

# The Usage of Spelling Norms in Early Nineteenth Century Personal Communication

## On the Implementation of the Siegenbeek Spelling (1804) in the Netherlands

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## **1. Introduction**

Until the fifteenth century, many different dialects were spoken in the Low Countries and because of this regional variation, people could not easily understand each other across the country. For scientific, religious and literary communication Latin or French were used and for informal communication people used their local dialect (Van der Sijs and Willemyns, 2009: 223). During the Middle Ages people spelled based on pronunciation, and therefore every region had its own spelling system, as no Unitarian language existed (Van der Sijs and Willemyns, 2009: 228). In the sixteenth century this slightly started to change: with the introduction of press more books were published and read, and the number of books written in the Dutch language was increasing (Van der Sijs and Willemyns, 2009: 223). Choices had to be made regarding the spelling used in these books. Many writers, teachers and scientist published their ideas on the spelling issue, which resulted in almost 30 spelling books being published between 1550 and 1700 (Van der Sijs and Willemyns, 2009: 228). However, as the Low Countries were organized in a federation of the seven provinces with each its own sovereignty (Lenders, 1988: 24), the spelling systems were not implemented countrywide. In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the scattered distribution of power became more problematic, because of political (the fourth English war (1780-1784) and economic (business and industry) misfortunes (Lenders, 1988: 25). In this period, a new concept of nation arose, containing not only a shared culture and tradition, but also a common language (Langer, 2011: 173). With the help of French troops, the Batavian Republic was established in 1795, a development which was crucial in the history of the modern Dutch nation (Lenders, 1988: 27). Suddenly, the public debate was open for discussion on the layout of state and society. One started to realize that a national language was crucial in the process of finding a national identity, and as a national language requires a national grammar and a way of spelling, one actively participated in the debate on spelling.

In 1804 the first official spelling of the national Dutch language, written by Professor Matthijs Siegenbeek, was introduced. This spelling system soon became obligatory in official documents and education and therefore also used in most of the (formal) printed texts at the time. However, the majority of the language users only use writing in personal communication and not in formal works. So far, it seems to be unclear whether the ‘ordinary’ language users also implemented the Siegenbeek spelling system in their personal correspondences with family and friends. The question is to what extent the national spelling contributed to the standardization of the Dutch written language. Did the language norms have an effect on the language use? Previous studies on eighteenth century Dutch observed a

discrepancy between “prescription in normative grammar [...] and language [use]” (Simons and Rutten, 2014: 69). This study aims to find out whether the Siegenbeek spelling is used in ego documents in the period 1820-1840. In doing so, it contributes to the research project at the University of Leiden ‘Going Dutch: The construction of Dutch in Policy, Practice and Discourse (1750-1850)’. Within this project the effectiveness of educational policy is examined by analyzing its influence on language use. This study serves as a small case study within that larger project. What is the effect of the Siegenbeek spelling? To what extent do writers use the spelling and which alternative ways of spelling do they use if they make “mistakes”? Social differences will be studied on the level of gender and individual differences. Other studies on the impact of Siegenbeek’s spelling (e.g. Vosters et al., 2010) take into account a handful of spelling features, whereas in this study twenty different spelling rules are examined. This study therefore provides a more complete overview of the implementation of the different rules Siegenbeek prescribes and also points out differences in the extent to which the rules are applied.

In this study the merchant family Boissevain from Amsterdam will serve as a case study. As this family has an extensive family archive, I was able to determine the social position of this family as well as of most of its writers. In total I investigated 34 letters of 15 different writers. More about the family, the writers and the material, will be discussed in section 4.

This thesis is structured as follows. First I will discuss the field of historical sociolinguistics in which this study is based. Then, in section 3, some historical and sociolinguistic background will be given; historical background with a focus on language politics in the eighteenth century (3.1), background on the education system in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (3.2), and background on the Siegenbeek spelling system implemented in 1804 (3.3). In the fourth section, I will discuss the method of the study, the material and the way in which the data were collected. I will also (in 4.3) briefly discuss the family history of the Boissevain family and give some more information on each of the writers of which I examined letters (4.4). In section 5, I will discuss the twenty variables that will be tested in this study. Subsequently, in section 6, I will present the results. First, some general results will be discussed, after which I will discuss the effect of sex (6.2) and individual differences (6.3). In section 7 I will summarize the main findings of this study and evaluate their meaning when compared to previous work on norms and language usage. Finally, section 8 will encompass a brief discussion. Transcriptions guidelines and transcriptions are attached in appendixes A and B respectively, after the literature section.

## **2. The field of historical sociolinguistics**

Historical sociolinguistics is a young, interdisciplinary field in science that only developed in the last thirty years (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2012: 22). It is a sub discipline of sociolinguistics, and it comprises both linguistics and social sciences (anthropology and sociology), as well as historical sciences (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2012: 26). Historical sociolinguists study language variation and change. They try to capture three different kinds of variation: diachronic variation, regional or geographic variation, and social variation (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2012: 24, see also e.g. Watts & Trudgill, 2002).

The most important way in which the work of historical sociolinguists differs from the work of regular sociolinguists is data collection. Historical linguists have to rely on written sources, whereas regular sociolinguists can make field recordings. Since texts are “produced by a series of historical accidents” (Labov, 1972: 100), historical linguists do not have as much control over their data as sociolinguistics have. According to Labov, “the great art of the historical linguist is to make the best of this bad data – ‘bad’ in the sense that it may be fragmentary, corrupted, or many times removed from the actual productions of native speakers” (Labov, 1972: 100). The problem of historical sociolinguists is that they cannot directly observe or test their subject of study as sociolinguists can.

The fact that historical sociolinguists can only rely on written sources, may cause problems in the analysis of their data. Labov distinguishes two main problems: first, the linguist has to fill the gap between the writing system and spoken language, which is not always straightforward, and, secondly, the linguist should determine the relation between “normative responses and the vernacular” (Labov, 1972: 102). In order to solve the former problem, historical sociolinguists are urged to focus on written documents that are as close to spoken language as possible (Elspaß, 2007b). This means they should study ego-documents such as diaries and private letters from lower and middle class scribes (Rutten & Van der Wal, 2011: 252), since it has been argued that the ‘degree of orality’ in such sources is higher than in other documents (Elspaß, 2007b; Howell, 2006: 219). However, although the degree of orality in ego-documents from the lower classes is higher than for example in printed texts, these documents are still influenced by supralocal writing systems that undermine the dialectal differences (Rutten & Van der Wal, 2011). “When people switched from spoken to written language, they also tended to switch from local oral to supralocal written practices” (Rutten & Van der Wal 2011: 269). Written sources will never equal spoken sources, but for the historical linguist, the analysis of ego-documents is as close as it gets.

The method used in this study adopts many aspects of the historical sociolinguistic method ‘language history from below’ (Elspaß, 2007a). The approach of language history from below “explicitly focuses on the language of the middle and lower classes and their handwritten texts” (Rutten and Van der Wal, 2014: 3, see also: Elspaß, 2007a). To study language variation and to find sources which are close to spoken language, ego documents of ordinary people are of great value. However, the present study focuses on the implementation of a spelling system and therefore on written language. Therefore, the aim is not to be as close to spoken language as possible, but rather to find out whether ‘ordinary’ language users actually use the official spelling in their daily private correspondences.

As spelling features in early nineteenth century letters were not studied before in such detail (twenty different features), the first step is to examine the letters of people who were well educated. Writers within the higher, well-educated class may be expected to have been exposed to the spelling system of Siegenbeek in their lessons. After studying the letters from writers from the higher social class, their data may, in future studies, be compared to the data of writers from the middle and low social class, who received less education. The selection of the material is further motivated in section 4.1.

Besides the use of ego documents, this study also adopts the social aspect of historical sociolinguistics, as the focus is on social variables. As explained above, no class differences will be taken into account in this study, as the writers all belong to the wealthy middle class and can all be assumed to be well educated. Still, social differences may be found in sex. Who uses the Siegenbeek spelling and who does not? Do we observe any differences between men and women? Also, where possible, a more detailed background will be given of every individual writer, so their background can be linked to their way of spelling.

