was a very politically charged term and one used in the contemporary political rhetoric of the rebellious towns in the 1480s. Popular revolts against the ruler could in medieval political thought be justified if the ruler was either not the natural, and thus rightful, heir, or if he did not have the common good of the people in mind. These arguments are indeed made against Duke Maximilian in the 1480s in rebellious Bruges to legitimise the dangerous political choices made by the population.[727] Other sections in dynastic and political history from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries were rewritten with a political purpose in mind. Accounts of previous problematic successions in the dynasty of the Counts of Flanders were adapted to represent the contemporary dynastic crisis rather than the actual historical events. As a result, the problematic behaviour of the counts in the past reads remarkably like the things the common people of Bruges rebelled against in the second half of the fifteenth century. In these historical cases the common people were justified to rebel, which is made clear by describing how the behaviour of the counts, such as spending too much, selling offices, or not being the natural heir, were legitimate reason to call in a more noble, and rightful, heir to the title.[728] Both the very distant, mythical, and the more recent, historical past are used to carefully influence the readers' mind about the contemporary political situation.

[725] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing'.
[726] Ibid., p. 41.
[727] Dumolyn, 'Privileges and novelties'; Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet'; Haemers, 'Factionalism'.
[728] Demets and Dumolyn, 'Urban chronicle writing', pp. 41–44.

Not all Flemish sources are necessarily written because of the uncertainties of urban crisis; this is especially true of the format of magistrate lists, which, as previously mentioned, were continued over a longer time and in a more continuous way. The Ghent *memorieboeken* do record part of the urban revolts and insecurities, but there is no indication they were written because of urban crises or to deal with the consequences. Originating from the town government, they were made to represent, if not all of the city, at least all of the governing elite, which could include members of different factions, making their texts more neutral. Jacob van Artevelde's rise to power and death, for example, are mentioned in a factual way. Manuscript UB 2554 recounts unassumingly: 'In this magistrates' year arose Jacob van Artevelde' in 1337, and seven years later: 'Here died Jacob van Artevelde.'[729] The brevity of these entries can also be partly explained by the nature of this tradition of annalistic record-keeping. These notes were additions to the lists of *schepenen* and were brief references to memories, rather than attempts to provide an historical account. Only in the sixteenth century do these notes become longer and more elaborate historical accounts.

Despite being part of a much longer tradition of recording, political situations at the time of copying did influence these texts as well. This is demonstrated through the sixteenth-century *memorieboeken* that took 1540 rather than the traditional 1301 as a start date. The shift in political circumstances after Charles V's punishment of Ghent in 1540, changing the institutional structure of the city and taking away much of its administrative records, was apparently successful to some extent.[730] It changed the scope of the social and political memory of the record keepers of the city of Ghent. So texts reflecting the urban historical culture are coloured by the political developments and ideologies of their time, even though individual manuscripts do not necessarily express a particular political bias or ideology; whether they do or not says a lot about their origin and audience.

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[729] *'In dit scependom rees Jacob van Artevelde. Hier bleef Jacob van Artevelde doet.'* Ghent, UL, MS2554, fols. 16r, 18v. The account in Ghent, SA, 441 is slightly more elaborate and symbolic: 'In this same year on all children's day Jacob van Artevelde arose into the government of the city helped by the commons and was in power 7 years, 7 months and 7 days.', 'In this year Jacob van Artevelde was beaten to death in an attack by the king, who was his enemy, on the 17th day of August.' Ghent, SA, Fonds Gent, 441, fols. 28r, 30r.

[730] Lowagie, 'Political implications', p. 215.

Holland

In Holland the ongoing conflict between the factions of the Hooks (*Hoeken*) versus the Cods (*Kabeljauwen*) determined much of the politics in the fifteenth century. The exact identity of these groups changed significantly over time due to personal and political loyalties and towns switched sides depending on the particular men in civic offices and the city's relationship with the count. [731] Most regional historiography from Holland has a Hook perspective when describing the battles and skirmishes between the two groups.[732] The local conflict interconnected with growing influence from the Burgundian court, the Cods supporting Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy after John of Bavaria's death in 1417 as the new Count of Holland, and so incorporating the county into the much larger framework of the growing Burgundian 'state'. The Hooks supported Jacqueline of Bavaria as the new countess and later opposed Mary of Burgundy's successor Maximilian as well. These tensions were very present at times in the towns, and not only because the urban governmental elite was involved personally. The preferences of the town magistrates marked the towns for one or the other party, and this influenced decisions on treaties and military aid or taxes given to the territorial ruler or other towns.[733]

There are several poems from an urban context that refer directly to the Hooks-Cods tensions. Following Dirk Matthijsz' Ode to Haarlem in the Utrecht manuscript there are two more texts in verse: a poem on the attack on Dordrecht by Cod leader Jan van Egmond in 1481, and a song describing the violence in the city of Haarlem in 1482.[734] I want to look at the former here in more detail, because it provides a clear account of the historical event, as well as adding a political opinion to it. The poem recounts in verse what happened this sixth day in April 1481 from seven in the morning. According to the poem Jan van Egmond ('the noble, high born lord of Egmond') embarked on the ship of captain Jan Teeusz together with his men. This brave captain ('like a lion's heart was this skippers courage') sailed his boat to the gate of Dordrecht, told the sheriff he just had all kinds of normal goods on his

[731] See Chaper 1, p. 60 for the Cods-Hooks conflict, there note 144 for overview works.
[732] Beke's chronicle had a Hooks perspective, and this had a long influence. Janse, 'Haagse kroniek', pp. 24–28; Janse, 'Utrechts naar Hollands', pp. 192–193.
[733] For an overview that includes the changing positions of the different towns during the fifteenth century: Van Gent, *Pertijelike saken.*
[734] Utrecht, UL, MS1180, fols. 93v-95r, 95r-96v, Van Gent calls the former a song, but Van de Graft considers it a poem and therefore does not include it in his book on songs.

ship and was let in. 'Never were goods so quickly unloaded.'[735] Van Egmond and his men spread through the town to the city hall, killed the mayor who came out with a big hammer to murder Jan van Egmond, and took over the town. All others from the mayor's 'party' (*van sijnre partijen*), in this case the Hooks, tried to flee by boat. This is evidently a story praising the Cods for a cunning plan that successfully won the city of Dordrecht from the Hooks. But it is also more than that. The introductory and concluding sections in particular tell us about the function of this poem.

> In the world there is no loyalty of loyalties equal
> Of any noble man, poor or rich,
> What greater loyalty can one find written
> Than to risk one's life for his rightful lord
> Or for his friends, he is to be praised
> Because his loyalty exceeds all loyalty
> An example you will hear in this poem
> How the noble, high born lord of Egmont
> Risked his life so bravely, as many saw
> For his lord, on the sixth day of April[736]

Trouw, translatable as loyalty or faithfulness, is a crucial term in these first lines. There is no higher loyalty than risking your life for your rightful lord or for your friends. This poem gives an example of this loyalty through the deeds of the noble lord Van Egmond. The suggestion here is that Van Egmond was an exemplary subject to the Burgundian Duke, his rightful lord, as well as a faithful friend to his fellow Cods. This is stressed even further by the suggestion he liberated Dordrecht from a bad government. 'How rebellious, how disobedient, how bad governance/ has been in Dordrecht in the council.'[737] Van Egmond's actions are therefore doubly justified, because he not only acts from loyal allegiance to his rightful ruler, but also to free Dordrecht of evil governors. This same topic of obedience to one's rightful ruler is repeated once more at the end of the text:

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[735] Quotes this paragraph from ibid., fols. 94r-v.
[736] Ibid., fols. 93v-94r. '*Ter werelt en is ghien trouwe der trouwen ghelijc/Van enich edel man arm ofte rijc/Ja wat trouwen men vint bescreven/Dan voer sinen rechten heer te setten sijn leven/ Of voer sijn vrienden is hi te loven/Want sijn trouwe gaet alle trouwe te boven/Exempel sel gi een nye ghedichte horen/Hoe die edel heer van egmont welgheboren/Syn leven stoutelic settede so menich sach/ Voer sinen heer in april den sesten dach.*'
[737] *Hoe rebel hoe wederspannich hoe quaet bestier/ Binnen Dordrecht heeft gheweest inden raet.* Ibid., f. 94r.

