

Women, War, and the Dutch Revolt: The History of Kenau and Magdalena

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2015

Kenau and Magdalena were two famous late 16th century Dutch women who are widely known in the Netherlands because of their role in the Dutch Wars of Independence against Spain. The Dutch Revolt, also known as the Eighty Years War, and in the Netherlands increasingly as the *Opstand* (insurgency or rebellion), is the iconic foundation story of the Dutch nation, which was known as the Republic of the United Provinces from the late 16th century until its dissolution during the Napoleonic period, and as the Netherlands since then. While we associate that nation today with liberalism, the welfare state, bicycles, flood management and peaceful pursuit of commerce, it was a country ravaged by civil war in the late 16th century and, except for a brief truce, war with Spain continued until 1648.¹ Kenau Simonsdr. Hasselaer's status as a heroin was a result of her fighting like a man on the walls of Haarlem during the siege of the city by forces loyal to the Spanish crown in 1572-73, while Magdalena Moons has been credited with saving the city of Leiden by preventing her lover, the Spanish Commander, from a final assault on the city in 1574 after a long siege. Kenau and Magdalena became the subjects of prints, paintings, plays, operas, histories, school lessons, and films. In 2014, they were even featured in a Dutch action film, *Kenau* (see the Kenau trailer on YouTube with English subtitles). The stories of these two women became part of popular Dutch national culture in the 17th century, but when history became a professional discipline during the late 19th century, historians began to doubt their stories since they found few primary documentary sources to corroborate their heroic deeds. Professional historians at the time, who were all men, argued that the deeds of Kenau and Magdalena, and even the historical existence of the two women, were mythological creations. While they banished the women from academic history, they did not disappear from popular culture. In 2014, Els Kloek, a well respected female historian in the Netherlands, published her research on the subject that not only provides a persuasive account of the lives and deeds of these two

¹ See Marjolein 't Hart, *The Dutch Wars of Independence: Warfare and Commerce in the Netherlands, 1570-1680* (2014).

famous women, but also provides insight into the experience of women during war in the early modern period and how and why male historians almost erased these women from history.²

The history of women did not develop into a recognized academic subject until the 1970s. In 1976 a group of Dutch historians organized a group on women's history, which declared that one of the reasons why women were relatively invisible in Dutch history was that most history was about kings, aristocrats, wars and the deeds and lives of well to do men rather than about ordinary people. The standard sources and archives used by historians contained mostly documents about men, while few women were featured in traditional sources because few were seen as having played a public role in the making of history. This was especially so of military and diplomatic history. The 1970s also saw the growing popularity of the social history of ordinary people, which popularized the use of many different archival sources, such as demographic records, local court and municipal records, and surviving diaries and local business records. More recently, historians of Dutch art have done a great deal of research on prints and paintings by lesser known artists that provide us with a much broader picture of historical popular culture in the Netherlands. Els Kloek played a major role in the development of Dutch women's history. She used a wide variety of sources and provided us with a gripping account of the lives of Keanu, Magdalena and of ordinary women during the civil wars during the early stages of the Revolt against Spain in the Northern Netherlands.

The Eighty Years War is usually dated from 1568, when the political and religious opposition to Spanish royal authority in the seventeen provinces of the Burgundian Netherlands turned into an armed insurrection and civil war. The causes of the conflict were complex, but consisted especially of efforts by the Spanish Crown to increase royal authority, centralize administration, raise taxes, and impose the Inquisition to enforce Catholic orthodoxy in the region.

² Els Kloek, *Kenau & Magdalena: Vrouwen in de Tachtigjarige Oorlog* (Nijmegen: 2014).



Jan Luyken, *Anneke Jans on the way to her execution in 1539 as a heretic hands her son to a bystander*, 1685, Els Kloek, *Kenau and Magdalena: Vrouwen in de Tachtigjarige Oorlog* (2014), pp. 106-07.

The Dutch Republic that emerged from this conflict became known for its pioneering role in what historians have called a military revolution, in which armies first became professional, disciplined and bureaucratic tools of national states. However, during the early stages of the revolt against Spain in the Netherlands all this was still in the future.³ The wars in the Netherlands during the 1570s and 1580s were essentially civil wars and were characterized by rival armies which lived off the land, often mutinied and terrorized the civilian population. Early modern armies have been described as traveling towns. They not only consisted of the men who did the fighting, but also included many servants and women. The latter did not have a formal status in the army but they slept in

³ Clifford J. Rogers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate. Military Revolution and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (2000); Jeremy Black, ed., *War in Early Modern Europe* (1999); J. R. Hale, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1450-1620* (1985).

the tents, cooked the food, did the wash, tended the fires, helped with carrying supplies, plundered goods, and took care of the sexual needs of the soldiers. War propaganda generally has dealt with women, children, and old people as victims, but in fact women were active participants and essential to early modern armies. Unfortunately, they do not figure much in the documents or in the military history of the period. John Lynn has recently argued that the women who traveled with armies during the 16th century played a key role in facilitating what he called a “military pillage economy.”⁴ Geoffrey Parker estimated that between 1577 and 1629, 5 to 53% of the Spanish armies in the Netherlands consisted of non-military personnel and most of these were probably women, although the numbers also included many young boys.⁵

A woman who traveled with a particular soldier was known as a *soldatenhoer*, but there were also unattached prostitutes. Kloek tells a story from a diary of the period of soldiers who during the siege of Haarlem raided a Spanish camp outside of the walls. They captured the women and freed the older ones, but gambled for the ownership of an attractive young woman.⁶ There is also some evidence that some women chose to dress as men and fought in armies during the early modern period. Two Dutch historians documented the stories of 188 such women, but there may have been quite a few others who did not leave a trace in the surviving documents. Lynn noted that “the women who masqueraded as a man to serve in the ranks were an anomaly, real but rare. Women who fought bravely and publicly as women in siege warfare were anything but rare.”⁷

⁴ John A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (2008).

⁵ Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and defeat in the Low Countries Wars* (1972). See also A. Th. Van Deursen, “Holland’s Experience of War during the Revolt of the Netherlands,” in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse, eds., *Britain and The Netherlands*. Vol. 4, *War and Society* (1981), pp. 47-92; Martin van Creveld, *Men, Women and War* (2001); Frank Tallet, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495-1715* (1992).

⁶ Kloek, p. 18.

⁷ Quoted in Kloek, p. 41.



Erhard Schön, *Ursulaatje with a Shoemaker*, 1535, in Kloek, p. 27.

The captions explain that Ursula decided to go to war with a shoemaker and become a *shoemakershoer* so that she can leave her spinning behind. Between 1508 and 1510 they went to Italy to fight. Both intended to become rich from war.

One of the military innovations of the 16th century was an increase in the scale of armies compared to the medieval period. Charles V, the king of Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor, assembled an army of 80,000 to defend Vienna against the Ottoman Turks. Unable to pay for armies of this size from royal revenue, he contracted with aristocrats who recruited armies that would be paid through the right to plunder

conquered cities. During the Eighty Years War many of the infantry regiments were composed of German mercenaries, known as *landsknechten*, who hired themselves out to both sides. They dressed in distinctive and extravagant clothes and were loyal only to their own commander. When the political leaders were unable to pay these regiments, or there were no opportunities for legal plundering, such armies often mutinied, as happened in the famous Spanish Fury of 1576 in Antwerp, when 5,000 soldiers who had not been paid for two years ravaged the city and murdered 8,000 inhabitants. Even if a city was not plundered, they were often required to quarter soldiers. A Spanish ordinance of 1530 required that homeowners were to provide a room with a bed for two soldiers, or a soldier and his wife; sheets that must be washed every fifteen days; and dishes, cutlery, pots, and a table and bench similar to those ordinarily used in the house⁸



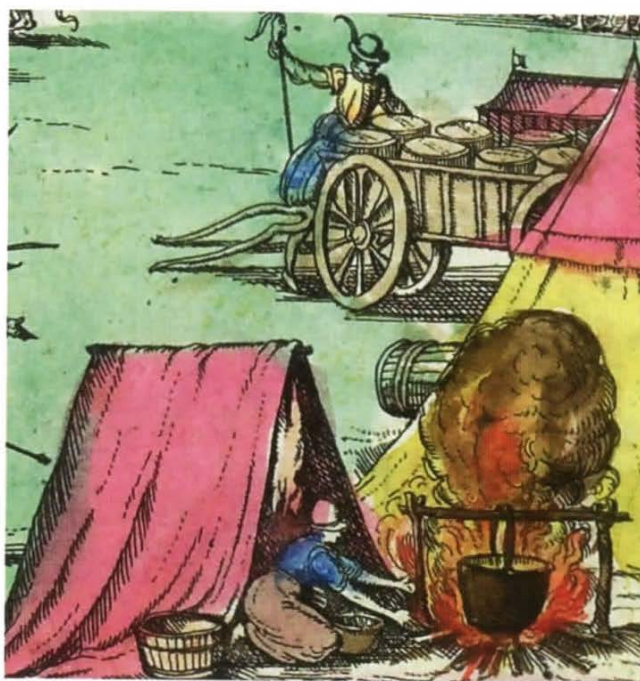
Daniel Hopper, *Officer with Four Landsknechten* (German foot soldiers) who are to be quartered in the city, Etching, ca. 1530, Kloek. p. 67.