### **3. Historical and sociolinguistic context**

#### **3.1 Language politics and historical background**

In this section I will discuss some historical background relevant for the history of Dutch language politics and the introduction of the first official grammar in 1804.

Until the fifteenth century, all official and religious documents in the Netherlands were written in Latin (De Vooy, 1952: 49-51). However, with the development of education in urban regions, the introduction of press and the reformation, the Dutch language was more and more used. From the 16th century onward, many spelling books and grammars of the Dutch language were published (De Vooy, 1952). However, there was no consensus on where to find the rules of a language. There were roughly three different kinds of grammars

that had all had a different view on what the Dutch grammar should be based on. First, there were linguists who based their spelling system on that of important writers (De Vries et al., 1993: 78) or the States Bible (first published in 1637). Others searched for even older, ‘purer’, versions of Dutch and argued that the grammar should be based on historical rules. Thirdly, there were grammars that relied on the proper spoken language of the elite. However, none of these grammars was so successful that they could become a national grammar.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the provinces of the Netherlands were united in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces (1588-1795). Especially in the seventeenth century the republic was politically and economically very powerful and also culturally prosperous (Willemys, 2003: 95). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a conventionalized spelling system became one of the main priorities of linguists. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, grammar and spelling were still perceived as “an elitist leisure activity, mainly relevant to, and focused on the highest stylistic level, viz. literary poetry and prose” (Rutten, 2012: 44-45). As most grammars were full of Latin concepts and terminology the early Dutch grammars were neither aimed at nor comprehensible to ordinary people. Step by step, grammars became more accessible for larger parts of the population. Also, the ideology behind the normative grammars changed, as grammar and spelling slowly became “a matter of national concern” (Rutten, 2012: 45).

In 1766 the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (Society of Dutch Literature), a prestigious literary society, was established in Leiden. Also other reading groups and poetry associations were erected. The most important societies, of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Leiden, united in the Batavian Society (De Vooy, 1931: 22). Many members of these societies felt the need of norms and a dictionary of the Dutch language (Kloek & Mijndert, 2001: 434). The Maatschappij tot Nut van ‘t Algemeen, the society for the advancement of public welfare, was unsatisfied with the level of language education on primary schools. One started to realize that a common language contributed to national unity and therefore at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century these different societies insisted on standardization of the Dutch language and a better education of spelling in schools (Kloek & Mijndert, 2001: 435).

Meanwhile, however, large political changes had occurred. After the French revolution (1789), the French annexed the southern provinces of the Netherlands (now Belgium) in 1794. Although the large majority of the population of the southern Low Countries still spoke Dutch, the French language took over many functions, especially in the more formal registers (Willemys, 2003: 101). In the northern Low Countries, the French played a large role in the downfall of the Dutch Republic and the new republic, the Batavian Republic (1795-1806),

became a client state of France. However, although the French had much political influence, the Batavian Republic could operate independently (Schama, 1977). The National Assembly (the parliament of the Batavian Republic) showed much interest in the ongoing discussion between the language societies on language regulation. It was for the first time that the national government actually thought that the national language was important (Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 436). As a consequence, the Leiden municipality decided to establish the first chair of Dutch Language at the University of Leiden in 1797 (De Vooy, 1931: 21) and Matthijs Siegenbeek was chosen to be the first professor of Dutch Language and Rhetoric. Language standardization was high on the priority list of the National Assembly and Siegenbeek was asked to make a spelling system that could be used by all Batavian Republic citizens. In addition, Petrus Weiland was assigned to write an official Dutch grammar. Siegenbeek finished his spelling book in 1804 and Weiland his grammar *Nederduitsche spraakkunst* in 1805. Both the spelling book and the grammar were the compulsory guidelines “in education as well as administration” (Willemys, 2003: 106).

These were turbulent times for the Low Countries, as Napoleon I ended the independent Batavian Republic in 1806 and replaced it with the Kingdom of Holland. He placed his brother Louis Bonaparte on the throne of the new kingdom. The Dutch language did not suffer so much under Louis’ reign, as the king thought the national language was very important and learned Dutch himself to prove it was. However, after four years the Kingdom of Holland was annexed to France. During the French domination, nationalism under the Dutch citizens increased. By 1810 language was considered to be the one thing that defined a nation, even when all its other properties were taken (Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 438).

Finally, in 1814, after Napoleon’s defeat, the Low Countries were free and the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was established (including what now is Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg). In the United Kingdom the Dutch language was the only official language and in the Northern provinces the Siegenbeek’s spelling was obligatory in all education systems.

### **3.2 Education**

In the early 18th century, a national educational system was lacking. This was partly due to the political structure of the country: the federation of the seven provinces existed of independent districts and cities that mainly arranged their own education (De Vos, 1939: 44). The power of local districts was more important than that of the national government and the educational system was as much disunited as the nation itself (Lenders, 1988: 35). Children usually brought their own – not necessarily the same – books to the class in which they were



together with children with different levels. Because the levels differed so much, no frontal education was possible. Children would, one by one, walk to the teacher to read their lessons while the other children were working on other assignments (Lenders, 1988: 80). This resulted in chaotic and noisy lessons which were not very effective (Lenders, 1988: 80).

Already from the mid eighteenth century onward, there was much attention in the public debate for improving the educational system. Many societies discussed the subject and were writing out contests. The Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen (the society for the advancement of public welfare) played a central role (Lenders, 1988: 33), but because education was not organized nationwide, the attempts of the societies to improve the system were not very effective (Lenders, 1988: 36). In 1795 however, the Batavian Republic was erected, a Unitarian state with a central government in The Hague (Boekhold and de Booy, 1987: 89). The government, from then onward, arranged education for the entire republic. The improvement of education became one of the central aspects of the national policy and a special minister was installed for national education (Boekhold and de Booy, 1987: 89).

With the help of three school laws (1801, 1803, 1806) the educational system was reformed. These reformations especially were supposed to stimulate the concept of the Dutch nation as a Unitarian state (Lenders, 1988: 24). A national primary schooling model was introduced and national inspectors were established to control the implementation of the uniform system (Lenders, 1988: 9). The idea that it would be better to teach all classes frontal, in front of the entire class, was quite new and effective. Pupils were directed to different groups based on their level of education and all schools started to use the same school books and methods (Lenders, 1988: 81; 37). There was a distinction between public primary schools and private primary schools, the first subsidized by the government and the second by money from the pupils. Poor children automatically went to the public schools as they could not afford a private school and children from higher classes usually went to the private schools (Lenders, 1988: 43). However, on both schools the education law was effective. Both schools had to follow the national regulations and were evaluated by the national school inspection.

The social hierarchy around 1800 was as follows: at the top of the pyramid were the nobility, followed by the middle class or bourgeoisie: the wealthy middle class (merchants, fabric owners, notaries, high placed officers, scientist), and the ordinary middle class (independent craftsmen, lower placed officers, teachers). At the foot of the pyramid were the ordinary people, the laborers (Boekhold and de Booy, 1987: 24). The nobility children usually did not go to school; they got private classes at home after which they would be given a chance to continue their studies at a French or Latin school. The children from the lowest

class only went to public primary school, which was obliged after the school laws of 1801-1806. However, these children usually went only parts of the year to school (when no work had to be done at home) and they did not stay for many years (Boekhold and de Booy, 1987: 25). The (wealthy) middle class children went to (private) primary school and after that to the ‘French’ schools where they could learn modern languages and math and sciences (Boekhold and de Booy, 1987: 25). Only few children, mainly children from academics, made it to the ‘Latin’ school for a classical education and further to the university.

The Boissevain family belongs to the wealthy middle class and therefore we may assume that the writers of the letters that are examined in this study went to (private) primary school and French school. As the schooling system and educational material was under national supervision, it may be assumed that the Boissevain family members got to learn the Siegenbeek spelling, which was obligatory at the time. Previous research showed that in the seventeenth century there were large differences in the education of boys and girls, girls did not go to school as often or as long as boys (Rutten and Van der Wal, 2014). In the eighteenth century these differences were slightly smaller, but still present. Women had “less access to written language and schooling than [...] men” (Simons and Rutten, 2014: 68). A small difference between the spelling capacities of the Boissevain men and women therefore may be expected.