Remember this day that you became tame
and was made obedient as a lamb
Be obedient to your rightful lord
so useless blood is spilled nevermore.[738]

The writer of the Dordrecht poem has a clear political message in mind. The political ideology of the 'rightful' or 'natural' ruler was a well-known one in medieval Europe. This concept played a large role in the Wars of the Roses and many succession conflicts in the Low Countries, for example, in the case of Jacqueline of Bavaria as countess of Holland, and was used by the rulers to claim their thrones.[739] But, as mentioned in the previous section on the *Excellente Cronike*, it was similarly exploited by the population to object to rulers. Flemish towns, for example, made it very clear to Maximilian after Mary of Burgundy's death that they only saw him as a regent for their natural ruler, the then three-year-old Philip. This poem is not a casual recounting of objective history, but a legitimisation and justification of recent events in Dordrecht, likely written down in this manuscript only two years after the events.[740] It was also a warning for future behaviour, reminding its audience to remember to support the side of the rightful lord.

The song about Haarlem, the third poem in MS 1180, is less explicitly about the Cods-Hooks tensions, although those would have played a part in the historical event.[741]

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[738] *Ghedenct desen dach ghi sijt worden tam/ Ende onderdanich ghemaect als een lam/ Sijt ghehoersaem uwe rechte lants heer/ Onnosel bloet en stort nimmermeer.* Ibid., f. 95r; Schotel, *1481* for more information.

[739] Paul Strohm, *England's empty throne: usurpation and the language of legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven; London, 1998), pp. 98–100, 126–127, 139–141; Antheun Janse, *Een pion voor een dame: Jacoba van Beieren, 1401-1436* (Amsterdam, 2009); Robert M. Stein, 'Recht und Territorium. Die lotharingischen Ambitionen Philipps des Guten.', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung: Halbjahresschrift für die Erforschung des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* 24:4 (1997).

[740] The *Gouds Kroniekje* in the same manuscript has the year 1483 written beneath it. Mathijszen, Van Mander, and Rutgers van der Loeff, *Drie lofdichten*, pp. 5–6 states all these are written in the same hand, which would suggest this poem was composed and written down soon after the event.

[741] Between the lines we can read a justification by the people of Haarlem of the violence. Although not directly related to the Cods-Hooks tensions, they would have added to the aggression. Knights from a Cods leader plundered the city of Hoorn and then arrived at Haarlem planning to do the same. The people of Haarlem took up arms and killed many of them leading to a riot in the streets. At the end of the song it suggests that the knights had stolen the holy sacrament out of a church. Unlikely to be a historical element to the story, this fact (and probably later addition to the song) obviously clarifies who was on the wrong side of history in this event and justifies the violence from Haarlem citizens. Utrecht, UL, MS1180, fols. 95r-96v; Van de Graft, *Historieliederen*, pp. 100–105; Petra J.E.M. Van Dam, 'Factietwist of crisisoproer? Achtergronden van een vechtpartij in Haarlem, 1482', in J.W. Marsilje (ed.),

The event itself and the entertainment value of it are highlighted in the song rather than the Cods-Hooks politics, but from the contents we can detect a pro-Haarlem account, justifying the inhabitants' response to the event. Similar in this respect is the poem recounting the siege of IJsselstein from the early sixteenth century. This narrates the (second) siege of IJsselstein by Utrecht, two towns which had been in conflict for decades. Although not explicitly mentioned in the poem, the tension between the Cods (IJsselstein was owned by the Van Egmont family, loyal to Maximilian) and the Hooks (Utrecht) added to the urban antagonism. The writer identifies early in the poem as being pro-IJsselstein. He calls the people of Utrecht 'dazed fools' and calls their actions 'treachery'.[742] The poem is, just as the one about Haarlem, mostly an account of events, but this writer's political opinion is clear. These two politically biased poems create a politicised historical culture, but they do not argue a specific political legitimisation and ideology as explicitly as the Dordrecht poem.

In this section we have seen that in both England and the Low Countries, the political situation had a large influence on the contents of medieval urban historical writing. Times of crises, unrest and uncertainties were in particular moments that both individuals and administrations in towns started writing. The functions of these writings were to make sense of the chaotic situations and record a memory of these events for the future. The latter could be from a personal point of view, as Jan de Rouc showed us, educating the next generation through the example of political argumentation and popular revolt in his time, or from an institutional one, documenting evidence of the city's view of the course of events, for example in the Diary of Ghent. Also in sources that were not written especially to argue a political argument, the contemporary political situation was often influential and ideology could be read between the lines; or through the missing lines, where politically awkward events were simply omitted. The very explicit politics found in the poems form Holland are rare.

Bloedwraak, partijstrijd en pacificatie in laat-middeleeuws Holland (Hilversum, 1990), pp. 142–146.

[742] 'Beleg van IJsselstein', pp. 670–671.

Reception

The discussion about function cannot be complete without considering the reception of the texts. Following on from Chapter 3's concept of collective authorship, we initially expect the audience of a text to be from the same social circles as the writer. The historiographical traditions and collective memory of a larger group shaped the historical culture of the individual writer of the text. The writer's social groups, for example craft guilds, family connections, social class, and locality, would all have their own experience of political and historical events, aspects of which he incorporated in his text. Reception has to be studied from this collective viewpoint. The 'textual communities' that influenced the writer's experiences would often be the writer's intended audience, for they would like to see their view on history written down and share the opinions, and the literary or social referencing, as well as steer the choice of format, language, and genre of the text.[743] So in many instances we will find the audience in the same social circles as the writers.

Many of the documents we have that fit in a tradition of record-keeping, such as the magistrate lists, were in first instance made for a small audience, mostly of town clerks and officials. The second half of the Bristol *Kalendar*, for instance, was specifically intended for future town officials: 'worshipfulle persones as hereafter shall be callid and electid to the seide officez, at theire ceasons of leysoure to rede or do to be redde and overseen this present boke.'[744] As most sources do not provide written clues to their intended audience, the language, form and contents also give indications. An example is the Latin mayoral list in a York custumal.[745] This register was used in the York town administration, where Latin was used longer than in most English towns.[746] A possible explanation of this is the desire of the town officers to keep the information for their small circle of professional and governing elite. However, as Chapter 2 concluded, most of our other urban historical texts were in the vernacular, as was most fifteenth-century urban administration. This does also create the possibility of a larger audience of non-clerical and non-university educated citizens.

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[743] Stock, *Implications*; Brian Stock, *Listening for the text: on the uses of the past* (Baltimore, 1990), pp. 140–158.
[744] Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 69.
[745] York, CA, Y/ COU/3/1, see p. 86, note 226.
[746] Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy', p. 223.