Armies carried relatively few supplies and depended on foraging and looting the countryside. Since women were generally in charge of the households, they were not only the victims of plundering but also directly involved in housing and feeding soldiers.

⁸ Kloek, p. 66.



Frans Hogenberg, Inname van Zutphen, november 1572. Terwijl de soldaten de stad bestormen, kookt een soldatenvrouw haar potje (detail). Ets, 1576.



Frans Hogenberg, *The Taking of Zutphen in November of 1672*, etching, 1576. Detail: while the soldiers storm the city, a soldier's woman cooks, Kloek, p. 97



Daniel Hopper, *A Landsknecht (infantry soldier) with his wife*, 1504-36, Kloek, p. 102. Note the division of labor.



Albrecht Altdorfer, *The army baggage train*. Part of a series, *Triumphal return of Emperor Maximilian, I*, 1517-18, Kloek. p. 98.



Albrecht Altdorfer, *The army baggage train*, part of a series, *Triumphal return of Emperor Maximilian, I*, 1517-18, Kloeck. P. 98. On the flag can be seen trousers that symbolize, ‘the battle of the pants.’ Note the well-dressed woman walking next to the carrier of the flag.

While it was not generally accepted that soldiers rape women as an instrument of war during the early modern period, the jurist Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546) suggested that in cities that committed high treason by rebelling against their sovereign, it was permissible to use rape as well as plunder and murder to set an example for other cities. The Spanish used these tactics in several cities in the Netherlands. After the turmoil of the *Beeldenstorm*--the iconoclasm that spread like wild fire to many cities in the Netherlands in the mid-1560s--King Philip II sent the Duke of Alva to the Netherlands to restore order in 1567.



Reiner Vinkeles after Jacobus Buys, *A Woman participates in Iconoclasm in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam in 1566*, Etching, c. 1790, Kloek. P. 112.

Alva arrived with 10,000 troops and by 1572 this number had grown to 67,000. Despite his overwhelming superiority in numbers, and his military success in defeating the armies of the Prince of Orange, he was unable to squash the revolt. In 1572 a group of *Watergeuzen* (Sea Beggars), as some of the rebels called themselves, attacked and took the town of Brielle (near Rotterdam) by water and proceeded to plunder the city. Modern historians have pointed out that the *Watergeuzen* were often just as much of a threat to life and property for civilians as Alva's armies during the early stages of the revolt. In

retaliation for the loss of Brielle, Alva set out to punish the cities that had refused to provide garrisons for his soldiers, but had supplied shelter for *Geuzen*. In October of 1572, Alva sent an army to Mechelen, which plundered the city for three days. The harsh treatment of Mechelen, an important city with Burgundian government institutions, was designed to set an example for other recalcitrant towns. Mothers and daughters were raped in front of family members and men were tortured and murdered. In the North, a Spanish army appeared before Zutphen. After a few days, the commander feigned a nighttime retreat and the citizens opened the gates, allowing his troops to enter the city. The commander then allowed the city to be plundered. The troops raped women and children, drove the inhabitants naked out of the city and burned the town. Later that year the Spanish demanded that Naarden allow a regiment to be quartered in the city. The commander offered to spare the city if its citizens would swear allegiance to the king. The city government agreed to the proposal and opened the city gates to the Spanish. When the men arrived at the city hall to celebrate the peace, the Spanish murdered all four hundred unarmed citizens. The city was plundered, women and children were raped systematically and the city was set on fire. For nine days the surviving inhabitants were not allowed to bury their dead and were required to tear down the houses that were still standing. Contemporary sources suggest that only 60 inhabitants of Naarden survived. The carnage in Naarden turned out to be a turning point in the conflict. Instead of the Spanish setting an example that would deter other cities from joining the rebellion, it had the opposite effect, since most other cities would now fight to the end rather than surrender and experience the fate of Naarden.



Frans Hogenberg, *The Plundering of Mechelen, October 1572*, Etching, 1576, Kloek, pp. 118-19.



Anonymous, *Murder in Zutphen, October 1572*, Etching ca. 1618-24, Kloek, p. 120.



Frans Hogenberg, *The Plundering of Naarden, November 1572*, Etching ca. 1576 Kloek, p. 120.



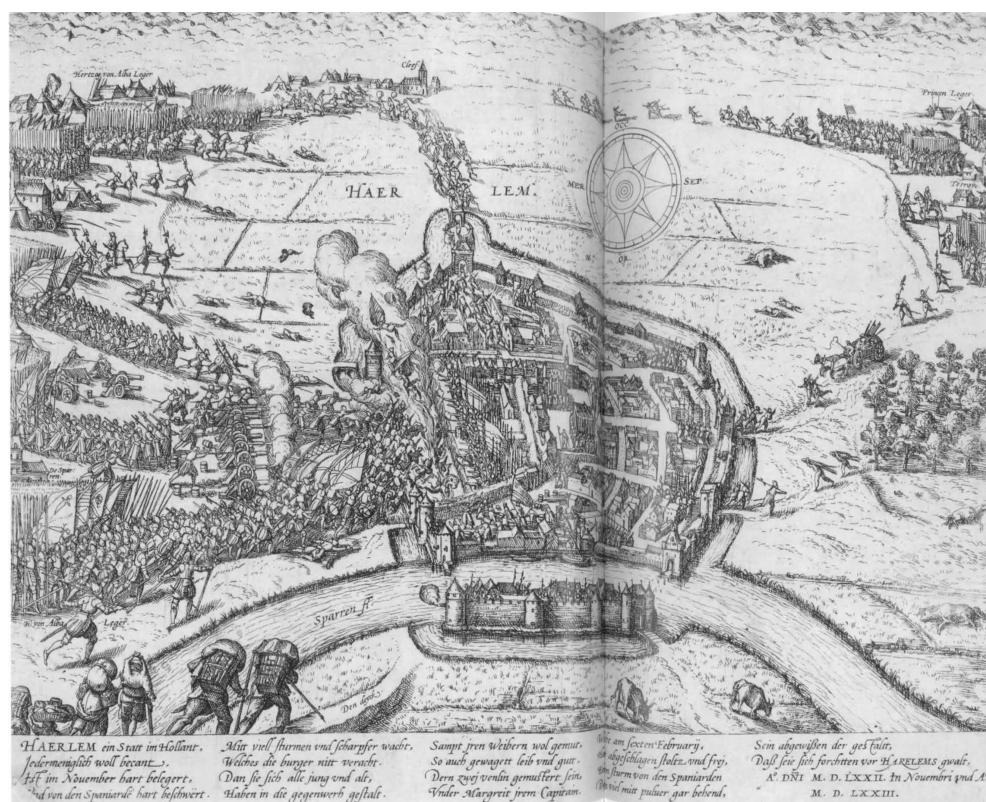
Illustration from *De thien Eerste Boecken der Neder-lantsche Oorlogh*, 1645, a translation of Famiano Strada, *De Bello Belgico*. The print shows the failed effort by William of Orange to end the siege of Bergen by the Spanish in August 1572. The detail shows the capture of two women spies. In Kloek, pp. 116-17.