### **3.3 Siegenbeek’s spelling system**

According to Siegenbeek, the largest problem with the Dutch spelling system was the lack of uniformity (‘eenparigheid’). The professor was in search of a more coherent system and wanted to base the new way of spelling on modern linguistic theories, such as that of the German linguist Adelung (Siegenbeek, 1804: 9). However, his practice was clearly more conservative than the theory he had in mind (De Vooy, 1931: 25), which resulted at times in contradictory rules. Siegenbeek’s spelling system is based on four principles: 1) written language should be based on (proper) spoken language (discussed below), 2) in spelling one should take into account the etymology of a word and traditional ways of spelling (also discussed below), 3) the spelling of words should be based on analogy, therefore as verbs in second and third person singular add a <t> to the root of the verb, this should also be done for words ending in a <d> (which is pronounced as /t/ due to syllable final devoicing), e.g. *ik word* ‘I become’, *jij wordt* ‘you become’, *hij wordt* ‘he becomes’, and 4) the spelling of words should be based on a regular morphology, what Siegenbeek calls *gelijkvormigheid*, for example: if a noun has a /d/ in plural form (e.g. *broden* ‘breads’), this noun should also have a

/d/ in singular form (e.g. *brood* ‘bread’), even though in the singular form this /d/ is unvoiced to /t/.

Siegenbeek was ahead of his time with the spelling principle that one should write as one speaks (“schrijf zoo als gij spreekt”) (De Vooy, 1931: 24). However, Siegenbeek also observed that while speaking sometimes full syllables get lost or some sounds that ‘belong to’ a word are barely heard. In addition, dialectal differences at times cause variation in the pronunciation of words. Therefore, Siegenbeek adjusted the rule ‘write as you speak’ by adding that one should aim on writing down the most pure and civilized pronunciation (Siegenbeek, 1804: 18). He claimed that in a pure way of speaking, all letters of a word are carefully pronounced by using the sound that goes with that certain letter. In addition, pure speech meant that sounds could not be blended (Siegenbeek, 1804: 18). This pronunciation was, according to Siegenbeek, mainly found within the civilized and linguistically trained class, existing of highly educated and erudite people (Siegenbeek, 1804: 19). So while his readers were instructed to write as they spoke, they could only write as the elite of erudite people spoke. In addition to the difficulty of the first principle, especially the first and the second principle often contradicted. Siegenbeek prescribed a contrast between ‘soft’ and ‘sharp’ long /e/ and /o/ which in spoken language was only found in the vernacular of the southern provinces of the Netherlands up to Rotterdam (Siegenbeek, 1805: 52). However, he noted that 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century Dutch texts show that this distinction was more commonly used at the time and therefore it would be useful to apply it to the 19<sup>th</sup> century spelling system as well. This illustrates the way in which he was searching for a balance between modern (more phonetic) and 18<sup>th</sup> century (more etymological) theories on spelling, using both the arguments of staying close to spoken language and showing the historical origin of words. The fact that in practice he leaned more to the conservative side is shown by the extensive word list of hundred pages that was required to be able to implement his rules.

One of the reasons why Siegenbeek’s spelling was still rather successful was that he based himself on renowned Dutch linguistics, who were older and more experienced than he was. Siegenbeek clearly depends on the work of Professor Adriaan Kluit (1735-1807); he uses the same arguments and often the same examples (Van de Bilt, 2009: 208). Although Kluit supported a purely phonetic way of spelling (Van de Bilt, 1009: 211), where Siegenbeek tried to combine principles of phonetics, etymology and analogy, the outcome of their reasoning was almost always the same. This was especially due to the fact that both Kluit and Siegenbeek tried to match the way of spelling that was already most commonly used at the time. This also contributed to the success of Siegenbeek’s spelling.

In this study, as noted in the introduction, I will be testing early 19<sup>th</sup> century letters to see whether Siegenbeek's spelling system was implemented in the letter writing of ordinary people. To obtain a good view of this, I will be testing a large spectrum of features, which are introduced and explained in section 5 (variables).

#### **4. Method and data collection**

The method used in this study adopts many aspects of the historical sociolinguistic method as was discussed in section 2. In section 3.1 I will discuss the material, from which archive letters were selected and which choices were made. After that I will elaborate more on the transcription procedure. Section 3.3 will encompass a brief family history of the Boissevain family. After that I will zoom in on each writer in section 3.4, trying to find out: 1) sex, 2) his/her relationship with the central writers Gideon Jeremie Boissevain and Maria van Heukelom, 3) profession (of the men), 4) economic position and 5) what is to be expected from the level of education.

##### **4.1 Material**

All material was found in City Archive of Amsterdam (Stadsarchief Amsterdam) within the archive of one Amsterdam family, the relatively wealthy Boissevain family (archive number 394). Amsterdam material was chosen because this thesis is part of the NWO project 'Going Dutch: The construction of Dutch in Policy, Practice and Discourse (1750-1850)' at the Leiden University Center for Linguistics. For this project a multi genre corpus is being composed with material from different regions in the Netherlands. As ego documents from the Amsterdam region were still lacking, I collected personal letters for my study that will also be included in the project corpus.

The Boissevain family was selected because I wanted to select a coherent set of material from a network of writers of which a similar background may be assumed. As the Boissevain family has an extensive archive, it was easy to find many letters from the selected time period (1820-1840) which also met the following requirements: the letter should be written in Dutch, the writers first language should be Dutch, both date and place should be written on the letter, and the sender should be known (at least his/her sex). The Boissevain family is of French origin, but for generations living in Amsterdam. In the extensive archive I was able to find letters from many different writers and it was rather easy to find biographical details of most of them. As all letters were written from one family member to the other, the

content (and also the way of writing) is very personal. The Boissevain family was a wealthy family, which is why we may assume that all members were well educated.

For this study on the implementation of the Siegenbeek spelling system, 34 private letters were collected. Eight letters were written between 1820 and 1829 and twenty-six letters were written between 1830 and 1840. There were fifteen different writers, although the number of letters and words per writer differed considerably. For example: the writer of whom most words were collected was Eduard (m); five letters were transcribed with a total of 2,955 words. In contrast, of Grietje, a female writer, one letter was transcribed which contained only 276 words. Below a table can be found with all writers and the amounts of letters and words. In total 18,262 words were transcribed. Although I tried to balance out sexes, most data comes from male writers. In total, there were nine male writers and six female writers. The length of the letters was on average similar, but more letters of men were collected as 65% of the 34 letters was written by a man (22 versus 12). In total 64% of all words in the corpus came from male writers (11,778 versus 6,484).

Writer	Gender	Amount of letters	Total number of words
<b>Gideon</b>	M	7	1,970
<b>Willem</b>	M	2	1,539
<b>Paul</b>	M	1	779
<b>Edouard</b>	M	5	2,955
<b>David</b>	M	1	1,012
<b>Bernard</b>	M	1	384
<b>Walrave</b>	M	1	323
<b>Jan</b>	M	1	837
<b>Frans</b>	M	3	1,979
<b>TOTAL M</b>	M	22	11,778
<b>Maria</b>	F	4	1,286
<b>Caroline</b>	F	1	358
<b>Grietje</b>	F	1	276
<b>Schankhuizen</b>	F	3	1,804
<b>Sara</b>	F	1	791
<b>Naatje</b>	F	2	1,969