Even though these documents can be regarded as official town records, because they represent the collective vision of the town government, rather than personal notes, this does not mean they were accessible to the wider public. This seems characteristic for medieval town governments, to keep most information to themselves. In several oaths of civic officers secrecy is explicitly commented upon.[747] This tendency towards secrecy is also apparent in the place where town documents were kept. In Flanders the chests that contained the urban privileges, secured with several locks, were stored in the town's belfry. English and Dutch towns knew similar chests, usually stored in the town hall.[748] Belfries and town halls were architectural symbols of urban pride and thus appropriate for the safekeeping of the very representation of urban autonomy, its charters and registers. The York register was held literally under the mayor's seat and the Colchester Oath Book was kept in the moothall for use by civic officers, both at the heart of urban government.[749] There were also public readings, for Flanders we know both annual accounts and major events were 'cried out' from the city hall.[750] However, these could be staged, only sharing certain parts or documents with the wider public that suited the town government. Tineke van Gassen even showed how some texts that were read publicly had quite different contents from the actual letters and agreements.[751]

Some official texts, however, might have been available for reference for a wider public. MS Guildhall 3313, which only contains a London Chronicle, is most likely produced in a London workshop and is an example of an official document from the town government that had a wider reception.[752] McLaren suggests it could have been kept in a semi-public place where guild officials or possibly other citizens

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[747] Mostert and Adamska, 'Introduction', pp. 7–8 see Part II of this publication for several essays on urban secrecy.
[748] Fleming, *Kalendar*, pp. 5–6; Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy', pp. 222–224; Mostert and Adamska, 'Introduction', p. 7; in Yarmouth the chest was located in a church, Andy Wood, 'Tales from the "Yarmouth Hutch": civic identities and hidden histories in an urban archive.', *P&P* 233: Supplement 11 (2016), p. 216; Lecuppre-Desjardin highlights the importance of place in urban identity, Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies*, pp. 65–102.
[749] Steele O'Brien, 'The Veray Registre', 179; Britnell, 'Oath Book', p. 98.
[750] E.g. on the 1st and 4th April 1483, when the peace between France and Flanders was cried out in Bruges, Carton, *Boeck van Brugghe*, pp. 47–48; Dumolyn, 'Privileges and novelties', pp. 11–12.
[751] Van Gassen remarks how the general population was fed a simplified and politicised story of political negotiations that suited the town government. Van Gassen, '*Diary of Ghent*', pp. 9–10; Benders, 'Urban administrative literacy', pp. 105–106.
[752] MS Guildhall 3313 used to be attributed to Robert Fabyan. This attribution originates from the well-known antiquarian John Stow, who possibly confused the manuscript with the text of the printed *The Newe Cronycles*, which was attributed to Fabyan. McLaren shows there is no evidence to link MS Guildhall 3313 to Fabyan. McLaren, *London Chronicles*, pp. 26–28.

could access it and in some cases, add to it. There are multiple marginal hands, and three of them each inserted a guild (the goldsmiths, fishmongers and drapers) next to the names of the appropriate mayors.[753] This suggests that at least some guild officials, and possibly a wider range of citizens, did have access to the manuscript and its ideas.[754] These additions illustrate not just the possibility of it being 'consulted' as McLaren describes it, they also demonstrate a sense of ownership and collective authorship felt by the writers of these marginal notes, that made them add to the text. They were thus part of the same 'textual community' around this manuscript, forming both audience and contributors. The spread of Ghent memory books and London Chronicles similarly shows citizens of some status could get access to certain documents from the archives, but it is unlikely that most townspeople without any specific civic office would ever have seen such documents.

Within the town government there could also be a desire for some texts to address a much broader audience, in principle the entire population of the town. We can imagine texts produced to be read out in public, displayed during a royal entry like the Coventry Annals dorse, or as plays and *tableaux vivants* performed for the whole urban population to see and hear. The Chronicle of Haarlem and the Bristol *Kalendar,* both produced within the town administration, indeed describe a more diverse audience. Ricart starts the chronicle in his *Kalendar* by addressing:

> *[E]very Bourgeis of the Towne of Bristowe, in especiall thoo that been men of worship*, for to knowe and understande the begynnyng and first foundacion of the saide worshipfull Toune: Therfore let him rede the olde Cronycles of Brute.[755]

The beginning of the Chronicle of Haarlem suggests a similar audience: 'so that *the burghers of Haarlem* may learn and know the honour and praise of the eternal glory which their predecessors have earned often and manifold.'[756]

The burghers of Bristol and Haarlem are addressed as the intended audience. The burghers were not the entire urban population, but the middle and higher

[753] Ibid., pp. 28, 101.
[754] Lowagie, 'Political implications', p. 216.
[755] Bristol, CC/2/7, f. 3v; Ricart, *Kalendar*, p. 8. My emphasis.
[756] *'op dat dair off die poirters van Haarlem mogen leren ende kennnen den loff ende prijs der ewiger glorien die welke hair voirgangers dijcwijl ende minichvondelic verdient hebben.'* Haarlem, Register 928, 32r. My emphasis.

classes. Ricart specifies the significance of the chronicles for the honourable men of the town, among whom the aldermen and civic officers were an important, but not the only, group. These men are encouraged to read which also suggests a literate audience and again excludes the lowest classes. Whether these particular manuscripts were indeed read by people outside the town archive, were read out in public, or represented a tradition of similar texts that also existed in other, more public, manuscripts, remains unclear to us from these introductions. From the good condition that these specific manuscripts are in, as well as the texts' survival in single manuscripts within the town archives, we may surmise that access to them was likely very limited in reality. However, the spread of the London Chronicles and Ghent *memorieboeken* provides a strong possibility for a habit of copying town documents among interested and educated citizens, and it cannot be ruled out that similar traditions once existed in Bristol and Haarlem.[757]

Decoration in manuscripts can point out the difference between private and public documents. Any substantial decoration is very rare in the texts discussed in this thesis, but there are a few exceptions. The official sixteenth-century *Schepenboek* from Ghent is very nicely decorated (now in the city museum). This suggests a representative function, where it could be seen and admired. The register that recounted the core structure and names of the urban government represented the town itself and needed to look beautiful and impressive. However, most of the *memorieboeken* that survived from the fifteenth and early sixteenth century do not contain any decoration at all, except for some rubrication. The audience of these books were a smaller group of higher class men and the function of the work more practical or personal than representative. We also find decorations in some of the guild books from Ghent, especially at the start of the registers.[758] The front of these guild books were similarly used to promote the guild's status, importance and wealth, whereas the rest of the book performed the more practical function of preserving the guild's records.

Decoration, much like the contents of these registers, will have functioned in a

[757] Chapter 2, pp. 85-86, 92-94; Chapter 3, pp. 139-41. Van Bruaene, *Gentse memorieboeken*, p. 62.
[758] Guild registers belonging to the Ghent carpenters, brewers and tanners all have miniatures at the start, Ghent, CA, 190/1; Ghent, CA, 160/6; Ghent, CA, 192/1.

practical way, as well as an ideological one.[759] The coats of arms in Utrecht, UL MS 1180 at the top of Dirk Matthijsz' Ode to Haarlem and at the start of every reign of the counts of Holland in the preceding Chronicle of Holland, were as much to point the reader to a new chapter, as to portray an interest in heraldry. Similarly, the half-page depictions of the English kings in Part Two and Three of the Bristol *Kalendar*, add status and beauty to the manuscript, as well as an organisational device.

The Bristol *Kalendar* contains more very skilled decorations, with a full-page image of the mayor-making ceremony as its climax. These decorations must have cost a significant amount of money, but unfortunately we have little evidence on whether and in which situations they were displayed. The image of the mayor-making ceremony depicted in the Bristol *Kalendar* suggests a secluded world of the town government, where the important events happen in the presence of a small group of men, closed off from the rest of the urban population.[760] The beautiful full-page painting depicts the new and old mayor, town officers and aldermen inside a building, presumably the town hall. A wall and doorway, where we can see a sergeant-at-mace, separate this scene from the crowd that has gathered outside. Inside the new mayor takes his oath and we see the town clerk standing by with a book, either the *Kalendar* itself or the Little Red Book, containing the mayor's oath. If this picture reflects reality, it means the book was only shown to a small elite of town officials, and not to the wider urban public, at least not at this occasion (and it is hard to think of a more suitable moment). The inclusion of the commonalty within the scene illustrates the importance of their approval and presence, even if not included in the oath-taking itself. The continuation of the mayoral lists for centuries, and the addition of an index in the sixteenth century, point to a continued use of the book by town officials, but give no evidence for a more public use. The representative message functioned apparently within the governmental elite. The decorated manuscripts of wealthy citizens, for example some *Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen* manuscripts, can be understood to function in a similar way for a small audience of family, friends and visitors. The wealth of decoration would confirm the owner's (or city's) status within a small circle of (near) equals, rather than in relation to the population at large.