KENAU AND THE SIEGE OF HAARLEM

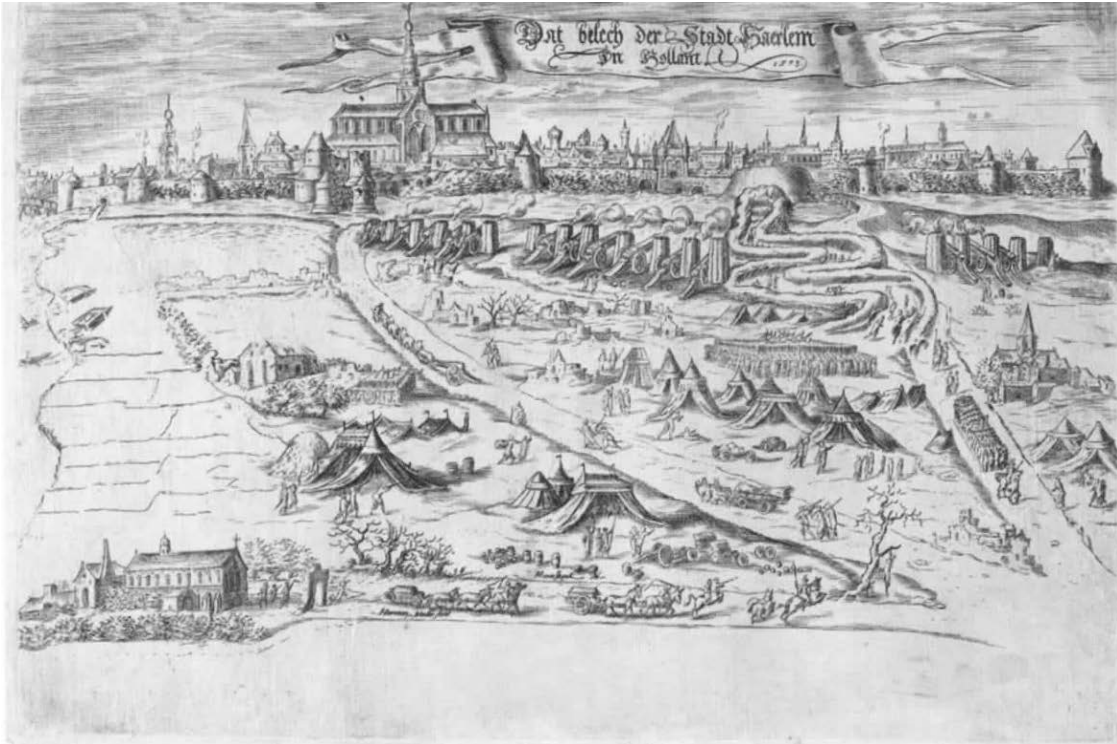
A representative of the Prince of Orange came to Haarlem in June of 1572 to persuade its government to side with the revolt against Philippe II. When *Geuzen* troops appeared before the city on July 4th and threatened to burn its gates, the city's leaders agreed to join the rebellion. The city required all its inhabitants, including women and children, to participate in the strengthening of its defenses. After a Spanish raiding party attempted to enter the city, the city was forced to quarter a *Geuzen* garrison and 300 foreign mercenary soldiers. The latter proceeded to plunder Catholic churches and threaten the inhabitants. During the autumn, raids from both rebel and royal troops devastated the countryside and small towns around Haarlem. On December 11, 1572, 14,000 Spanish troops appeared before the city. After several days of artillery barrages, the Spanish stormed the city but failed to capture it. The Spanish then settled down to a seven-month siege⁹ with repeated artillery assaults, occasional raids, naval battles on the Haarlemmermeer, and a blockade of the city in an attempt to starve the population. Rebel forces sent a relief fleet to the city on the Haarlemmermeer in March of 1574 but the Spanish defeated this effort. Despite several subsequent naval skirmishes, the Spanish were able to blockade the city effectively and by mid-May hunger became the chief problem for Haarlem. The city population was now down to about 21,000 people, consisting of about 6,000 adult women and 10,000 children; 3,000 German, Walloon, French, English, and Scottish soldiers; and only 2,000 Haarlem male burghers. In early July, a rebel force of 4,000 volunteers from various city militias in Holland attempted but failed to relieve the city. The next day William of Orange sent a dove with a message that no more relief efforts were possible. On July 9th, some mercenary captains decided on an attempt to flee with their troops and break through the enemy lines, but to leave the women, children and the old behind. A protest demonstration by the women prevented this plan from being executed and a decision was made to bring the women and children with them in a future escape plan. Meanwhile, the city government had been discussing surrender terms with the Spanish, who offered to spare the burghers and not plunder the city in return for a ransom payment of 240,000 gulden (about ten million in today's

⁹ On siege warfare, see C. Duffy, *The Fortress in the Early Modern World 1494-1660* (1979).

euros). The German and Scottish troops were to be allowed to leave, but the others had to await their fate. On July 13, the city opened its gates and Spanish troops entered with bread and wine. Surprisingly there was very little plundering. The burghers assembled in the Zijlport, the women in the Grote Kerk, and the unarmed soldiers in the Banenesskerk. Don Frederik, the Spanish commander triumphantly entered the city. Two days later, 300 Walloon soldiers were beheaded and hung up in the market. The next day 400 other soldiers were to meet the same fate. However, since the executions turned out to be too much work, many of these were bound together in twos and drowned in the river. The following day, another 300 were executed outside of the city, as that would make it easier to dispose of the bodies. All the Scottish soldiers were executed, but the Germans were allowed to leave without their arms if they swore never to fight the Spanish again. All but 57 burghers were pardoned. Half of these were fugitives. Nine were executed and 12 died in prison. About 700 Haarlemmers died during the siege from fighting or hunger. While the Royal forces retook the city, it was also a very costly victory for them, since 800 Spanish and about 4,000 mercenaries died during the siege.



Anonymous, *The Siege of Haarlem, 1572-73*, Engraving, 1573, in Kloek, pp. 202-03.



Herman Jansz. Muller (after Maerten Jacobsz. Van Heemskerck, *View of Haarlem from the North During the Siege*, Engraving, 1573, in Kloek p. 206. The zigzag trench approaches the walls between the Sint-Janspoort and Kruispoort.



Hermanus Vinkeles (after a drawing by Jacobus Buys), *The Haarlemmers Roll a Barrel with Twelve Spanish Heads over the wall*, in J. F. Martinet, *Het Vereenighd Nederland*, 1788, p. 143, in Kloek, p. 208.



Frans Hogenberg, *The Surrender of Haarlem and Executions*, Etching, 1573, Kloek, p. 208

Contemporary sources, including Spanish sources, reported that both men and women participated in the defense of the city. The sources mentioned that Kenau Simonsdr. Hasselaer fought 'like a man on the walls of Haarlem.' The sources noted that she carried arms in the city and used them on the walls. Documents also relate that she inspired others to participate in the city's defense, helped keep people's spirits high and encouraged them not to be tempted by the various peace proposals offered by the Spanish. Moreover, some sources suggested that she led a group of women who participated in defending the city under their own banner. Contemporary illustrations attest to these heroic deeds. Countless generations of Dutch school children have been taught patriotic tales about these women and the word *Kenau* entered the Dutch language to denote an amazon warrior and man-like woman.



Remigius Hogenberg, *Captain Kenau with the head of Don Pero in her hand*,
 Etch, c. 1573, in Kloek, p. 139.

As early as June 1573, thus before the surrender of the city, a pamphlet published in Delft, explained that during the storming of the city in December, Kenau led a group of women who took part in the fighting, while other women and children repaired the walls at night. German sources of the period also mention Kenau and relate how women participated in boiling oil, pitch and tar that was dumped on attackers and also heaved stones and roof tiles on the besiegers from the walls. Despite her fame at the time, modern research has only turned up two of Kenau's personal documents. One is a copy of a letter she wrote in 1588, and the other is a petition she submitted to the Haarlem's city government in 1586 asking the city to pay for the wood she had delivered to the city at the beginning of the siege. Her petition pointed out that as a good patriot she had helped sustain the city during the entire siege and that, like other Haarlem burghers, she had been forced to leave the city after its surrender with only the belongings she could carry. After her death, the city of Haarlem paid the debt to her heirs at the urging of Maurits, the

Prince of Orange. Research has not turned up personal references to her in documents from people who must have known her. The few extant personal documents about her has allowed later critics to argue that Keanu as a female warrior during the siege of Haarlem was a mythological patriotic invention. The most direct personal document about her that research thus far discovered is a handwritten note on a 1573 print of Kenau by someone who knew her and claimed that the picture was not a very good likeness, because she had a fuller face and a stouter figure than portrayed in the image.¹⁰

There is direct evidence that Kenau Simonsdr. Hasselaer existed. She was born in 1526 and was the second daughter of Guerte Coenendochter Hasselaer and Simon Gerritz. Brouwer. The family was well known in Haarlem and belonged to the well-off burgher establishment in the city. Kenau's sister, Adriana, married the Rector of Haarlem's Latin School. He served as the city's official doctor as well as the personal physician of William of Orange. Her sister and her brothers were active supporters of the rebellion against Spain. In 1544, at the age of 18, Kenau married Nanning Gerbrantz. Borst, who belonged to a family of Haarlem shipbuilders. After the death of her husband in 1561, Kenau controlled and ran the business. Between 1562 and 1571, records show that she took out mortgages to build sixteen ships, primarily modern caravels that were used for inland and European trade. Records also show that she was a determined businesswoman, who did not shrink from suing those that did not pay their bills. Just before the siege of Haarlem, she showed up in records as a moneylender. There is also a record of her purchase of a farmhouse in Overveen, an area northwest of Haarlem at the eastern edge of the dunes along the North Sea where several country estates were built during the Golden Age. The only thing we know about the state of her business at the beginning of the siege is that she delivered wood to the city for the building of a ship to fight the Spanish on the Haarlemmermeer. The siege ruined the economy of Haarlem and a great fire further damaged the city in 1576. She must have left the city soon after the Spanish took Haarlem, because official records show that she was in Delft, Leiden, and Arnemuiden, in Zeeland, between 1573 and 1578. Her father had been a brewer in Haarlem and it is possible that she tried to enter the brewing business in Delft after the siege, because there are records that she purchased beer and grain there in April of 1574.