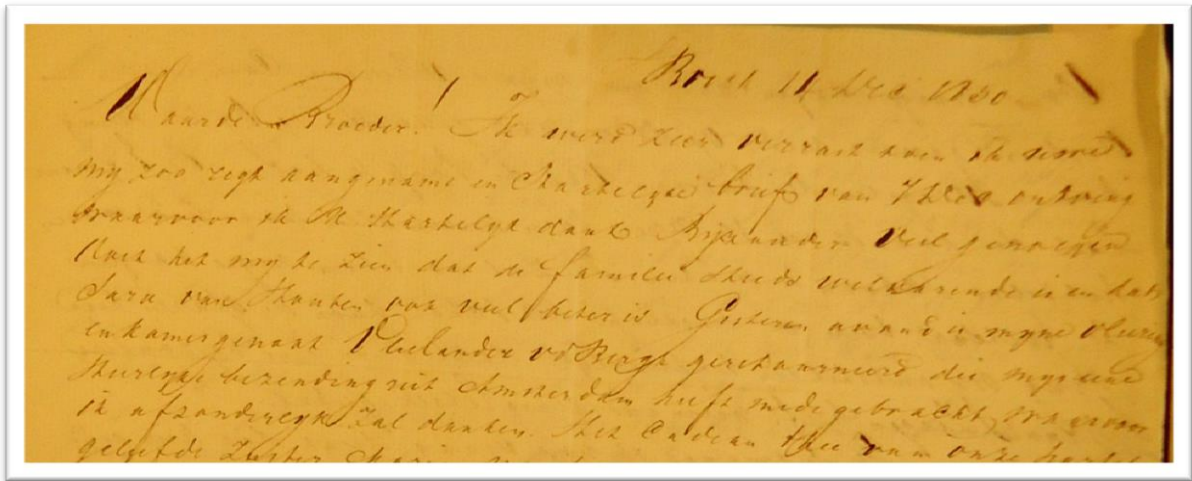
<b>TOTAL F</b>	F	12	6,484
<b>TOTAL</b>	F/M	34	18,262

*Table 1. Overview of the material*

## **4.2 Transcription procedure**

Within the archive of the Boissevain family (archive number 394), all three inventories were requested which in the online catalogue promised to include personal letters from family members. The inventory numbers were: 44 (letters from Gideon to Maria), 46 (letters from their brothers and sisters) and 48 (letters from other family members). In the library of the city archive of Amsterdam all letters were checked and the selection was made. First, only letters were selected within the period of 1820-1840. After that first selection all letters with a date and sender on it were assorted, with a maximum of five letters per sender. Only of Gideon, the central writer in this study, seven letters were selected, partly because his letters were relatively short.

After selecting the material, all letters were systematically photographed in order to digitalize the data and to be able to transcribe the letters outside of the archive library. Then the transcription procedure started. The guidelines for this procedure were formulated by Andreas Krogull, PhD candidate working on the Going Dutch corpus at the University of Leiden. The exact transcription guidelines are attached in appendix A., but in short described below. All letters were given a header with the following information: document name including archive number and inventory number, archive, genre, date, place, sex of the writer, initials of the transcriber, notes and word count. The letters were diplomatically transcribed. That is to say: the letters were transcribed without making any corrections on spelling or punctuation. Some tags were added for words that were illegible, ambiguous, deleted or inserted. Also underlined words and page breaks were tagged. Below three transcription examples are given. The first is the opening of one of the letters Edouard writes to his brother Gideon (Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_46\_let06). The second is a middle part of a letter of Gideon to his wife Maria (Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_44\_let07) written in 1838 and the third is the closing of Sara's letter to her sister Maria and brother in law Gideon (Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let05\_hand01) written in 1830. This final letter is addressed to London where Gideon and Maria, just two months married, were at the time.

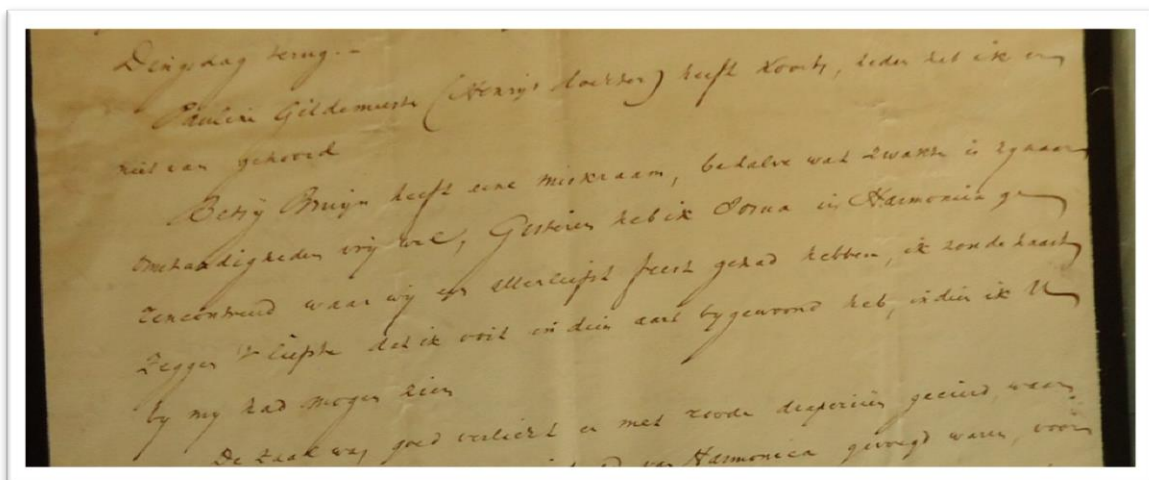


Fragment 1. Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_46\_let06. Sender = Edouard

'Bosch 11 Dec 1830

Waarde Broeder! Ik werd zeer verrast toen ik uwe  
 my zoo regt aangename en hartelyke brief van 7 Dec ontving  
 waarvoor hartelyk dank Byzonder veel genoeg  
 <ambig>deed</ambig> het my te zien dat de familie <illeg> wel <illeg> is en dat  
 Sara van Houten ook veel beter is Gisteren avond is myne <illeg>  
 en kamergenoot Vlieland <illeg> geretourneerd die my eene  
 heerlyke bezending uit Amsterdam heeft medegebracht, waarvoor  
 ik afzonderlyk zal danken. Het cadeau thee van onze hartelyk  
 geliefde Zuster Maria was heerlyk .....

Transcription of fragment 1. Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_46\_let06. Sender = Edouard



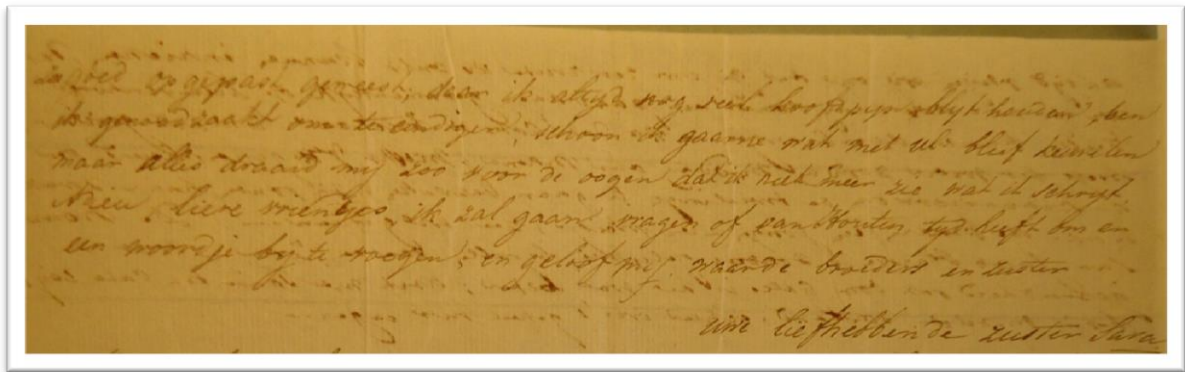
Fragment 2. Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_44\_let07. Sender = Gideon

Dingsdag terug. –

Pauline Gildemeester (Henry's dochter) heeft koorts, heden heb ik er niet van gehoord

Betsÿ Bru°yn heeft eene miskraam, behalve wat zwakte is zy naar omstandigheden vr°y wel, Gisteren heb ik <illeg> in Harmonica ge recontreerd waar w°y een allerliefst feest gehad hebben, ik zoude haast zeggen 't liefste dat ik ooit in dien aart bygewoond heb, indien ik u by my had mogen zien

De zaak was goed versiert en met roode daperieën gesierd, waar  
*Transcription of fragment 2. Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_44\_let07. Sender = Gideon*



*Fragment 3. Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let05\_hand01. Sender = Sara*

<page/>

<illeg> opgepast geweest; daar ik altyd nog veel hoofdpyn blyf houden, ben ik genoodzaakt om te eindigen; schoon ik gaarne wat met ul: bleef keuvelen maar alles draait my zoo voor de oogen dat ik niet meer zie wat ik schryf <illeg> lieve vriendjes, ik zal gaan vragen of van <illeg> tyd heeft om er een woordje b°y te voegen, en geloof my, waarde broeder en zuster

Uwe liefhebbende zuster <u>Sara</u>

*Transcription of fragment 3. Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let05\_hand01. Sender = Sara*

The third fragment shows that not all letters were easily readable. The transcription of letters with faded ink or sloppy handwriting was especially time consuming. Also, texts which were contaminated by the visibility of letters written at the other side of the paper (as is the case in the third fragment) were difficult to unravel. After transcribing all 34 letters the spelling



analysis started. During this phase, all transcriptions were checked manually and corrected when necessary.