[759] See also Steele O'Brien, 'The Veray Registre', 211–227 on registers from London and York, for description of both practical and ideological aspects of those registers.
[760] Fleming, *Kalendar*, pp. 60–64; Cuenca, 'Town clerks', pp. 1–3; see also Liddy, *Contesting the city*, pp. 94–108.

Bristol Archives, CC/2/7, f. 152v, oath-taking ceremony in the Bristol *Kalendar*. With the kind permission of Bristol Archives.

Other forms of historical culture

That many of the texts we discuss here were written in the context of the town administration by writers who were part of and represented the governing elite should not simply lead us to believe the wider population was never among the intended audience or not interested in historical culture. The historical culture communicated in these sources appealed equally to writers for public and private aims, as we have seen that, for example, the *memorieboeken* and the London Chronicles were copied in both an official and an individual, private context. The reception of these manuscripts does not give an accurate view of how widespread elements of urban historical culture were; we have to include other forms of historical culture. The wider population knew of and interacted with similar elements of historical culture as were part of even the more formal manuscript texts, such as the Diary of Ghent or Hereford negotiation manuscript mentioned in the examples above. This can be deduced from the fact that many urban conflicts were accompanied by popular action and were thus more than a mere elite or legal issue. Common people in Hereford took to the streets in riots related to the events we know from official documents, as discussed at the start of this chapter. The same is true for the factional politics in Flanders and Holland. The common people were involved in this, they would listen to speeches, sing songs about it and their representatives wrote political tracts, which all made use of and contributed to the urban historical culture.[761] Popular knowledge of and involvement with urban history is also shown in urban plays, performances at royal entries, songs, architecture and material culture in towns. Through public readings and performances we know that at least some of the core concepts of historical culture were widely shared, suggesting that the wider public at least knew of these stories, even though they might not have been able to (or interested in) understanding a detailed explanation of their political implications.

Aspects of historical culture surrounded late medieval urban citizens in the fabric of the city and material culture they encountered. Some popular interest in history is

[761] Rosser, 'Myth, image', pp. 15–16; Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet'; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Reclaiming the common sphere'; Jan Dumolyn, 'Urban ideologies in later medieval Flanders: towards an analytical framework', in Andrea Gamberini, J.P. Genet, and Andrea Zorzi (eds.), *The languages of political society: Western Europe, 14th-17th centuries* (Rome, 2011).

demonstrated through a medieval form of 'information panels': wooden tables with (historical) information in churches.[762] At Glastonbury Abbey near Bristol the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, which also appeared in the Bristol *Kalendar*, was displayed on parchments on a wooden frame in the church.[763] The choice of Latin does not necessarily suggest a wide audience in this context and the main intended public for this information might well have been pilgrims and visitors. It contained legends of Joseph of Arimethea, King Arthur, and St Patrick, and the history of the Abbey, as well as lists of saints and kings buried there. A reference to a similar table in Exeter's cathedral is made by Mayor Shillingford.[764] Richmond suggested that such tables were common around 1500, although the precise function, what type of information was being advertised and to whom, remains unclear.[765] However, they were public displays, and even if a large part of the urban population would not have been able to read the (Latin) text themselves, one can assume the citizens would have been familiar with their stories. The fact these boards were made does suggest that town or church authorities did consider the historical background of abbeys or cathedrals a matter of interest to the visiting citizens and pilgrims. Not only the current authority, but also the status acquired through antiquity was made clear to the public.

Origin myths in particular can often be traced easily in urban historical culture as they lend themselves well to retelling. The Bristol and York royal entries described in Chapter 4 demonstrated how the Trojan Kings Brennius and Ebrauk were used in the welcoming performances in the fifteenth century, making themselves known to the visiting monarch and the audience. In Bristol the population would also recognise this king from the statues of Brennius and Belinus on St John's Gate.[766] Bristol was not unique in this. For example, Bath also had a

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[762] C. Richmond, 'Hand and mouth: information gathering and use in the later Middle Ages', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1988), pp. 246–247; Wood, 'The "Yarmouth Hutch"', p. 214 for example of 'chronological table' in St Nicolas' Church in Yarmouth. Rosser, 'Myth, image', pp. 14–15.

[763] Gordon Hall Gerould, '`Tables' in mediaeval churches', *Speculum* 1:4 (1926).

[764] Rosser, 'Conflict and community', p. 32.

[765] Richmond, 'Hand and mouth', pp. 246–267, see nt. 5.

[766] The precise date of their appearance is unknown. They were definitely there in the seventeenth century, and 'it is at least possible that they were pre-Reformation'. Peter Fleming, 'Processing power: Performance, politics, and place in early Tudor Bristol', in A. Compton Reeves (ed.), *Personalities and perspectives of fifteenth-century England* (Arizona, 2012), p. 162. Later medieval town and guild halls in the Low Countries were similarly decorated 'with public relations and politics in mind', for example: 'statutes of the members of the reigning dynasty often adorned the façades of these halls', Marc Boone, 'Urban space and political conflict in late medieval Flanders', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* xxxii:4 (2002), pp. 630–631.

king's head, representing the city's founder King Bladud according to popular legend, carved in the town defences.[767] Other biblical and national history, especially the anecdote of St George slaying the dragon was also very common in urban performances and plays. Similar material culture that would have reminded the urban population was to be found in Holland. In Haarlem the 'saw-ship' of the Damietta legend was used in the public sphere as a reminder of this proud episode in its history. A quarter in the town of Leiden was called 'Woud zonder genade', 'Forest without mercy'.[768] This was a reference to the larger area in which Leiden lay, which according to medieval historiography was called the forest without mercy before the Hollanders populated it and founded cities. The urge to understand origins and archaeological and visible features as well as etymological explanations encouraged a close connection between material aspects and historical narrative.[769]

Songs are a form of historical culture that typically had a very different audience than written texts. Most historical songs were created by popular and travelling poets and performers, possibly soldiers or knights.[770] They were sung, we imagine, by all sorts of groups in urban society, but would have been more common within the lower classes.[771] Not many late medieval song texts have survived. They were obviously more often transmitted to future generations orally than in writing, and only some have ended up in the few early modern song books that survived.[772] Other songs are known only by their titles or through references in other sources such as court records. Historical songs are quite often also political songs.[773] These are often vague about the actual historical event, but the transmission of the event is more important than an exact recount of what happened. A lack of historical fact did not

[767] Rosser, 'Myth, image', pp. 12–14.
[768] Marijke Carasso-Kok, 'Het woud zonder genade', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 107:2 (1992), p. 244, nt. 12.
[769] Architectural remains, such as ruins of Roman forts were incorporated in urban origin myths. See the Colchester example. Also for Holland, Tilmans, 'Autentijck ende warachtig', pp. 84–87; Woolf, *Social circulation*, pp. 310–315.
[770] Van de Graft, *Historieliederen*, pp. 32–39.
[771] Ibid., p. 39. Political and historical songs obviously also existed in England, but no urban examples. See Thomas Wright, ed., *Political poems and songs relating to English history, composed during the period from the accession of Edw. III to that of Ric. III* (London, 1859); Carter Revard, 'Political poems in MS Harley 2253 and the English national crisis of 1339–41', *The Chaucer Review* 53:1 (2018); Scattergood, *Politics and poetry*, pp. 298–377.
[772] The Antwerp Song book is the most important source for the fifteenth century. Van der Poel and Grijp, *Antwerps Liedboek*. The historical songs from the Antwerp Song book are discussed by Van de Graft, *Historieliederen.*
[773] Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems'.

decrease the political meaning these songs had.

An example of some songs from late fifteenth-century Holland that refer to the conflict between the Hooks and Cods will demonstrate how powerful these historical references could be. Singing of the song *Brederoede hout dy veste* [Brederode, hold on] was reason for punishment by the town governments of Haarlem and Leiden, as well as the Council of Holland in the years between 1478 and 1483.[774] This song referred to the Brederode family, a prominent family on the side of the Hooks in the previous century and a half. The transmission of events, and more importantly, the meaning of it for the singer or performer in his or her contemporary political situation, is what brought these songs significance. This was not only felt by the singers, but also acknowledged by the governmental elite. The singing of this and other 'party songs' was prohibited as it was feared they would incite a new outburst of the party conflict. Punishments for the *Brederode* song ranged between a three guilder fine and three years of exile, so the offenses were taken seriously.