¹⁰ Kloek, pp. 156-57.

In August of 1574, she took the oath as city *waagmeester* (inspector of weight and measure) and collector of taxes on peat (the chief fuel used in Holland during the early modern period) in Arnemuiden. It was very unusual for a woman to hold these official positions. A 1574 document notes that William of Orange nominated her for the post. She held the Arnemuiden position for three years. Throughout her life, Kenau was quite litigious. In early 1578, records find her living in Leiden, where she was involved in a lawsuit about an assault with a broom handle upon a woman at the fish market. Kenau claimed that the assailant owed her 42 guildens. The issue was settled with compensation paid to Kenau. Subsequently, the assailant filed a complaint against Kenau for standing outside her window and yelling at her in public for not paying her debts. The magistrate settled the matter with both parties paying small fines to the city's poor relief fund. We do not know if the debt was ever repaid, but the records suggest that Kenau was not a shrinking violet.

The Pacification of Ghent in 1576 led to the departure of the Spanish troops from Haarlem and its economy began to recover. In 1578, Keanu's son Gerbrant took out a ship mortgage in Haarlem and Keanu must have returned to the family business because records show that she also took out a ship mortgage in the city in the next year. In July 1587, she sent Captain Geryt Thonisz. to Norway to buy lumber but on the way home he decided to make a stop at Calais, where he was captured by pirates. She paid 400 gulden for his release but Thonisz. sued her for not being able to work because she had taken too long to pay the ransom. The court in Haarlem ruled against her but she appealed the case to the Court of Holland. A notarial action at the time stated that she was extremely angry and had cursed Geryt's attorney as a "bankrupt crook, thief and knave." The attorney had replied three or four times that she was a sorceress. Kenau lived with her three daughters in Haarlem. Neighbors whispered that men would not be safe in or around their house. The oldest daughter did not marry until she was 45 and returned as a widow seven years later. Another married at 33, but after seven years was also back in the house as a widow in 1589. The youngest never married. As long as the mother lived, there was apparently peace among the children, but soon after her death fights broke out between them. People who lived in the house behind them reported that Gerbandt, her married son, had run amok and left the house yelling that all the men who had come into the family had been

found dead. The Haarlem archives show that authorities had to intervene several times to make peace between the sisters and to deal with accusations from neighbors that they were sorceresses, witches and perhaps man murderers.

Although we do not have irrefutable documentation that Kenau was the woman who fought on the walls of Haarlem, it is beyond doubt that she was a Haarlem businesswoman. She apparently died at the age of 62 under mysterious circumstances. According to a lawsuit filed by her daughters, she was kidnapped by pirates on her way to Norway to buy lumber and died in 1588. Her daughters testified that they saw her leave from Hoorn. There is a copy of a letter Kenau wrote in June 1588 to her daughters from Vlieland, an island to the north of Friesland, in which she explained that since her captain did not have a full crew, she decided to go with him on the voyage. She admonished her daughters to earn some money because she did not have enough funds to support the family. In late 1588 the daughters filed a lawsuit with the city of Haarlem that as heirs of Kenau they were entitled to the money the city still owed her for the lumber she supplied to the city at the beginning of the siege. Maurits, the Prince of Orange, ordered the Haarlem city government to pay the debt to her children. In March of 1589 they filed an affidavit that they had not heard from her mother since late October of 1588. On May 18th of 1589, they declared in a court in Hoorn that the ship claimed by a Lieven Hanss., who had recently been arrested, was in fact her mother's ship. They argued that the ship must have been attacked by pirates and set adrift and that it should be returned to Kenau's heirs. Lieven replied that he had bought it legally. At the time, an abandoned ship could not legally be sold for at least a year and the sisters were able to show that it was in fact her mother's ship. The records suggest that the sisters eventually agreed on a settlement with Lieven. We do not know if Kenau died at sea or perhaps ended up in Scandinavia to flee from her debts. The court in Holland did not declare her deceased until 1593.¹¹

Kloek suggests that such famous historical women as Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, Elizabeth I of England, and in the Netherlands, Kenau have become favorite subjects in fiction, poetry, songs, paintings, children books and films because they have qualities that

¹¹ Kenau, chapter 6; Kenau Dossier, *Kenau Simonsdr. Hasselaer, Vrouwen-en gendergeschiedenis*, <http://www.gendergeschiedenis.nl/nl/dossiers/kenau.html>. Accessed 11/30/2015.



1. Onbekend, Houtsnede, 1573.



2. Onbekend. Gravure, 1573?



3. Onbekend. Gravure, 1573?



4. Onbekend. Gedicht gesigneerd door MQ: Matthias Quadus. Gravure, 1573?

Anonymous prints of Kenau, in Kloek. p. 186.

January 31, 1573. The accompanying German poem states that young and old, and men and women, defended the city. The women were organized in two companies led by ‘Captain Margreet’ (perhaps a mix up of Kenau and her daughter’s name). The earliest known Dutch image of Kenau is an engraving entitled, ‘Captain Kenou,’ #3 above. We see a heavily armed woman with a lance, pistol, sword and a satchel of gunpowder on her hip. A Geuzen pendant hangs around her neck. The Spanish poem underneath states that

even in our time there is an Amazonian housewife, ‘Kennow,’ who leads two companies of women warriors who inflicted great de damage upon the Spanish besiegers so that her fatherland would not be destroyed by the Spanish Moors. This print looks similar to #1, above, which comes from an appendix to a day-by-day account of the siege by Van Rooswijck, a burgher in Haarlem who was present during the siege and published the print as an appendix. The diary entries ended on March 26, 1573. Image # 4, above, was probably published after the siege and includes a poem that identifies ‘Kennow Jansen,’ a an almost an old woman who was a burgher housewife in Haarlem and was active in shipbuilding and trade and other “manly business on water and on land.” The poem goes on to recount that on the day the Duke of Alva visited the siege forces, she aimed a gun at Alva and fired a shot, but her aim was too high and only knocked off his hat. The poem ends with the statement that she left the city just before it surrendered on an important mission for the Prince of Orange. The poem is the first time that her lieutenant, a maid by the name of Dyuer Claissen, was mentioned. No documentation has been found to prove that person with this a name existed. The print of Kenau holding the head of Don Pero, the Spanish commander of the siege (see above) is also from this period. Below is another early print of Kenau as a Dutch Judith with a severed head. In addition, there are other 17th century prints that appear to be based on earlier ones, see below.

Johannes Arcerius described Kenau’s exploits on the walls of Haarlem in a booklet that was published soon after the siege in June 1573. Arcerius was a Frisian scholar who fled to Haarlem to escape religious persecution. His booklet described the siege from December 8, 1572, until he fled to Delft soon after February 15, 1573. He explained that there was an affluent middle-aged woman in Haarlem named ‘Kenu,’ who did not only provide material support and labor during the siege like many women, but also defended the city with arms. Arcerius reported that more than other women she demonstrated that she had a “manly” heart in her body.¹² Since the siege of Haarlem was not a success for either Haarlem or the Spanish, given the very large losses the Spanish suffered during the siege, and perhaps because it was followed immediately by a siege of Alkmaar and other battles, there was relatively little written about the siege of Haarlem and Kenau for several decades.

¹² Kloek, pp. 188-89.



Anonymous, *Portrait of Kenau with weapons and a severed head of a Spaniard*, 1573, in Kloek, p. 210.

Engraving 1573, in Kloek, p. 210



5. Onbekend. Ets. 1573?



6. Onbekend. Pen in bruin, penseel in grijs, ca. 1623.



7. Onbekend. Gravure, ca. 1623.

Anonymous prints: #5 Etching, 1573?; #6 Pen in brown and pencil gray, Drawing, ca. 1623; #7 Engraving, ca. 1623 at the time of the 50th anniversary of the siege, in Kloek, p. 187.

In 1599, Emmanuel van Meteren, told the story of Kenau in his *Belgische ofte Nederlantsche historie van onze tijden* (the History of the Belgian Netherlands of Our Time). In 1616, a Haarlem preacher and historian wrote a history of Haarlem in which he praised the role of Kenau and her women followers in the defense of the city. During the fifty-year commemoration of the siege in Haarlem in 1623, a Kenau personification participated in a *rederijkersoptocht*, a parade in which participants dress up as historical figures and deliver speeches about important past events. The Civic Guard ordered a painting of Kenau and her lieutenants as depicted in the parade and this hung in their headquarters for many years. Relatives of the Hasselaers had many portraits made of Kenau and claimed to possess Kenau memorabilia, especially the weapons pictured in prints and paintings.