### **4.3 Boissevain family history<sup>1</sup>**

The history of the Amsterdam Boissevain family starts in the seventeenth century in Bergerac, in the Southern French Dordogne. This is where Lucas Bouissavy (born in 1660) grew up in a Protestant farmer family. Being a Protestant in the Catholic kingdom of France wasn't easy at the time. Especially after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, when Lucas was 15 years old, the hostility towards Protestants increased. Protestants were persecuted and forced to adopt the Catholic Faith. Therefore, many Protestants tried to flee the country to safer, more tolerant countries, such as the Netherlands. Lucas, who did not want to give up his religion, left Bergerac soon after the revocation. After three years of roaming through France, some Protestant friends helped him to hide himself in Bordeaux on a sailing vessel full of barrels of wine. Some weeks later Lucas arrived in Amsterdam in miserable condition and without any money. Luckily, the Wallonia church community gave shelter to many Huguenots from France and was also able to help Lucas. Lucas found a job as a drawing teacher and also gave French classes. In 1700 he married Martha Roux, also a Huguenot, who gave him two children. After Lucas' death in 1705, the Boissevain family stayed in Amsterdam and step by step gained higher positions in society. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century many Boissevain family members worked as merchant or in the insurance business and some had political influential positions or were members of the board of the Wallonia church community. The increase of their social importance is also shown by many marriages that were arranged between members of the Boissevain family and members of high-placed influential families such as De Clercq, Bosscha, Brugmans and Van Hall.

I will start the family history of Gideon Jeremie Boissevain, the central writer in this study, with his grandparents Gedeon Jeremie Boissevain (1741-1802) and Marguérite Quien (1746-1808). Gedeon worked in Amsterdam as an accountant for several companies and later worked as a merchant. Also, he was an active member of the Wallonia church. Gedeon married the Amsterdam Marguérite when he was 26 years old and they got ten children. Daniel (1772-1834) was their third child. Daniel started working in a trade office when he

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<sup>1</sup> Different sources are used in order to write this background section on the Boissevain family and all family members. The sources were first of all the family archive (archive number 394, inventories 1267, 1269, 1270, 1272, 1278, 1281). Besides the archive, some useful website were visited: [www.genealogieonline.nl](http://www.genealogieonline.nl), <http://gw.geneanet.org/>, [www.boissevain.org](http://www.boissevain.org) on which several bulletins were published, [www.stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl](http://www.stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl)

was still a teenager. He worked together with the family Retemeijer for several years and married to Johanna Maria Retemeijer in 1795, when he was 23 and she was only nineteen. Although during the French annexation of the (Southern) Netherlands from 1795 onwards, business in Amsterdam was not prosperous at all, Daniel was co-founder of the *Company Retemeijer & Boissevain* in 1797. In the early years, this was an international trading company in cereals, German linen, French wines and English woven textiles. Daniel also traded in colonial products such as sugar and coffee, which he transported from Germany to England. In his early thirties he was very creative in the business world as he smuggled forbidden English products to Amsterdam and Rotterdam claiming these products were of German origin.

While business was going well, Daniel and Maria also had a vivid family life with the 14 children they got between 1796 and 1820: Gideon Jeremie (1796-1875), Jeanne (1798-1885), Caroline (1799-1879), Margueritte (1801-1879), Marie (1803-1803), Daniel (1804-1878), Charles (1806-1886), Annette (1808-1890), Eduard (1810-1885), Charlotte (1811-1873), Henri (1813-1891), Antoinette (1815-1815), Henriette (1818-1900), and Guillaume (1820-1889): six sons and eight daughters, although two daughters died within one year.

In 1812, Daniel started his own business, which he called *Boissevain & Co Company*. He was an influential business man as in 1813, the year in which the French troops were banished from the Netherlands, he became a member of the Commercial Court (Rechtbank van Koophandel). Three years later he started advising the Chamber of Commerce (Kamer van Koophandel). In the same year, 1816, his oldest son Gideon, twenty years old, started working for the family company. In the early years, *Boissevain & Co* was not very successful. However, when they started specializing in navigation and colonial products from 1820 onwards, the turnover increased. Their shipping company had seven ships that mainly sailed to Indie.

Since the *Boissevain & Co Company* was rather successful after all, it may be assumed that Daniel's children all had a good education. His sons were all enterprising, as most started their own business. Daniel II (1804-1878) and Eduard (1810-1885) started the insurance company *Gebr. Boissevain, commissionairs in effecten* (1836) and had their office along the Keizersgracht. Henri (1813-1891) also worked in the insurance business and had his own company *H.J.A. Boissevain en zoon, assurantiebezorgers*. Charles (1806-1886) wanted to marry Hester Kooy, but her father had one condition: Charles had to bring the ship into their new family company that was recently built for *Boissevain & Co*. Charles did and the shipping and business enterprise *Boissevain & Kooy* (1840) was established, as was the

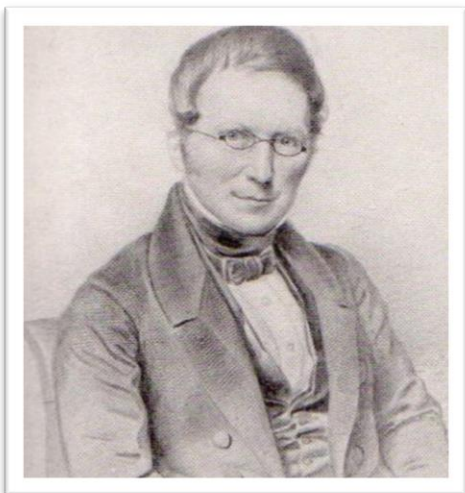
marriage. Guillaume, the youngest of the family, was the only son without his own company. He worked for the Netherlands Trading Society (Nederlandse Handelsmaatschappij). Daniel's six daughters also contributed to the family prestige by marrying to influential men, such as merchants, directors, professors, and politicians.

#### 4.4 On the writers of the examined letters

Within the Boissevain family archive I found personal letters of fifteen different writers:

1. Gideon Jeremie Boissevain (central writer)
2. Maria van Heukelom (wife of Gideon)
3. Caroline Charlotte de Clercq-Boissevain (younger sister of Gideon)
4. Willem de Clercq (cousin of Maria and husband of Caroline, therefore brother in law)
5. Eduard Constantin Boissevain (younger brother of Gideon)
6. Sara van Houten – van Heukelom (younger sister of Maria)
7. Bernard van Houten (husband of Sara)
8. Walrave van Heukelom (father of Maria)
9. Jan van Heukelom (brother of Maria)
10. Frans van Heukelom (brother of Maria)
11. Naatje van Heukelom – Vos (wife of Frans, therefore sister in law)
12. David van Walree (older brother of Judith, Gideon's second wife, before Maria)
13. N.C. Schenkhuizen (aunt of Gideon, sister of the mother of Antoinetta, his first wife)
14. Paul (possibly family of Antoinetta, Gideon's first wife)
15. Grietje (wife of Paul, possibly family of Antoinetta, Gideon's first wife)

##### 4.4.1 Gideon Jérémie Bossevain (1796-1875)



When he was twenty-years old, Gideon married with the twenty-year old Antoinetta Elizabeth Klijn, daughter of Hendrik Harmen Klijn and Christina Maria Schenkhuysen. Sadly, after one year of marriage, Antoinetta died while giving birth to their dead born child. For years, Gideon focused on his career as a ship-owner and business man. Also, he traveled a lot through Europe. However, when he was 30, he tried his luck and married Judith van Walree (1804-1827), daughter of

Nicolaas van Walree and Judith van Lennep. Also his second wife died very shortly after their marriage, when she was only 23 years old.