Titles of other songs show they had a strong political argument in them. In Hoorn in 1481 several Hooks forced their way into the household of brothers Jan and Pieter Gerbrantsz while singing *Waer is hij nu Sceelwe Ghijs van Egmondt, die leit tot Nijmmagen in den hellengront ende Mancke Jan ende alle die gaperts* [So where is he now Cockeyed Ghijs van Egmondt, who suffered in Nijmegen in the depths of Hell and Jan the Cripple and all the Cods.][775] Cockeyed Ghijs and Jan the Cripple were the brothers Frederik and Jan van Egmond, well-known Cod leaders. The singing Hooks evidently did not care much about discussing exact historical facts, but rather expounded their view of the Cods' leaders. Provocation of the other group and emphasis on the identity of one's own group based along political lines were part of the function of these songs. Some songs (or poems) related to the Cods-Hooks conflicts do relate a more consistent narrative of a historical event. The afore-mentioned song of the Haarlem riot of 1482, the poem about the surprise attack on Dordrecht in 1481, and the IJsselstein poem are examples. The functions of these texts are diverse. The historicity of the event is not the point of these verses, but rather remembering the fact it happened at all and the political implications it

[774] For these three cases, see Van Gent, *Pertijelike saken*, pp. 421–422; Van de Graft, *Historieliederen*, p. 21.
[775] Van Gent, *Pertijelike saken*, pp. 422–423. Van Gent translates the term *gaperts* as a (derogatory) term for Cods.

carried.[776] Van de Graft however, sees songs changing so much that he concludes it is no longer the political meaning, but the dramatic framing and the vivid imagination of the poet why they survived so long. Many songs about dynastic figures turned into stories about a bride and her lover, a dying mother, and other personal and dramatic stories.[777] Exceptionally, some songs recount major political events, such as a fourteenth-century song about Jacob van Artevelde that was still sung five centuries later. The oral traditions as well as the dramatisation of the events mean historical songs hold very little historical information. However, shared referencing of collective memories of key historical moments created a shared urban identity and proves a large part of the urban population shared these elements of historical culture.

Conclusions

> The tales told by the magistrates could not operate in a vacuum, but depended for their effect upon their capacity to resonate in the wider public consciousness. Given the modern historian's heavy reliance upon written sources, it is easy to underestimate the roles of oral tradition and of visual images in the generation and dissemination of urban stories.[778]

Gervase Rosser made this very significant point in one of his articles on urban ceremony and ritual. Although part of this chapter is spent discussing individual sources, the overall impression of the studied texts are impossible to understand without knowing how much elements of the stories resonated with the visual landmarks and architecture, social events and performances, and songs and oral stories. An initial exploration throughout this thesis has shown snippets of the recurrence of historical themes and elements. The stories in the Bristol *Kalendar* were mirrored in statues and entry ceremonies and the tensions between the Cods and Hooks factions were not just present in written texts but experienced by the common people in songs and revolts, to name just two examples. Urban historical culture was encountered and shaped by the inhabitants of a town in many ways and in many forms as different imprints of this shared historical culture was interpreted and used by many groups within urban society.

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[776] Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Political poems'.
[777] Van de Graft, *Historieliederen*, pp. 25–26.
[778] Rosser, 'Myth, image', p. 12.

The way a society and groups within that society record their past or even adapt stories about their past says a lot about their contemporary political situation and identity. Consciously or not, political ideology is often recognisable in the written text. The past can be used in a very functional way to legitimise political views and self-identify as individual or collective.[779] Several of the manuscripts discussed use their historical account to justify their political ideology. The level of political interaction can range from an explicit party political argument, as in the poem on Dordrecht in UL, MS 1180, to political jests, in the case of the Cods-Hooks songs that were forbidden due to their inflammatory effects.

Urban recording is especially present in times of urban crisis, when it is easily understandable that the urban government feels the need to record its legal status quo and document its side of the story, and more individuals take to writing their experiences to educate future generations and make sense of the events unfolding around them. The Wars of the Roses, Cods and Hooks factional conflicts, and political conflict between the Flemish towns and Burgundian rulers, made for a particularly tumultuous fifteenth century in England, Holland and Flanders. The political situation influenced many professional and non-professional writers to record events and attempt to place them in their historical context.

However, not all uses of historical writing have such a political intention. Functions such as pragmatic recording for future civic officers and future generations, creation of status and expressing of praise can also be found in historical writings in all three areas. Written evidence of historical culture has shown us that texts from an urban administrative context were mostly written for practical functions within the context of pragmatic literature. Some historical texts are the result of court cases and specific conflicts. But even without one particular court case or meeting to prepare for, a town's legal memory consisted of such documents which ensured that a record of the town's past and its rights and privileges were saved for future generations.

Memory and remembrance are central themes when examining urban historical culture. Remembrance of historical heroic deeds and origin myths to promote a town's antiquity and status, as in the Ode to Haarlem by Dirk Mathijsz, is

[779] Richard C. Trexler, 'Introduction', in Richard C. Trexler (ed.), *Persons in groups: social behavior as identity formation in medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Binghamton, 1985).

common. This memory is a collective, or social, memory, as it is linked to the urban identity of the town and groups of its inhabitants rather than to the writer's individual memory. There are multiple reasons for remembering the past and selecting certain parts from history to write down and commit to memory, as the above studies show. This written memory can be used to document and praise the city's past and so enhance its antiquity and status; to record the legal past of a city and thus protect its legal future; or to record the political past of a city to legitimise its political choices of the present. Moreover, these functions are not exclusive and a single text can have multiple uses at once or throughout its lifetime.

Conclusions

This thesis has shown that there is ample evidence of historical writing in late medieval towns in the Low Countries and England. A lack of research into the issue and a narrow definition of medieval town chronicles have until recent years hampered the recognition of these texts in these regions. The medieval County of Flanders, with its great metropoles Ghent and Bruges, has been the obvious place to start research on urban historical writing outside Germany and Italy. Indeed, this has been done in the last decades and more and more Flemish studies on urban historical sources continue to appear. The secondary literature brought incidental mentions of urban historical sources in the Northern Low Countries and England, but no coherent information was available, providing an inviting field for this exploratory study into written urban historical culture. Research into urban historiography has usually been on a specific manuscript or a particular town. Hence, one of the objectives of this thesis has been to adopt a large comparative and international perspective and to compare manuscripts of various towns and countries to give a more coherent assessment of the amount and nature of medieval urban historical writing.

This thesis has conducted a comparative study of several characteristics, such as format, authorship, contents and function, of urban history writing in England, Holland and Flanders. It has sought to discuss the urbanness through the combination of the manuscripts' characteristics in many smaller towns in these three regions. The connection to the national or regional authorities in these three regions with very different political situations and the difference in degree of urbanisatiaon have been central to the study. In addition to identifying texts that can be considered urban historical writing, this thesis has shown that there are important similarities and differences between the texts from the three regions under discussion. Main themes include their administrative contexts, a fluidity of form and function and their relationship to national narratives and origin myths.

Much has been written on the definition of medieval chronicle, and town chronicle. The fact that twenty-first-century articles still bear titles such as 'What is a chronicle?' is strong proof that existing definitions are not straightforward and not

fit for purpose.[780] Although there have been increasing attempts in recent decades to take a broader look using concepts such as historical consciousness and social memory, I have chosen to use the framework of historical culture. The concept of historical culture is purposefully broad, including all expressions of, communication about, and ideas that have to do with the past. The valuable perspectives provided by social memory studies and the viewpoint of historical consciousness are considered but the use of historical culture gives more space to discuss the physical manuscripts as well as the ideology behind it.