Anonymous, *Rederijkersoptocht* (Rhetorical Parade) commemorating the siege of Haarlem, ca. 1660, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

The earliest known youth schoolbook that features Kenau, *De Spaensche Tiranije* (The Spanish Tyranny) was published in 1622. Many other historians included Kenau in their histories. There were also many poems, plays, and novels that featured Kenau. She was portrayed as a virtuous woman, a good mother, a faithful lover of freedom and a sensible business woman who had no real choice under the circumstances to do what she did, although, over the years authors increasingly wrestled with the reality that she had stepped out of a woman's proper role.

Herstelde
HONGERS-DWANGH,

OF
 Haerlems langh en strenghe Belegeringhe,
 Ende het overgaen der selver Stadt, door het
 scherpe Swaerdt der ellenden.

TREUR-SPEL,

Met zijn VERTOONINGHEN;

In vier Treur-deelen.

Hersteldt door STEVEN vander LUST.

Ghespeelt tot Haerlem, op den 29 Junij, Anno 1660.



Ghedrukt tot Haerlem, by Kornelis Thennisz. Kas, op de
 Marckt, in de Nieuwe Druckery, Anno 1660.

Steven van der Lust, *Title page of Hunger Pain*, a play in four parts about pain and suffering during the siege of Haarlem, 1660, in Kloek, p. 207. The illustration is older.



Romeyn de Hooghe, *Kenau Hasselaer on the Walls of Haarlem*, Engraving, 1688, in Kloek, p. 205. This is one of many illustrations that border his large map of Haarlem.

In 1813, a poem used to inspire young men to join the army to fight for the country's freedom by defeating Napoleon, lamented that if men did not join up, women would once again have to take up arms to defend the fatherland as in Kenau's time. In 1828, the author of a book about exemplary Dutch women explained that he did not include Kenau because very few women could be like her. Instead, he noted that women were by nature better suited for domestic tasks and the softer virtues.¹³ On the other hand, an alphabet book (below) from 1833 held Kenau up as an inspiration for children.

The greatest praise for Kenau appeared near the end of her fame. In 1854, Thomas Wilson, a Haarlem factory owner, commissioned a painting of Kenau Hasselaer and her female comrades on the walls of Haarlem. At 3.6 by 4.5 meters, it is one of the largest

¹³ Kloek, p. 193.



Anonymous, *K = Kenau Hasselaer*, an illustration from A B, Boek, *Vaderlandsche oftrekken en merkwaardigheden uit de Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis*, in Kloek, p. 214.

historical paintings in the Netherlands. Today it hangs in the Haarlem City Hall. It is based on a novel of the period about Kenau, and other famous Haarlem women, including a famous noblewoman of the period. The exaggeration depicted in the painting soon produced severe criticism suggesting that these women did not and could not have participated in the defense of Haarlem as depicted. Cornelius Ekeman, a Haarlem

physician and well-known local historian, complained that the painting was pure romanticized fiction that had no factual basis in the documents of the time. This was the period when professional history was being created as a discipline and many historical myths were being debunked. The result was that the painting was put in the attic and a proposed statue of Kenau for the upcoming tercentenary of the siege was cancelled.



Barend Wijnveld and Johannes Hinderikus Egenberger, *Kenau Hasselaer on the Walls of Haarlem*, 1854.

At the beginning of WW II there was an effort to call members of a new Corps of female volunteers of the Low Countries ‘Kenaus’ but the proposal was rejected. In 1956 Kenau was ‘definitively’ removed from her pedestal as the leader of women warriors by an exhaustive study by Gerda Kurtz. She argued that Kenau might have been an inspiring and leading woman who had encouraged the burghers of Haarlem not to surrender, but there was no documentary evidence that she actually fought on the walls of the city and as a captain led a corps of women fighters. In conclusion, Kurtz wrote, “one

can not imagine that the women of Haarlem could have achieved much with the weapons, with which Kenau has been pictured. After all, the use of fire-lock pistols and swords required a great deal of training to be used effectively.” She went on to suggest that perhaps the women had participated in hurling pitch, tar and stones at the besiegers, but they could not have used the weapons with which Kenau and her women had been pictured. In a 1973 edition of her writings, Kurtz noted that perhaps the difficult and coarse lives of Keanu’s daughters was due to the fact that in their youth their mother had spent too much time on her business and had neglected her children.¹⁴ Kloek argues that Kurtz’s conclusion were readily accepted by the historical profession and it was not until much more recently that Kenau’s reputation has been revived. In 2013 a statue was placed in front of Haarlem’s railway station of Kenau and Ripparda (Wigbold Van Ripparda was the nobleman who headed the seven month defense of Haarlem from the Spanish). The Spanish executed him after the city surrendered).



Grazielle Curelli, Kenau-Ripparda Monument, 2013, Railway Station Plaza, Haarlem

¹⁴ Kloek, pp. 195-96.

MAGDALENA AND THE SIEGE OF LEIDEN

The capture of Haarlem was the Duke of Alva's last military victory and it had cost thousands of Spanish troops. The siege of Alkmaar, which followed soon after the surrender of Haarlem, was a Spanish failure. Nonetheless, Alva began the siege of Leiden on October 31, 1573, but he would not see it through because he left the Netherlands in December and took his son, Don Frederik, with him never to return again. Don Luis de Requesense, a sickly nobleman who died in 1576, replaced him. The commander at the siege was Francisco Valdez. He was a veteran officer who had served in the Netherlands for six years. There is not much known about Valdez, but his chief fame in the Netherlands is that he put off an assault on Leiden in return for Magdalena Moons' acceptance to his proposal of marriage. Much of what can be said about the documentation about the tale of Kenau can also be said about the story of Magdalena. From scant first and second hand information a potent myth has been made about the story. Valdez and his Dutch lover's story does not appear in formal sources, such as letters, reports and official papers. This may not be surprising, since if his affair with Magdalena was true, he would probably have tried to keep it quiet from his superiors. In any case, the truth of the story depends, like that of Kenau, primarily on circumstantial evidence. Nineteenth century historians found it unthinkable that a respectable young woman from The Hague played an important role in warfare and spent time in an army camp, but recent historians, such as John A. Lynn II, have shown that women were very much a part of early modern armies.¹⁵ According to Els Kloek, there is evidence of rumors of the affair during the period that Valdez had a lover in The Hague, and that he allowed himself to be bribed by people in Leiden.¹⁶

The siege of Leiden began three months after the surrender of Haarlem to the Spanish but it took place under very different circumstances for the Royal forces. A Spanish report had warned in 1569 that the geography of the Northern Quarter of the Province of Holland, a region that included an area approximately from Amsterdam and Haarlem north to the sea was unsuitable for a war for large armies with wagons and

¹⁵ John A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (2008).

¹⁶ Kloek, p. 221.

cavalry because of its marshy terrain and its small roads. Alva had ignored this advice and had suffered very heavy casualties in the siege of Haarlem. Despite these losses, his commander Don Frederik began a siege of the northern city of Alkmaar on August 21. When the rebel forces flooded the land surrounding the town, Frederik broke off the siege on October 8. Three days later, the Royal fleet was defeated on the Zuiderzee. It would now become very difficult for the Spanish to maintain a large-scale military campaign



Anonymous, *Trijn Rembrants, the Heroine of Alkmaar*, Chimneypiece, 1777, in Kloek, p. 225. The panel on the chimneypiece dates from ca. 1623 and was incorporated into this commemorative piece to honor Catherine Remme (ca. 1557-1638), better known as Trijn Rembrants, for her role in defending the city. The panel was placed in the Regents room of the plague hospital in Alkmaar. The image bears a striking resemblance to the contemporaneous images of Kenau of Haarlem.

in the North, and thus they turned to Leiden in the Southern Quarter of Holland. In order to minimize their losses, the Spanish adopted a new strategy and decided to starve the city with a long blockade rather than a direct assault it.



Anonymous, *Hollands Love*, Etching and Engraving, ca. 1661, Kloek, p. 229.

Lambert Melisz., the son of a noble, fled from a Spanish army with his mother on an improvised sled over the ice near Hoorn in 1574.