In 1830 Gideon married for the third time and this time he was successful. Maria van Heukelom gave him seven children: Daniel (1831-1849), Walrave (1833-1854), who both died as young men, Annette (1835-1894), Jan (1836-1904), Hester (1842-1914), Charles (1842-1927), and Jacob (1844-1927).

Gideon had a busy life, with his career as business man and with the many other positions he held. Just to name a few: he was manager of an institute for blinds, member of the Wallonia church, and commissionaire of the Entrepotdok. Also, he was president of the district committee for cholera. During the 1832 cholera epidemic, he stayed in Amsterdam instead of finding a safer place on the country side so he could help the diseased. Gideon was awarded with a medal of honor of the city of Amsterdam because of his brave contribution to the repression of the plague. Later in his life, Gideon suffered an increasing deafness because of which he had to decline some positions, such as member of the city council of Amsterdam.

In his childhood memoires, son Charles writes about his father: Every morning, the first thing Gideon did was to walk to the closed veranda of the family house along the Herengracht, and look out of the window. From there he could see the weathercock of the Westertoren so he could see whether the wind was any good. When the ships were waiting to sail out from the harbor of Nieuwediep, an eastern wind was required. The captains of the vessels, mostly from distinguished captain families from Katwijk, always came for a cup of coffee after having returned safely to Amsterdam. For the children of the Boissevain family, these visits were most spectacular, as the strong, broad-shouldered men brought many sensational stories and exotic gifts: clove, ginger, canaries...

#### **4.4.2 Maria van Heukelom (1801-1866)**



Maria was the second child of banker Walrave van Heukelom (1775-1853) and Joanna de Clercq (1778-1810). Her two-year older sister was Catharina (Cato), who never got married and had many health problems as she was very often ill. After Maria, Walrave and Joanna got three more children: Frans (1803), Sara (1806) and Jan (1810). Maria was nine when her mother Joanna died, most probably during the birth of the youngest child Jan. Two years later,

father Walrave remarried with Louise Victoire Gales (1774-1838). Walrave and Louise got two daughters, Maria's half-sisters: Henriette (1816) and Louise (1818).

The family of Maria was wealthy, given the fact that her father was able to give Maria a dowry of 40,000 guilders. In his memoirs, Charles, one of Maria's sons, wrote about his mother that she was a very well-read woman who spoke different languages (Charles Boissevain (1842-1927) NP VIIIb 67 on Boissevain.org). This suggests that Maria was well educated.

#### **4.4.3 Caroline Charlotte De Clercq-Boissevain (1799-1879)**

Caroline was the younger sister of Gideon. She married to Willem de Clercq in the summer of 1818 when she was 18 years old. Willem and Caroline got eight children between 1821 and 1836, mainly boys: Gerrit, Paul (who died after one year), Daniel, Stephanus, Gédeon, Margaretha, their only girl, Carel and Matthijs.

#### **4.4.4 Willem de Clercq (1795-1844)**

The parents of Willem de Clercq, Gerrit de Clercq and Maria de Vos, belonged to the distinguished class of merchants. When Willem was fifteen years old, he started working for the family company *S. en P. de Clercq*, a business in grain. In 1818, he became chef of the business and he married Caroline with whom he had a very happy marriage. Although he did not have extensive education, Willem was very much interested in arts and literature and he was a well-read man. He knew many languages and he knew a lot about history. He was a poet, improvisator and a very Christian man. In 1824, the Netherlands Trading Society was erected and Willem, only 30 years old, became the secretary. Ten years later, Willem was to be the director (see NNWB, part 3: 236-9).

#### **4.4.5 Edouard Constantin Boissevain (1810-1885)**

Edouard, the younger brother of Gideon, was a volunteer for the Amsterdam citizen force "schutterij" between 1830 and 1832. From 1836 onward he became chief of the *Brothers Boissevain Company*, the company in assurances. Edouard married the British Emma Nicholls (1815-1871) in London in 1841 and they got eleven children, mainly girls. The family lived along the Keizersgracht, where also the office of the company in assurances. Edouard was churchwarden of the English Episcopal community.

#### **4.4.6 Sara van Houten - van Heukelom (1806-?)**

Sara married Johannes Bernardus van Houten in 1830, in the same year in which Maria and Gideon got married. Maria and Gideon called them lovingly ‘de Van Houtentjes’. Sara and her sister Maria were pregnant at the same time, which must have strengthened their relationship even more. In 1832 Sara got her first daughter: Sara Maria van Houten. After the first baby, Sara was almost pregnant all the time, as she gave birth to a child every year: Jan (1833), Isa (1834), Frans (1835) and Louise (unknown).

#### **4.4.7 Bernard van Houten**

Bernard is the son of Bernardus Albertus van Houten and Sara Maria Lisman. He married to Maria’s sister Sara in 1830. Unfortunately, not much is known about his (educational) background or profession.

#### **4.4.8 Walrave van Heukelom (1774-1853)**

Walrave is the father of Maria. Walrave was the second child of Frans van Heukelom and Catharina Kloppenburg. He was a banker who married Joanna de Clercq in 1798. Walrave and Joanna got five children: Cato, Maria, Frans, Sara and Jan. Sadly, Joanna died while giving birth to their youngest son in 1810. In 1812 Walrave remarried to Louise Victoire Gales (1774-1838). They got one son, who sadly died after living for two months and two daughters Henriette (1816) and Louise (1818).

Walrave van Heukelom was a wealthy man who owned the country estate Leeuwenhooft in Haarlemmer Hout, where family members often stayed if they felt like leaving the city for a while.

#### **4.4.9 Jan van Heukelom (1810-1879)**

Jan, the youngest son of Walrave and brother of Maria, married Anna Margareta Beetz (daughter of Andries Beetz and Bartruida Boot) in 1834. As far as the archives show, they got only one son in 1835 which they called Walrave after his grandfather. Anna died in 1847 after which Jan remarried to Emilie Cornelie van Heukelom. It is unclear what kind of work Jan did, but as his father was a wealthy banker it may be assumed that Jan had good schooling.

#### **4.4.10 Frans van Heukelom (1803-1845)**

Frans is the younger brother of Maria and one of the sons of Walrave. He left the Netherlands to work in Indie, a Dutch colony. In 1832 he married in Indie with Johanna Vos (Naatje).

They got one daughter, Jansje, who died when she was only about one year old in 1838 in a mysterious way. Both Frans and Naatje were very sad and especially Frans explicitly wrote to his brother in law in August 1838 that he would rather die today than tomorrow: *Geluk, genoegens, smaak ik waarachtig niet & ware het gene zonde ik geloof dat het my aangenamer zoude zyn, dat God my heden in stede van morgen tot zich riep* “Happiness, pleasures, I do not experience & if it would not have been a sin, I believe that it would be more pleasant to me if God would call me today instead of tomorrow”. Frans had to work very hard in Indie and he was not so lucky in his career either. Around 1839 he lost all his money and quotas and got many debts. He was in a depressive mood in this period. He died in 1845.

#### **4.4.11 Naatje van Heukelom - Vos**

Johanna Maria Vos (called Naatje) married Frans van Heukelom in Indie in 1832. See further details under 4.2.10. In the family archives nothing can be found about Naatje’s family history so it is unknown whether she was able to go to a good school.

#### **4.4.12 David van Walree (1800-1854)**

David van Walree is the older brother of Judith van Walree, the second wife of Gideon, who died on the age of 23. David is the son of Nicolaas van Walree (who worked in real estate in Amsterdam) and Judith van Lennep. Nicolaas and his wife got five children in total: Jacob, David, Suanna, Judith and Nicolaas. David married to Sophie Christina Camp in the autumn of 1835. They got eleven children. His first daughter, their fourth child, was called Judith, after David’s sister. Not much is known about David’s profession, but as he was able to make a trip to Saint Petersbrug in 1827, it may be assumed that he was a wealthy man, possibly a land owner.