My focus has been on written evidence of urban historical culture but I have tried to highlight where possible the strong links with other forms of historical culture. In some cases, like Colchester's Roman remains, they influenced a written account of the town's early origins, in other cases, such as the appearance of King Brennius and Ebrauk in the perfomances during royal entries in Bristol and York, they highlighted the cooperation between so many different expressions of historical culture of similar elements, narratives and feelings.

An aspect that has become apparent in the study of these written expressions of urban historical culture is the fluidity of forms, genres and traditions. The boundary between administration and historical writing is fluid and characterised by their interconnectedness; administrative sources can be historicised to a small or large extent, but there is never a dichotomy. The formats are also fluid. Although I have discussed the primary sources I interacted with in six categories in Chapter 2 to facilitate comparison between towns and countries, and to highlight certain recurring elements, that overview clearly showed these categories were not exclusive or clear-cut. Form is not unimportant and can help us recognise urban history writing and tell us about a manuscript's social context and message; as long as form does not determine what is considered urban history writing and engaged with as such, and what is not.

This has important implications for our perception of late medieval historical writing more broadly. It provides a large boost to the recent feeling that categories such as 'town chronicle' should be interpreted more broadly and move away from a discussion focussing mainly or even exclusively on definitions. This is a debate in

[780] Dumville, 'What is a chronicle?'

medieval studies that has taken place in the study of Flanders more than in the other areas. The Ghent memory books, the Diary of Ghent, Ypres' so-called Chronicle of Olivier van Dixmude, songs, and many other sources have been studied there in recent years giving a new perspective to the concepts around medieval urban chronicling. By expanding this approach to both England and Holland, this thesis demonstrates that there are many manuscripts that have previously been ignored which can be productively engaged with from the perspective of urban historical culture. Not only does this expand the scope of what can be useful to analyse for the discipline, it also adds to our understanding of urban historical culture and identity in these areas.

Geographical comparisons

There is a greater amount of secondary literature that already exists on urban historiographical writing in the County of Flanders, which is why I have chosen to use this as a comparison to England and the Northern Low Countries rather than engage with primary sources for this region to the same extent. The main political background influencing urban historical culture in fifteenth-century Flanders was one of urban conflicts with the Burgundian and Habsburg Dukes. Several sources, such as the *Boeck of al 't ghene datter geschiede te Brugghe*, the Ghent artisan Jan de Rouc's writings on the 1470s and 1480s, and certain urban copies and continuations of the regional Excellent Chronicle of Flanders tradition all strongly focus on the events related to such conflicts. This ranges from quite factual accounts of guilds' movements and popular gatherings in the *Boeck of Brugghe* to more politically charged argumentation and legitimation of those events, either describing contemporaneous events by Jan de Rouc or rewriting early history in similar terms to create examples, as in some urban versions of the *Excellente Chronike* tradition.

Flemish urban historical sources are generally very much concentrated on the specific town they originate in. Events in the rest of Flanders or internationally are discussed, but often from a very local perspective. The notes in the guild register of the cloth shearers in Bruges for example shows this, giving accounts of the festivities in the town after publication of royal births or peace agreements, rather than recording the moment the actual event took place. There is no particular attention for events in other Flemish cities.

A distinct corpus of manuscripts from Flanders are the Ghent memory books. The sheer volume of these similar manuscripts which have the *schepen* lists as their main structure is exceptional, with over forty manuscripts currently known. Many of these manuscripts are from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the tradition stems from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, giving it clear medieval roots. In the development of these *memorieboeken* the transition from purely administrative sources recording the lists of aldermen, to historical registers with entries stretching over several pages per year, is illustrated. In the fifteenth-century manuscripts I focused on in this thesis, however, the annotations are few, they are short and appear in the margins of the lists. Also in the later manuscripts, the lists of aldermen remain the main structure and always get pride of place at the start of every year in a similar manner, upholding the administrative background and underpinning to the texts.

In the County of Holland most written expressions of urban historical culture are in relatively traditional chronicle formats. The Chronicle of The Hague for example is a continuation of (a continuation of) the Middle Dutch translation of Beke's Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht. It was a common practice in medieval chronicle writing to extend existing work to the writer's own time, and it is the strong emphasis on local events in The Hague and the detailed knowledge of the town that gives it a distinct urban character. Even texts completely 'urban' in their contents, such as the Chronicle of Rotterdam, written in one of the town registers, and the Chronicle of Haarlem, which only has entries directly related to the city and people of Haarlem, are written in a style and format reflective of traditional medieval chronicles and used Chronicles of Holland as their sources. Odes to cities, poems praising a certain city, were also relatively common in Holland, compared to the evidence I found in Flanders or England. The historical components in these poems were either origin myths and etymological explanations connected to the city's founding or descriptions of major historical events that the city derived status from. The recounting of the Damietta legend in Dirk Matthijsz' poem is a typical example. And although not having anything to do with the city's foundation, it does explain the origin of and design of Haarlem's coat of arms. These odes to cities were also part of a well-established medieval tradition.

One of the reasons that it was easy for urban writers in Holland to refer back to and use the national history writing tradition was the strong urban component already present in this historiography. In the fifteenth century, and especially after the County of Holland had become part of the larger personal union of the Burgundian Dukes, national history writing in Holland changed to become less focused on the comital dynasty. Previously the structure of many chronicles was made up by the consecutive counts, whereas now a purely chronological structure became the norm. In the *Gouds Kroniekje*, written around the 1440s and printed as early as 1478, and the historiographical tradition based on that text, the early history of the county received much more attention than in previous chronicles. The early history of Holland was told through identifying the origin of the people of Holland and a series of city foundations; the first Count of Holland only becoming part of the story at a later stage. This reflected the strong urban component in Holland's society and political structure. Holland was a highly urbanised society, although most towns were small to medium sized and none ever became as large as London, Ghent or Bruges in the Middle Ages. Holland's towns however had an institutionalised voice in the county's polity with an urban representative at the Estates General. Although there were also matters decided between individual towns and the duke, there was a strong communal sense of urban identity. This was reflected in the urban historical culture, as we have seen in the entries in the Chronicle of Rotterdam where events in the towns of Holland were always discussed more favourably than those in Guelders, Flanders or other counties. Internal struggles only became visible through the specific conflicts arising from the Hooks – Cods tensions.

England's urban historical texts have the strongest links with national narratives and dynastic elements from the three areas I have looked at. Similar to Holland, a major national chronicle tradition, in the English case the *Brut* chronicle, included strong urban characteristics making it easy for towns to use or incorporate it. The *Brut* chronicle tradition recounts the dynastic history starting with the Trojan Brutus arriving in England. However, one of the major things Brutus is recorded doing is founding the city of New Troy (later London) and the following list of his descendants is also the story of many urban foundations. This made it easy for towns to link their history to a national narrative, but also provided the town with proof of

antiquity and status, through a proven connection with the earliest foundation of the country and its dynasty. Contrary to the national chronicle traditions in Holland, the *Brut* chronicle is also highly dynastic and combines the dynastic and urban development, whereas in Holland the counts were only brought in to keep the land and cities already created by the people. We have seen several examples where the *Brut* chronicle was copied (in summarised form sometimes) and continued with an urban continuation, such as in several London Chronicles. Alternatively, elements of the narrative were selectively used, as in York's reference to King Ebrauk. The Bristol *Kalendar* not only followed the chronicle with a mayoral list, but also added a few lines with detailed information and a large drawing of the town to the chronicle, another way of making this national narrative unmistakably work from an urban perspective.

A second major national or dynastic element in the majority of English urban historical sources is the regnal dating and inclusion of king lists. The Lincoln roll for example starts with a list of kings with the length of their reign (presumably based on the *Brut* tradition). For the time of the annotated mayoral list the king list also continues in a way through the regnal years used to date. This is obviously a practical issue, as most administrative documents were dated in regnal years, but it also highlights the dynastic presence and continuity next to Lincoln's history and authority. Towns were very aware they were 'the king's towns' and city officers received all authority from the monarch, meaning there was no contradiction between the two authorities. A combination of regnal and mayoral years in many manuscripts highlights this. Starting dates often do prove the urban focus of a text, as they begin with the first mayor, a significant charter, or new urban constitution rather than the first year of a new king's reign.