A wooden sculpture commemorating the flight of Lambert Melisz. with his mother from the Spanish in 1574. It adorned the Westernport of Hoorn for several centuries,

Leiden was an important textile center and the Revolt caused serious economic problems and social unrest in the city. As in Haarlem, the city closed its gates to Royal troops in 1572 and on June 26 a small *Geuzen* army of 160 entered to help defend the city. The troops plundered many houses of the rich in Leiden and a month later a *beeldenstorm* broke out. When Rebel authorities also demanded compulsory loans for the forces of the Prince of Orange, many Catholics and supporters of the crown, who became known as *glippers* (a derogatory word for those who slipped away) fled the city. The area around Leiden became contested territory with some towns occupied by Royal and others by Rebel forces. In July of 1573 there were about 800 Rebel troops garrisoned in the city and about 15,000 inhabitants. The Calvinist city government imposed strict discipline upon the soldiers and demanded that all the women of unmarried soldiers and prostitutes leave the city. Unlike in Haarlem, the Spanish did not use artillery against Leiden and the fighting around the city involved far fewer troops than in the siege of Haarlem. While there were six to seven hundred deaths among the inhabitants from the siege of Haarlem, about 4,000 died in Leiden, not from fighting but from hunger. Alva's new strategy was to starve the cities of Holland with a blockade and to destroy the agricultural resources of the surrounding countryside.

After abandoning the siege of Alkmaar, Francisco Valdez returned to Haarlem and with 10,000 men crossed the Haarlemmermeer and besieged Leiden from October 31, 1573 to March 21, 1574. He also occupied the surrounding countryside. Since the Spanish did not attempt to take the city and there were not enough troops in Leiden to attack the Spanish, not a great deal happened during the first siege. With rationing there was enough food in the city to sustain the population for the 141 days of the first siege. The Spanish occupation of the countryside led many farmers to flee to the city with their livestock and the defenders were able to grow vegetables right under the walls of the city. Moreover, some food reached the city by water. When Louis of Nassau's army invaded the Netherlands from the south near Maastricht, the Spanish abandoned their siege of Leiden to meet this new threat. While Valdez arrived too late to participate in the Spanish defeat of Nassau's army on May 26, his troops managed to return to Leiden and again besiege the city. Unfortunately, the defenders had not expected the Spanish to return and had failed to stockpile food. During the second blockade, which lasted until October 3,

1574, there was much more fighting around the city so that vegetable gardening outside of the walls was no longer possible. By July, serious grain shortages became apparent and on top of that a plague broke out. By the end of August supplies of bread, cheese, and vegetables were exhausted and the slaughtering of animals began. The freebooter soldiers hired to defend the city marched on the city hall and demanded passports to leave Leiden. In the middle of September, mayor Van der Werff gave his famous speech in which he offered up his own body for food.



Mattheus Ignatius, *Mayor van der Werff Offers His Body for the Starving People of Leiden*, 1816-17, Lakenhal Museum, Leiden



Joris van Schotén, *Famine During the Siege of Leiden*, 1643, Lakenhal Museum, Leiden



Otto van Veen, *De Distribution of Herring and White Bread After the Relief of Leiden*, ca. 1574, Lakenhal Museum, Leiden.



Frans Hogenberg, *The Relief of Leiden*, Etching, ca. 1590, in Kloek, pp. 298-99.



Willem de Haan, *The Relief of Leiden as the Geuzen come up the Vliet*, Illustration in Jan Jansz. Orlers, *Beschrijving de Stad Leyden*, 1614, in Kloek, p. 300.

Relatively few documents about women during the sieges of Leiden survived and among these there are no first hand account of armed women who defended the city. The latter is understandable since very little fighting took place in or very close to the city. There are some references to women *glippers* who attempted to leave the city. There is one story from July in a diary, which reports that two women with eight to ten children managed to flee the city but were sent back naked by the Spanish. In the list of *glippers* put together by one chronicler, there were only five women and 81 men listed. It is possible, of course, that some of the men took their wives with them but they were not mentioned. The city census of August 7, 1574, lists 1889 male and 1147 female heads of households in the city. This was a very high percentage of households headed by women. When the second blockade began, the city government proclaimed that all women and children below the age of 16, and who were of no productive utility, were encouraged to leave the city. We do not have any evidence from documents how many women and children left Leiden, but we do know that the besiegers sent back many women and children who attempted to leave. There are also reports that well-off women were forced to eat their dogs and there are reports that women searched through the dunghill for bones with which to make soup. There is also an account that the city's refusal to surrender to the Spanish resulted in the death of unborn children at the hands of midwives. After a group of jeering women appeared before the city hall to seek an end to the siege, the city government complained on September 13 that since some widows and married women with substantial assets had never held watch or otherwise contributed to the defense of the city, they would now have to send someone to serve the city or pay a fine.

The only memorable women's story to come out of the siege of Leiden was the story of Magdalena Moons, the lover of Valdez. Frans van Mieris, a noted historian of Leiden, explained in his 1757 history of the siege that he would only discuss important people and events that had a broad impact on the history of the city and the country. However, he would include the love affair of Valdez and Magdalena Moons since it had great consequences and prevented the storming of the city by the Spanish.¹⁷ Kloek argues that we must understand the story of their romance in the context of a siege of the city after Alva had left the country, and that many citizens of Leiden believed that it might be

¹⁷ Kloek, p. 239.

possible to negotiate with Requesense, the new governor, who appeared more moderate than Alva. Moreover, the siege commander, Valdez, sent many letters and messages to city officials suggesting that negotiations could spare Leiden.

The essentials of the story are that Magdalena Moons was a respectable young burgher woman who lived in The Hague with her mother. Commander Valdez had come to the Binnenhof, the government complex of Holland, to organize the first siege of Leiden and met and courted Magdalena. In late September, she told Valdez that she would consent to marry him if he postponed his planned assault on the starving city in which she had family and many friends. On September 29, Valdez agreed to postpone the assault for a few days. When a big storm threatened to flood the area around the city, the Spanish fled on October 3rd. The Dutch public at the time believed that God had sent a storm to save the city and that Magdalena had played a part in this divine plan. It was not until the 19th century that historians began to see this story as a fictional romance.

Magdalena Moons (1541-1613) was the youngest daughter of an important civil servant in The Hague. We know about her father because her half-brother, who died in 1571, was a jurist at the Court of Holland and later wrote a history of the family. Her mother was from a family of Aldermen in Antwerp. Magdalena was thus a privileged member of society in The Hague and had a wide network of relatives and acquaintances. We do not know when exactly the 33-year-old unmarried Magdalena met Valdez, but we do know that he was in The Hague just before the first siege of Leiden. One of her brothers was a *burgemeester* in The Hague at the time. Some officials fled when the Spanish occupied the city, but many returned when the Spanish did not threaten them. According to Kloek there are three sources that mention the romance between Magdalena and Valdez. One is by a Dutch historian in 1624, another is in a Spanish account of the war in 1634, and the last is an undated notice by Magdalena's second cousin.

Valdez was a professional soldier with a long military record who was named Field Marshall by Requesense. He is best known for his role in the siege of Leiden and as a writer of a book advocating strict military discipline. This is ironic since he had a serious problem in this regard. His own troops mutinied around Utrecht several weeks before the siege of Leiden. In early September of 1574, Valdez wrote a letter to the Leiden government promising a general pardon if they opened the city to the Spanish. He

followed this up with a request for negotiations, but before this letter arrived in Leiden the city also had received a letter from Valdez's superior, La Roche in Utrecht, stating that the city should surrender quickly since otherwise its destruction was imminent. The city government debated its options, but could not come to a resolution. Some wanted to send a delegation to Utrecht for talks with La Roche, but in the end they decided to contact William of Orange who encouraged them to hold on since relief of the city was near. Meanwhile, Leideners could hear fighting not far from the city in Zoetermeer. On September 9, La Roche complained to Requesense about Valdez' negotiations with Leiden and on September 14 he received a response from him confirming his authority. On September 15, La Roche sent a letter to Philip II in Spain stating that Leiden wanted to negotiate with him. La Roche also wrote Requesense that Valdez was planning to plunder Leiden. Valdez wrote La Roche that the opposition in Zoetermeer was so fierce that he would have to draw back from the fighting, which he did on September 20. On September 17, La Roche sent a trumpeter to the gates of Leiden to ask for an answer to his earlier request for surrender, but Valdez did not allow the messenger to return with an answer. Moreover, Valdez also told him that he would shoot the next messenger. On September 22, Leiden told Valdez that the city would not surrender. On September 27 there was a report that the Spanish had begun to move heavy artillery from Amsterdam toward Leiden. Then on the 29th of September a serious storm broke out that drove high water towards Leiden. This caused the Spanish on October 3rd to abandoned their fort at Leiderdorp and flee east to higher ground. The same day a Rebel relief force arrived on flat boats with supplies for Leiden.