#### **4.4.13 N.C. Schenkhuizen**

Unfortunately, nothing could be found in the family archives about this aunt of Gideon, Mrs. N.C. Schenkhuizen. She must be a sister of the mother of Antoinetta, the first wife of Gideon, who is still in contact with the father of Antoinetta, as she writes about him in her letters.

#### **4.4.14 Paul**

Unfortunately, nothing is known about Paul. He must be a family member of one of the previous wives of Gideon, possibly a brother of Antoinetta.

#### 4.4.15 Grietje

Also about Grietje, nothing is known, except for her being Paul's wife. They are possibly related to the family of Gideon's first wife Antoinetta.

### 5. Variables

From the spelling book of Siegenbeek (1805) I deducted twenty features that characterize the spelling Siegenbeek promoted. Some of these features were subject of the debate of linguists for many years (Van de Bilt, 2009). For all features I will try to give a bit of context and motivation for Siegenbeek's choice.

#### 1. Spelling of <ij>

The rule: One should use <ij> or <ÿ> instead of <y> (or even <ei>) as in words like *zijn* 'to be' and *mijn* 'mine'.

Siegenbeek (1805) argues that <ij> is historically a lengthened [i:]: the second <i> in <ii> got a small twist. Especially in the dialect of Holland this long [i:] is diphthongized into a sound similar to <ei> [ɛi] (Siegenbeek, 1805: 26-27). Siegenbeek admits that in many dialects the difference between <ei> and <ij> was lost, which caused spelling problems (Siegenbeek, 1805: 57). Still, because of the etymology, the distinction should be marked. One should write the <ij> as two characters with dots and not as a Greek Y. This <y> is not part of the Dutch alphabet and should not be used at all (Siegenbeek, 1804, 69; 1805: 28).

#### 2. Spelling of <i>

The rule: One should use <i> for [ɪ] instead of <y> as in *ik* 'I' and *zingen* 'to sing'.

The motivation for this rule can be found in the explanation of feature 1: the <y> is not a Dutch letter sign and should be avoided (Siegenbeek, 1805: 28). In addition, Siegenbeek argues that the use of <y> as short [ɪ] comes from French and is therefore not native (Siegenbeek, 1805: 29).

#### 3. The spelling of <ie>

The rule: One should use mostly <ie> for long /i/ (see lexical items for exceptions).

Examples are: *zien* 'to see', *niet* 'not', *iets* 'something' (and not *zyn*, *nyt*, *yts*). The motivation, again, can be found in the explanation of feature 1: as the <y> is not a Dutch letter sign and should be avoided (Siegenbeek, 1805: 28).



#### 4. Diphthongs /œy/ and /ɛi/

The rule: For diphthongs /œy/ and /ɛi/ one should write <ui> and <ei> instead of <uy/uij> and <ey/eij>

Both ways of spelling <ui> and <uy> and <ei> and <ey> were in use in the eighteenth century. Siegenbeek prescribed the use of <ui> and <ei> as he did not want to use the ‘foreign’ symbol <y> which was, as he claimed, of French origin (1804: 68). Despite this prescription, other studies showed that in both the eighteenth and nineteenth century, in informal letter writing mostly <uy> <uij> <ey> and <eij> were used, so: *kleyn* or *kleijn* instead of *klein* ‘small’, and *bruyn* or *bruijn* instead of *bruin* ‘brown’ (Vosters et al., 2010: 101).

#### 5. The spelling of long /a/

The rule: For a long /a/ in closed syllables, one should use <aa> instead of <ae>

The spelling of long /a/ already during the sixteenth and seventeenth century was a subject to debate. At the end of the sixteenth century many writers started replacing the traditional <ae> by <aa> (Van de Bilt, 2009: 174). Although <aa> is the variant mostly used in the seventeenth century, the discussion continues in the eighteenth century. One argues that <ae> represents a more palatal pronunciation which is by many regarded as being crude Northern Dutch dialect and therefore <aa> should be preferred in spelling (Van de Bilt, 2009: 175). Siegenbeek adopts this more modern spelling and prescribes to write *haar* ‘hair’ and *schaap* ‘sheep’ instead of *haer* and *schaep*.

#### 6. <ee> or <e> and <oo> or <o> in open syllables

The rule: in open syllables one should never double the vowel (not *geeven* ‘to give’ but *geven*), unless the vowel is a historically ‘sharp’ long [e:] and [o:]

The spelling of [e:] and [o:] in open syllables was a much debated issue amongst grammar writers and linguists such as Verwer, Séwel, Ten Kate and Kluit (Van de Bilt, 2009: 175, 190). In most spoken varieties of Dutch a difference between sharp long and soft long [e:] and [o:] was not audible. However, there was a historical difference, as the West-Germanic diphthong \*au became long [o:] through monophthongization (Kroonen, 2013: 41). This sharp long [o] merged with the soft long [o:] which came from lengthened West-Germanic \*o and \*u. Examples are: *gelooven* ‘to believe’, *hooren* ‘to hear’, and *noodig* ‘needed’ (sharp long) versus *vrolijk* ‘happy’ and *over* ‘about / over’ (soft long).

Similarly, soft long ē “developed through lengthening of the short vowels [ɛ] and [i]. Examples are the vowels in the first syllables of *leven* ‘live’, *rekenen* ‘count’, and *hemel* ‘heaven’. Compare German *leben, rechnen, himmel*” (Rutten en Van der Wal, 2014: 35). In contrast, the sharp long ê was the result of the West-Germanic diphthong \*ai, as in *steen* ‘stone’, *een* ‘one’, *heten* ‘be called’. Compare German *Stein, ein, heißen* (Rutten en Van der Wal, 2014: 35). In present-day standard Dutch, these two variants merged into one long [e:]. “The merger dates back at least to the end of the sixteenth century, and probably started in Amsterdam” (Rutten and Van der Wal, 2014: 35, see also: Rutten, 2009). Although for many language users in the early nineteenth century, the difference between the historically soft long and the sharp long <e> was not audible, Siegenbeek, as most of his examples (such as Verwer and Kluit), chose to keep the distinction in his spelling system. In open syllables, the soft long [e:] should be written with a single <e> as in *leven* ‘live’, *rekenen* ‘to count’ and *hemel* ‘heaven’, whereas the sharp long [e:] should be <ee>, e.g. *steenen* ‘stones’, *eene* ‘a’, and *heeten* ‘to be called’ (Rutten en Van der Wal, 2014: 35). For sharp and soft long [o:] the same rule applied.

Interestingly, previous work on Amsterdam 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century letters show that the use of <ee> in open syllables increased for both sharp and soft long [e:] (Rutten en Van der Wal, 2014: 68). Writers were, as they couldn’t hear any difference between the two [e:]s, clearly confused and over generalized the <ee> spelling.

### 7. Verbal ending –eren or –eeren

The rule: One should write verbs ending in suffix –eren with a single <e>, so *studeren* ‘to study’ and *regeren* ‘to reign / govern’ instead of *studeeren* and *regeeren*.

### 8. The use of ‘foreign’ letter signs such as <c>, <q> and <x>

The rule: One should not use the letters <c, q, x> as they are not Dutch. They can only be used in foreign names or loan words like *Xerxes* and *cirkel* ‘circle’. Also <c> can be used in the combination <ch> for /x/ (Siegenbeek, 1804: 51).

According to Siegenbeek one should “write the words of a language by using the letter signs which are accepted in a language and belong to it” (Siegenbeek, 1804: 51, my translation). In order to apply this rule, Siegenbeek needed the word list which was added to his spelling book, as it was debatable to what extent words were loans and to what extent they were implemented in the Dutch language. For example: *officier* ‘military officer’ and *procureur* ‘solicitor’ with <c> were correct, whereas *character* ‘character’ and *canaal* ‘canal’

should be written with <k>: *karakter* and *kanaal*. However, many words, like *contract* ‘contract’, *cigaar* ‘cigar’, *correspondentie* ‘correspondence’ and *circa* ‘approximately’, were not on the list. For <q> and <x> this was a bit less of a problem for the writers, as there were not many words in which they were tempted to use these letter signs. I hardly found any in the letters under investigation.