Proving antiquity and promoting status was one function of written forms of urban historical culture, but especially in England, I also found several sources that referred to or were written to be used in conflicts between the town and other authorities. Proving greater antiquity than one's opponent was an effective way to prove authority in an area and cities used this in conflicts with cathedral or monastic authorities within the city boundaries. The so-called Wars of the Roses influenced political life in fifteenth-century England, although in the urban texts in this study this was more the political background than the reason for writing. Although battles and related events are recounted, Lancastrian or Yorkist sympathies are often not

explicitly advertised. Certain events from the past might have been highlighted or left out to disguise previous loyalties, but explicit political arguments are rare.

Comparable to the Ghent memory books, the London Chronicles form a significant corpus in English urban historiography. Placed together in this group because of their structure of mayoral names and start date at 1189, they do not form as tight a group as the *memorieboeken*. There is much variation in the format, from lists of names with very occasional short Latin notes in the margins, to long vernacular continuations to *Brut* chronicles that use the mayoral names as subheadings of elaborate narratives. Some have an origin in the town administration, others were written and owned by private citizens, collected in commonplace books with recipes, romances, lists of London churches or wards, and many other examples of useful information. This composite nature of urban historical writing in both private and public contexts is found throughout the sources discussed in this thesis.

There are clear local differences, such as relatively more magistrate lists in England, and listing mayors rather than aldermen, more surviving urban poems in Holland, more notaries among the writers in Flanders. However, the level of similarities between the three regions is remarkable. The type of authors (mostly town clerks and professional writers as well as some wealthier citizens); the formats of the sources (continuations of national chronicles, magistrate lists, a combination of administrative and historical information in town registers); the way these sources express their urbanity (by starting at local administrative significant dates and providing detailed knowledge on local geography); a preference for including founding myths and etymological explanations, are all elements that are recognisable internationally. This suggests an organic development of these types of sources from other well-known medieval traditions in chronicle writing, annalistic recording and the demands of pragmatic literacy.

Similarity to German and Italian sources

All the texts discussed in this thesis prove that the assumption that medieval town chronicles were limited to the geographical regions of German and Italian city states was incorrect. However, urban historical writing did start earlier particularly in

Italy than in other regions and existed in much larger numbers in some Italian and German cities than seems apparent in the Low Countries or England.

While accepting this difference in timeframe and scope, the perspective of this thesis has shown that urban historical texts from Holland, Flanders and England were not fundamentally different from those examples from Germany and Italy. Many aspects of their form, the combination of administrative and historical information contained within them, and the authorship by town clerks, notaries and professional writers, are all similar.

The range of urban sources in Florence, from long formal narrative accounts starting with the city's foundation at one end of the scale to the *ricordanze*, family chronicles at the other end, mirrors the wide range of formats expressing urban historical writing in towns in England and the Low Countries discussed in Chapter 2. The recurrent format of magistrate lists discussed in this thesis is also not unknown as Italian urban history writing is equally said to have developed from lists of urban governors, albeit two centuries earlier than in England, Holland and Flanders. Continuations of national chronicles are known from all areas, and the odes to cities especially prevalent in Holland, were influenced by the German and Italian genre. There are also very clear parallels between the German *Ratbücher* or *Stadtbücher* and the English custumals or Dutch *keurboeken*. The fluidity of the boundary between history writing and administrative recording and the development of narrative historical elements in administrative sources are very similar. The strong connection with the town administration that was found in the primary sources discussed in this thesis was also present in Germany and Italy.

The authors of these sources were either wealthy citizens, in the case of the Florentine *ricordanze* for example, or in the case of most German sources, they were town clerks. Both groups are similarly identified as most common writers of urban historiographical sources in Holland, Flanders and England. There are local differences in the number of clerks with a notarial background, and the influence of local clergy in urban historical writing, but this is a matter of scope rather than a fundamentally different way of writing or organising the securing of memory for future generations.

As for the contents of the sources, it is a matter of scope, not of fundamental differences between the geographical regions. Many of the definitions of town chronicle contained the assumption such texts exclusively include events relevant

to the particular town. Chapter 4 has shown how in reality national narratives and national elements are widespread in urban historical culture in England, Holland and Flanders, albeit incorporated within urban frameworks. When one moves away from the definitions and actually discusses the town chronicles we know, we find German town chronicles that are part of world chronicles, similar to the way in which some London Chronicles are a continuation of *Brut* chronicles, or the Chronicle of The Hague was added to a copy of Beke's Chronicle of Holland and Utrecht.

Many aspects in which the manuscripts from England or the Low Countries would not conform to the stereotypical definition of town chronicle, such as a non-narrative format or national contents, were actually not applicable to many German and Italian sources either. And although there is a matter of scope and emphasis, in number of sources, as well as differences in the relative number of certain types of authors or formats, many major elements are comparable. This means the texts also had similar functions in forming the political-administrative memory of the towns, as well as some sources being a more personal or family record. The difference is quantitative rather than qualitative, with generally more and more elaborate urban historical sources from medieval German and Italian cities than from towns in England, Holland and Flanders, but many aspects of the manuscripts were similar. Therefore, this thesis has proven that late medieval urban historical writing was not limited to the geographical region of Italy and Germany. It has also shown that we need to move away from discussions of definitions of 'town chronicles', not only to be able to identify and study manuscripts from the rest of Europe, but even to fully appreciate German and Italian urban examples.

Themes in historical culture

This thesis talks about written expressions of historical culture in late medieval towns. As historical culture includes all physical reminders of the past, all written and oral expressions about the past, as well as all ideas connected to history, this thesis has by necessity only been able to discuss a small part of urban historical culture in detail. During the discussions I have referred to other forms of historical culture, such as songs, ceremonies, statutes, architecture, art, but only insofar as they mirrored or overlapped with notions found in written historical culture. Every

town's historical culture is unique and changeable, but we can see certain common themes in the written expressions of historical culture discussed in this thesis.

One theme that has become apparent in every single aspect of the historical writings is the connection to the town administration. In form, authorship, contents and reception, the majority of manuscripts discussed in this thesis were significantly influenced by the town administration. Looking at format in Chapter 2, we have seen that in all three countries magistrate lists and town registers were common expressions of written historical culture. These types of documents were especially common in England in this study, although at the current state of research we need to be careful in concluding whether this is a significant difference or merely happens to reflect the environments in which sources were more likely to survive.

In both the Low Countries and England, a large majority of writers of these urban texts were professional writers, most notably town clerks. This offers no surprise, as it is easy to understand how this group in society had the literary skill, as well as the interest and access to sources to write about the city's historical events. However, this authorship also poses interesting questions regarding the formal or private context of these writings; were they commissions by the city and thus city records or were they private expressions of an interested citizen? These questions can only be answered on a case by case basis as we have seen examples of both. The Diary of Ghent and Bristol *Kalendar* are clear examples of commissioned works that are owned by and represent city governments' views. The notes that make up the Chronicle of Rotterdam, for example, are evidence of a more personal venture, including family history. Whether commissioned or a private venture, the writing of town clerks and other professional writers was heavily influenced by the social contexts they lived and worked in and the social groups they were part of. So both types of texts would likely represent the historical culture of the urban middle and higher classes. The town clerks were not part of the governing elite, they often came from less prestigious families and few held civic offices at any point in their careers. However, as they worked for and with the city's government, we can assume their vision on the city's legal, political and historic position was similar to that of the mayors and aldermen. Their long periods of service to the town, compared to annually elected officers, also meant their knowledge and vision of the town's legal memory and history was substantial and highly valued.

The strong links many manuscripts have with the town administrations also brings to the fore another major theme of urban historical writing in the late Middle Ages, namely the practical aspect. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries pragmatic literacy increased enormously in European cities, causing a large increase in the number of documents used for practical, administrative and juridical use. Written evidence became the norm and became valued higher than oral memory. The increase in educational opportunities, literacy and practical and recreational writing manifests itself in the increase in urban historical writing from the fourteenth century in Holland, England and Flanders.