Valdez first went to The Hague after the relief of Leiden, but soon turned up in Haarlem. A *Geuzen* force entered The Hague and William of Orange had to restrain its soldiers from plundering the houses of the wealthy. In late October Valdez was again in The Hague protected by German soldiers. Unpaid Spanish troops mutinied in a number of places and in early November mutineers captured Valdez demanding to be paid and brought him to Utrecht, but they were not able to gain entry to the city. In early December Valdez managed to escape to Amsterdam and for the next several months he was in Utrecht dealing with mutineers in the region. He participated in the 1575 invasion of North Holland and in sieges in Overijssel, including the infamous sack of Oudewater

during which Spanish troops murdered over a thousand citizens in a few hours on August 6, 1574. Valdez went to Zeeland but left for Bergen op Zoom (in Spanish held territory) in 1576. He subsequently served in Italy.



Anonymous, *Atrocities in Oudewater*, July 1575, illustration from *de Spaensche Tiranye geschiet in Nederlandt*, 1620, in Kloek, p. 267.

We do not have any primary documents about the role Magdalena Moon played in the delay of the storming of Leiden, except that there is a story from the time that at a dinner in late September in The Hague, Valdez agreed to put the assault off for a few days and we also know that during this time a storm resulted in the fleeing of the Spanish troops. We do not know where Magdalena was in the months following. We know that her mother received a ruling from the States of Holland in July 1575 that she had a right to the goods she had forfeited when she left the city upon the payment for the rent due on her house in The Hague. It appears that Magdalena was also in The Hague at that time. We also know that Valdez was in Antwerp in August of 1576 and that his troops

mutinied in Aalst and took part in the plundering of Antwerp in October of that year. The Pacification of Ghent meant that Spanish troops would be removed from the region and thus it was likely that Valdez might soon return to Spain. According to Jan Moons' account of his family history, Valdez arranged to bring Magdalena Moons to Antwerp for their marriage. There is no documentation of the marriage in Antwerp, but in an inheritance case of 1610 there is a document that calls her the widow of Valdez. There is also a mention of her forthcoming marriage by The Spanish Ambassador in Lisbon in May of 1578. Kloek believes that they were married in late 1578 or early 1579, since Valdez was again with his troops in February.¹⁸ Magdalena was now a general's wife and may have traveled with Valdez to the siege of Maastricht in 1579. Valdez was subsequently sent to Italy as Governor of Tuscany. He died in 1580 or 1581. Magdalena returned to Holland as a widow via Liège. We do not know if she traveled to Italy with Valdez, but she had two sons during this period who died young. Subsequently Magdalena married twice more to State of Holland military men. She lived near The Hague with one husband and in Utrecht with the other. She died in Utrecht in 1613. Kloek concluded that however fragmented the evidence of her love affair with Valdez, the story demonstrates how a daughter of a high civil servant in Holland ended up marrying a Spanish Field Marshall and subsequently two high Dutch military officers.¹⁹

During the nineteenth century, history became an academic discipline dependent upon archival information. Kloek quotes, Leopold von Ranke, a famous German historian who is considered one of the founders of professional history: "Was nicht in de Akten, had nicht gelebt" (What is not in the documents, did not happen). The professional historians, who had not yet admitted women to the profession, proclaimed that the tale of Magdalena Moons was too nice to have happened. Military leaders would not have listened to women. They argued that Valdez' plan was to defeat Leiden through hunger and he had never planned to assault the city, but instead had planned to starve it into submission. They held that no primary documents had been found to corroborate the story of Magdalena and Valdez. Moreover, they insisted that those who promoted the story were schoolmasters, genealogists and amateurs rather than professional historians.

¹⁸ Kloek, p. 263.

¹⁹ The details of the story are in Kloek, chapter 9.

Modern women historians have pointed out that the professional historians were masculinizing the discipline and deemed the history of women to be trivial and untrustworthy. Kloek counted fifteen publications between 1823 and 1891 about the Magdalena story and asked why so many found it important to show that it was a myth.²⁰

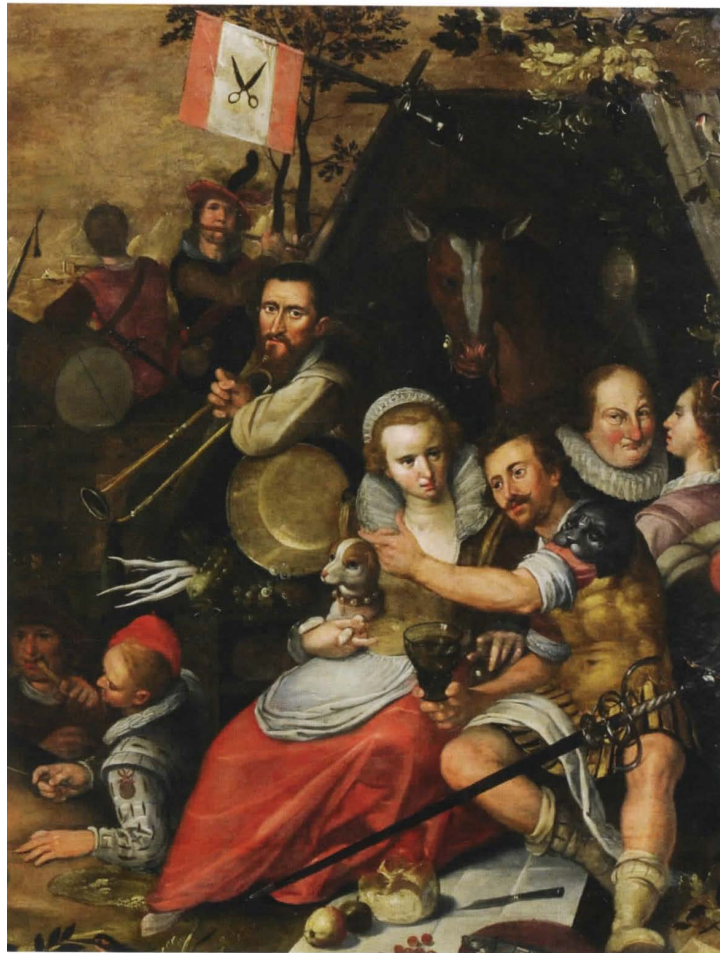
The first mention of the story in print was by Pieter Bor in his *Oorsprongk, Begin, en Vervolgh der Nederlandsche Oorlogen . . .* (The Origin and Course of the Wars in the Netherlands . . .), first published in 1621, but written in 1614. Another early source is by an Italian, Famiano Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, published in Rome in 1632, but written about 1602, and translated into Dutch and published in 1645 as the *Nederlandsche Oorloge*. Both books claimed to be based on oral sources from both the Dutch and Spanish side. An earlier source is a large history painting of 1603 by Jan Cornelisz. Van 't Woudt, better known as Woudanus, *De Overgave van Weinsberg*, 1603, now in the Lakenhal Museum in Leiden. The painting depicts the legend of the medieval town of Weinsberg that surrendered from hunger after a long siege. The victorious Emperor announced that all the men would be beheaded, but the women would be allowed to leave. The women asked if they could bring their valuables with them and the Emperor replied that they could bring what they could carry on their backs. The women then hoisted their men on their backs and the Emperor kept his word.



Jan Cornelisz. Van 't Woudt (Woudanus), *De Overgave van Weinsberg*, 1603, Lakenhal Museum, Leiden

²⁰ Kloek, p. 267.

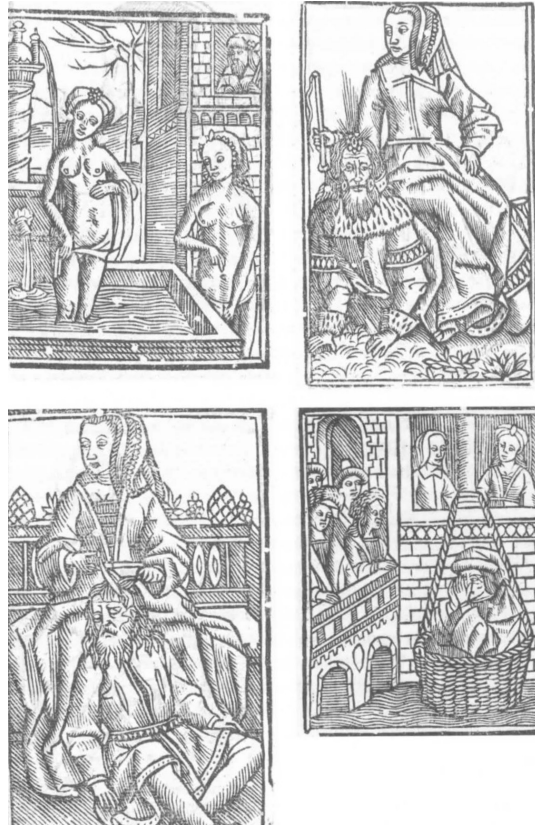
We see (above) the women of Weinsberg in the middle of the painting. A stout woman carries a man and young girls carry their brothers. Rudi Ekkart, a Dutch art historian, explained that the painter was inspired by a play written by Jacob Duym in 1600 and used the legend of Weinsberg to commemorate the siege of Leiden. The cruel looking general with a pointed beard in the middle looks like Alva. He stares angrily toward the Kaiser who sits on his white horse and watches the women leave. Behind Alva is Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert, a famous Dutch scholar and champion of toleration who looks us straight in the eye. To the right of this group we see a pot, the famous *hutspot* still filled with warm stew that was found on the morning of October 3 when the Spanish hastily fled from their positions around Leiden. Next to the pot we see a boy chewing on a carrot who represents the orphan who found the pot. All the way to the right we see herring and white bread spread out on a napkin that represents the food brought by the Rebel relief army.



Detail of Jan Cornelisz. Van 't Woudt (Woudanus), *De Overgave van Weinsberg*, 1603, Lakenhal, Leiden

In the detail picture (above), we see a lady, who represents Magdalena Moons, in front of an army tent with a dog on her lap, a symbol of fidelity in marriage, and a military leader, Valdez, leaning on her. The flag in the painting depicts scissors, which may refer to the story of Delilah who destroyed Samson's strength by cutting of his hair. The scene suggests that Valdez's love for Magdalena made him postpone the taking of Leiden that resulted in the riches of Leiden slipping through his fingers.

Stories from the Bible and Classical literature that warned men of the dangers of loving women who sought to turn over the natural order of male dominance were common in the culture of the period. Adam's downfall was portrayed as due to Eve's influence. King David was mad with love for Bathsheba. Aristotle had warned Alexander the Great not to be enchanted by his wife, Phyllis, because it would keep him from great deeds. However, Phyllis easily seduced Aristotle. Samson lost his godlike power to Delilah. Vergilius used a basket to reach a much too young maiden, but she left him dangling in the air.



Jan Bernts, *The Cunning of Women: David and Bathsheba, Aristotle and Phyllis, Samson and Delilah, Vergilius in a Basket*, woodcut from *Thuis der Fortunen*, 1531, in Kloek, p. 271.

In 1645 Reinier Bontius wrote a play about the siege of Leiden in which Valdez slept with the prostitute Amelia in his tent and postponed the taking of Leiden. The audience recognized that Amelia referred to Magdalena. Jan Moons sought to set the record



Anonymous, Illustrations from the play by Reinier Bontius, *The Siege of Leiden* (1645), from editions published in the late 18th and early 19th century, in Kloek, p. 304.

straight by noting that his aunt, whom he had known, was not an army whore. In *ca.* 1659 he wrote two pieces about his aunt, one of a thousand words and another of 5,500-words. One appeared in print in 1739 and the second not until 1868. He emphasized that Magdalena had been a virtuous and respectable woman from a good family and that she

had indeed married Valdez. After his death she married two other respectable men. In 1659 Bontius issued a new edition of his play in which Amelia had become a proper maiden who convinced Valdez to postpone the assault because she had friends and family in Leiden in return for a promise that she would marry him in The Hague. In other plays on the subject, Magdalena became a niece of the famous Leiden burgemeester, Van der Werff. For Kloek, the key to Magdalena's fame was that as a woman she had been able to influence a military leader not to launch an assault on Leiden, or as Kloek notes, Venus had won over Mars.²¹



Anonymous, *Magdalena Moons Pleads with Francisco Valdez Not to Attack Leiden*, Illustration on the title page of the historical novel *Magdalena Moons and the Siege of Leiden*, 1835, by Anne Diederik van Buren, in Kloek, p. 306

Romantic and nationalist writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century insisted that Magdalena pleaded with Valdez not just to save her family and friends in Leiden, but she also did so out of love for her Fatherland. In the decade before the 300th anniversary of the siege, historical critics launched a full-scale discussion about the veracity of the Magdalena Moons story. This culminated in Robert Fruin's 1879

²¹ Kloek, p. 278.

declaration that the story should be assigned to the category of mythological fables. He argued that his research in Antwerp turned up definitive evidence that there was a marriage in Antwerp on August 16 of 1578 between a Magdalena Moons to Jan Cues, and thus not to Valdez. An English genealogist commented that the name Magdalena Moons was rather common in Antwerp during the period. In a footnote to a subsequent article Fruin suggested that this Magdalena could have been a niece of the famous Magdalena and stuck to his argument that a woman could not have been responsible for the postponement of the attack on Leiden.

An English researcher, W. J. C. Moens, who turned to history and genealogy after making money in the stock market, devoted much time to studying the topic. He discovered evidence of the marriage of Magdalena Moons to Valdez in the Antwerp archives and sent an article about Magdalena Moons to a leading Dutch scholarly journal. The editors rejected the article on the grounds that they did not publish genealogy or family history. Moens planned to write a book on Magdalena Moons and send his manuscript to Elsevier, a leading publisher in Leiden, but they demanded an advance payment. Moens saw this as a request for a subsidy and that went against his principles. In 1881 Moens contacted Fruin for advice. When Moens found the evidence of Magdalena Moons' marriage in Antwerp, he had told the Leiden archivist about his discovery. What Moens did not know was that the Leiden archivist probably had told Fruin about this and that may have led Fruin to include his footnote that this Magdalena could have been her niece. However, in 1885 Moens discovered archival evidence that Magdalena's marriage to her first Dutch husband was in fact her second marriage. On this marriage document there was a crossed out name that he believed must have been Francisco Valdez. Unfortunately, Moens did not have access to the technology to read the evidence that can be seen today for that would have proved him correct. Moens wrote to archivists in The Hague about his discovery and received a reply that stated that underneath the crossed out material were the words "widow of Jan Cuez."²² The fact that Moens was a distant relative of Magdalena Moons did not help his case. The historical profession concluded that the issue was settled and the story of Magdalena Moons was a fable concocted by her family and subsequent nationalist mythmakers. They concluded

²² Kloek, p. 286.

that there was no archival evidence of her marriage to Francisco Valdez and, even if there were, a woman would not have played a crucial role in the ending the siege of Leiden.

Kloek concedes that there is no hard archival evidence for the stories of Kenau and Magdalena as two heroines who played important roles in the sieges of Haarlem and Leiden. However, there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence to make their stories plausible. This evidence consists of oral history that was written down after the fact, diaries of the time and material written later in life by people who were there at the time, as well as pamphlets and pictures of the period. However, these sources were rejected when history became a professional discipline in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the role of women in war was not something earlier generations of professional historians concerned themselves with. It was not until the rise of a more inclusive social history in the last third of the twentieth century, the rise of women's history, and the opening of the profession to women that Kenau and Magdalena's stories have again come to the foreground.

There are perhaps also wider social reasons why their stories have again become popular. The Dutch are proud of their reputation for toleration and liberal social attitudes. Already in 1917, for example, they decided to have the state pay for all schools, including those run by religious denominations. Twentieth century Dutch society was characterized by what they call *verzuiling*, or pillarization, according to which each social group had its own newspapers, radio and TV stations, labor unions, and voluntary associations. The Dutch shunned nationalism and overt displays of patriotism in the late twentieth century (except for the national football team and, more recently, for the new young king and his family). Dutch schools hardly taught the nation's history in the schools and promoted multiculturalism on the *verzuiling* model as an important liberal value. However, by the late twentieth century they began to realize that some immigrant groups failed to accept the predominantly liberal, and now secular, social ideals of The Netherlands. This was especially so among the Moslem immigrants from North Africa and Turkey who had come to the Netherlands for work in the 1960s and 1970s. It became clear that these groups were not assimilating into the dominant Dutch liberal culture. At the same time enthusiasm for the greater integration pursued by the European Union—a process in which they had been pioneers soon after WW II—began to be questioned more seriously

after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the EU's expansion to include Eastern Europe. One of the consequences of these factors was that in the 1990s the Dutch decided to rekindle interest in their history and traditional 'liberal' values by requiring immigrants to learn Dutch and to create Canons of national and local Dutch history to be taught in the schools. Although the national Canon mentions Kenau's story as legendary, the Haarlem Canon lists her as an important historical citizen. The Canon of Leiden also features Magdalena as a noted woman in the history of the city. In addition to more systematic teaching of history in Dutch schools, there seems to be a modest revival of Dutch nationalism in Dutch culture generally and a greater embrace of its historical heroes, and this time it includes heroines. Kenau now shares a modern monument in Haarlem, but Magdalena Moons has to be satisfied with a street named after her in Leiden and one for her first husband.



Street names in Leiden, Kloek, p. 312.



Erwin Olaf, Photograph of a Visualization of the Siege of Leiden, 2011.

To the right, Magdalena negotiates with Francisco Valdez.



Frank Dam, *Magdalena Moons, Heroine of the Siege of Leiden*, Drawing from the series, *Onbekend Vaderland Unknown Fatherland*, *NCR Handelsblad*, 10-22-2007, in *Kloek*, p. 311.