Historical research has seen a shift in the twentieth century from a search for factual details in historical writing at the start of the century to a strong focus on ideology in writing in the last decades. Although I strongly agree that every version of a text and manuscript is worth researching for the perspective it gives on the personal and collective knowledge and view of the author and his society, I argue that many of the texts discussed in this thesis should also be understood from a pragmatic perspective. List of kings were a representation of England's national strength, history and dynastic continuity, but they were also a practical tool for the breakdown of historic timeframes and the main way of dating events and documents until early modern times. Likewise, magistrate lists were both historicised in their celebration of the town and practical documents for keeping track of important events. Several examples that survived to us of townsmen recording the history of their towns were written for very practical reasons. For instance we know of court cases or negotiation processes regarding conflicts overauthority within urban areas between the city and ecclesiastical or royal sites, as we saw in the cases of Hereford, Colchester and Exeter mentioned in Chapter 5. Then there are administrative sources, such as many magistrate lists, that became more historicised over time, but were started as practical records. The development is most clearly seen in the Ghent *memorieboeken*, where the early manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries consist mostly of lists of aldermen and have only occasional historical annotations. The implicit historical meaning of the *schepen* lists proving the city authority's antiquity and continuity becomes more explicit in later sixteenth and seventeenth-century versions when elaborate historical notes are included.

This attention paid to the pragmatic context of some expressions of historical culture is important, because it influences how we as modern historians read a text.

All these manuscripts provide us with a peek into the historical culture of the person writing and the traditions he is part of. Still, how and how much we can read into it depends on the writer's intentions as well as other aspects. When we know that someone set out to write a (narrative) historical record, such as Jan de Rouc's account of the events in Ghent in the 1470s and 80s, we can ascribe more meaning into the views expressed in the text than when there are occasional notes added to lists of aldermen. The latter also provide a glimpse into the historical culture of the person choosing what to include and how to phrase it, but can easily be argued to be less complete in presenting their views on the past and might be selected for very practical reasons.

Other recurring elements are origin myths and, related to that, etymological explanations for the city's name. We have seen this in different formats and mostly in Holland and England, from the six odes to cities in Johannes a Leydis' Chronicle of Holland to the Colchester Chronicle and several English sources referring back to the *Brut* chronicle. In the first instance, foundation myths provide status to the people or place they refer to. Very common elements in origin legends are Trojan or Roman ancestors, providing the place or people with a long past and simultaneously connecting them to illustrious ancestors. This descent can give a city and its inhabitants antiquity and, through that, status. However, origin myths are not only about the city or region itself. They also establish or legitimise external relationships. The hierarchy in foundation legends is always a vital point, because the age of a city and the nobility of its founder create legitimacy to enhance its own status relative to others, both other towns and the national ruler. The story of origin can therefore provide valuable legitimacy for contemporary political situations. Similarly, a region or city can argue for its self-government and continuation of privileges through foundation legends. In Flanders, urban rights and privileges form the basis of a city's status and legal positioning more than any reference to antiquity, which can explain the lack of attention for urban origin myths in Flemish urban texts.

Another aspect of the historical culture we found expressed in the writing in towns was a strong awareness of and interaction with national narratives and national history. There was never a dichotomy between the urban and national perspectives

on history, but the extent to which certain national or dynastic elements appear in sources with an urban character differs and study of this has been part of this thesis. This has been shown especially clearly in English sources, where stories from the national *Brut* chronicle and habits of regnal dating and keeping of king lists were common. Also in Holland and Flanders, there are urban continuations of national chronicles and urban texts based on national narratives. This teaches us there is no contradiction between urban and national history as modern-day definitions have often suggested. The interaction with national narratives is not only logical because they were the prevailing historical narratives, but would also enhance the status and political position of a town, rather than diminishing its urban identity.

If the geographical focus of the contents does not have to be urban, then what distinguishes an urban text from, for instance, national chronicles written in a town? Chapter 4 illustrates that it can be the detail of geographical knowledge for its own town, telling the reader who lived in which house, compared to general terms when talking about other places; it can be seen through inclusion of administrative documents or magistrate lists of specific towns; or through the dating system or the timeframe chosen. Many urban texts, and this is particularly obvious in magistrate lists, tell a story through the start date they choose. Often this was the year of the first mayor, or of an important charter, some sort of significant administrative change. In selecting a significant moment in the urban administration rather than a national one, the writer makes his urban preoccupation clear.

Collective authorship

Chapter 3 has shown how authorship and ownership of shared historical culture, as well as the format that it is shared in, are heavily influenced by diachronic and synchronic traditions. Remarkable in Chapter 2's discussion of format are the strong comparable elements in urban records in the different countries. The format of annotated magistrate lists for example, or odes to towns are remarkably similar in many different towns. Most obviously, the traditions of the London Chronicles and the Ghent *memorieboeken*, both currently counting over forty extant manuscripts, show the collective nature of these sources. Sometimes this collectivity is identified quite literally in writing by successive town clerks or members of a family continuing a book, sometimes more theoretically by people copying a certain format

of one of their sources because it represents ideas and customs they want to keep and are familiar with.

We have seen aspects of two main traditions. Firstly, that of administrative record-keeping, which has produced copies of administrative documents and lists of names of aldermen and mayors, just as it was a custom to keep lists of kings. Secondly, the tradition of chronicle writing or history writing, producing larger narrative accounts, often with prologues and subdivisions into chapters or books, and referred to by their own authors or others as a 'chronicle'. There are obviously other traditions that influenced some particular sources here discussed, such as the genre of *laus urbis*, homages to cities. Just as there is no clear boundary between administrative and historical recording, there is a fluidity in how these two traditions of pragmatic recording and of chronicling were used by late medieval writers. The strong similarities in the format of manuscripts within towns, for example the Ghent memory books or the copies of the Coventry Annals, clearly suggest writers valued aspects of the tradition as well as finding interest in the recounted facts.

The collective nature of authorship also means something for the identification of the audience of these sources. The strong ties to certain traditions that particular groups in society were part of means the primary reception of the sources would also have been within these groups. This suggests most sources would initially be written for a small middle or upper class urban audience. Whether this is in a professional or a private context, the incentive to write in most cases (with the exception of sources especially written as evidence in a legal case) is the urge to record useful information. This can be useful from a perspective of the town administration, making a record of the town's rights and status, or from a more personal perspective collecting historical as well as other knowledge in a personal or family notebook. We have seen that in general two, sometimes contradictory, situations drive this writing. Periods of urban prosperity see an increase in urban art and civic architecture, as well as urban historical writing, proudly showcasing the status and privileges enjoyed. But many other sources come from times of urban crises. Whether through internal urban turmoil, or being caught up in national conflicts, people start writing to record possibly confusing and chaotic actions as well as making sure their side of the story and existing rights are securely

memorised for the future. As more powerful and autonomous towns would earlier take up a challenge to a ruler or rival towns, these drives to record can overlap.

The objective of this study to take a very broad view both in geographical perspective as well as in the types of manuscripts to include, brings with it the consequence that not every source can be given the full attention and research it would warrant. Every single one of the manuscripts I have discussed in this thesis would benefit from additional research, as would the overall debate from the inclusion of more towns and countries in the discussion. As this is an initial study in this field, it does not in any way claim to provide a full overview of extant sources, and a real hope is that future study will identify many more manuscripts that would shed additional light on these findings.

Much is already being done in this field, mostly regarding Flemish sources, where this attention for urban historical culture in medieval studies has been present in the last decade. This thesis sits in a growing field of study into similar sources and interest in a broader field of historical culture in many countries in Western Europe. The holistic attention to manuscript texts inspired by the New Philology approach and a move towards broader frameworks of research such as memory studies, historical consciousness and historical culture open doors to the study of ignored manuscripts.

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