#### 9. <d> or <t> word finally

The rule: One should, if applicable, use the <d> at the end of a word, instead of a <t>, even though the <d> is unvoiced and will therefore sound like a /t/ (Siegenbeek, 1805: 153).

This rule is based on the principle of regular morphology. A word which in plural form has a [d] sound and a written <d> (e.g. *broden* ‘breads’), should also have a <d> in the singular form, even though this <d> is unvoiced (e.g. *brood* ‘bread’ and not *broot*). This rule also applies to adjectives: *goed* ‘good’ and not *goet*, because: *de goede man* ‘the good man’. Traditionally, one argued that the letter <d> was too ‘soft’ to close a syllable and therefore the <d> was replaced by or followed by a <t>, instead of *stad* ‘city’, *stat* or *stadt* were written (Siegenbeek, 1805: 152). Siegenbeek argues that although the <d> at the end of a syllable does not completely represent the sound /d/ it also does not equal /t/, as there is – so he claims – a difference between the pronunciation of *nood* ‘emergency’ and *noot* ‘nut’ (Siegenbeek, 1805: 153). Therefore he argues it is clearer and more regular to use the <d> as a *sluitletter* ‘closing character’ in words like *brood* ‘bread’ and *goed* ‘good’.

#### 10. <gh> or <g> before high/front vowels

The rule: One should use <g> instead of <gh>, as in *geven* ‘to give’ and not *gheven*. This rule also applies in different contexts as word initial, as in: *brenghen* ‘to bring’ and not *brenghen*.

#### 11. <ck> or <k> syllable final

The rule: One should use k instead of ck, as in *ik* ‘I’ and not *ick*

#### 12. Verbal conjugation for stems ending in <d>

The rule: One should add a <t> to verbal stems in second and third person singular, also if there verbs already end in <d> (which sounds like [t]), e.g. *ik word* ‘I become’, *jij wordt* ‘you become’, *hij wordt* ‘becomes’, instead of *ik/jij/hij word*

This rule is based on the principle of analogy.

### 13. The use of <cht> and <gt>

The rule: One should use <g> for /x/ if the word can be derived of a form with <g>, if not, one should write <ch> for /x/, so: *klagt* ‘complaint’ from *klagen* ‘to complain’, but *kocht* ‘bought’ from *kopen* ‘to buy’.

### 14. The use of <sch> instead of <sg>

The rule: One should always use <sch> in anlaut, instead of <sg>, so *schoen* ‘shoe’ and *schaap* ‘sheep’

### 15. The use of connecting <w>

The rule: Words that get a <w> in plural (or derived forms), will also get that in singular, so one should write: *dauw* ‘dew’, *rouw* ‘mourning’ and *nieuw* ‘new’ instead of *dau*, *rou*, *nieu* without a w.

This rule is based on the principle of regular morphology (*gelijkvormigheid*). Because you say and write *vrouwen* ‘wives’, you have to write *vrouw* ‘wife’.

### 16. The use of connecting <j> in verbs

The rule: One should write *vleijen* ‘to butter up someone’, *zaaijen* ‘to sow’, *gooijen* ‘to throw’, etcetera instead of *vleien*, *zaaien*, *gooien* without <j>.

Siegenbeek argues that a spelling like *zaaijen* ‘to sow’ best complies with the pronunciation (Siegenbeek, 1805: 84). The <j> functions as a glide just like the <w> does in *vrouwen* ‘wives’.

### 17. The use of connection <j> in nouns

The rule: In addition to rule 16, one should make plurals of nouns ending in a vowel in the same way, so *koe* ‘cow’ becomes *koeijen* ‘cows’ and *vloo* ‘flea’ becomes *vlooijen* ‘fleas’.

The motivation for this rule is the same as for rule 16 and is based on the principle of pronunciation or phonetics.

### 18. The spelling of <ch> intervocalically

The rule: After a short vowel intervocalically, one should double the <ch> with a preceding <g>, as in: *ligchaam* ‘body’ and *lagchen* ‘to laugh’.

Similar to the morphology of words like *katten* ‘cats’ and *bommen* ‘bombs’, the <ch> should intervocalically be doubled if that is required to keep the preceding vowel short (note:

*katen* ‘-’ and *bomen* ‘trees’ are words with long vowels) (Siegenbeek, 1805: 85). However, as Siegenbeek does not like the combination <chch>, he argues that it would be better to double the <ch> with a <g>, e.g. <gch>. This combination is only required intervocalically and when preceded by a short vowel. In *lach* ‘laugh’ one <ch> is enough and in *juichen* ‘to cheer’ the vowel is not short, so no doubling is required either (Siegenbeek, 1805: 85). This rule is clearly based on the principle of analogy.

#### 19. The spelling of word final <sch> and <s>

One should write *vergeefs* ‘fruitless / in vain’ as an adverb, but *vergeefsche* ‘fruitless’ as an adjective before a noun. Also, one should write <sch> for words that historically ended in <sk>, such as *visch* (from *fisk*) ‘fish’ and *mensch* (from *mensk*) ‘human’. For other words, such as *huis* ‘house’, only a <s> is required.

#### 20. Lexical items

In letters, often temporal terms are used (days, months). Therefore I decided to select four words in this category that have a typical Siegenbeek spelling. The items are: *Junij* ‘June’, *Julij* ‘July’, *Zaturdag* ‘Saturday’, *Dingsdag* ‘Tuesday’. Also used at that time (and in current Dutch) were: *juni*, *juli*, *zaterdag* and *dinsdag*. If writers use the Siegenbeek way of spelling these lexical items that shows they were familiar with Siegenbeek’s prescriptions.

## **6. Results**

### **6.1 General results and analysis**

I will first discuss all results together (6.1), before taking into account differences between male and female writers (6.2) and individual differences (6.3). In total, 10,570 items were found. The items were not distributed equally over all features, as some (such as feature 16 and 18) were barely observed (5 and 6 times respectively), whereas other features were overrepresented, such as feature 1 and 2 (1,536 and 1,902 times respectively).

Overall, the data clearly shows that participants use the spelling Siegenbeek prescribes. Of all 10,570 items only 1,538 (14.5 %) are spelled differently than the prescribed spelling, as table 2 shows. The unknown category contains items spelled with a <c> where I could not find out whether Siegenbeek would approve this or not. In his word list there are some items with <c>, such as *citroen* ‘lemon’, *cijfer* ‘cipher’ and *officier* ‘officer’. Still, there were many words I could not find in his word list and I also couldn’t find them spelled in an alternative way, with <s> or <k> for example.

Spelling of all writers together	Items	Percentages
spelling according to Siegenbeek	8,960	84.8%
not according to Siegenbeek	1,538	14.5%
unknown spelling	72	0.7%
total items	10,570	100%

Table 2. Results for all spelling categories and writers together

I examined what kind of mistakes writers make. I listed the categories in which (relatively) most mistakes were made below in table 3. Obviously, it is hard to calculate the importance of a mistake if there are only nine items in total (as for feature 7). This feature therefore is more of an illustration. As the percentage of mistakes is high, it is clearly something that writers often do wrong. However, as the absolute numbers are so low, the significance of these mistakes is difficult to express.

Nr	Description of the feature	Total mistakes	All items in this category	Percentage mistakes within this category	Percentage mistakes of all mistakes
1	Spelling of <ij>	1,397	1,536	91%	91%
7	Verbal ending <i>-eren</i>	4	9	45%	0%
12	Verbal morphology, (stem with d + t)	14	47	30%	1%
6	Spelling of soft long and sharp long [e:] and [o:]	84	1,096	8%	5.5%
	Total	1,499			97.5%

Table 3. An illustration of the mistakes that are most often encountered

Some examples of these features are given below:

- (1) *gebrek aan **tyd** had Sara belet U eenige letteren toetevoegen*

‘shortage of time kept Sara from adding some letters’

Fragment taken from: Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let06 (sender = Jan, 1832)

- (2) *laat dezelve **tapeeren** & verkoopt dezelve*

‘let its value be estimated and sell it’

<tapeeren> should be written with verbal ending <eren> and not with <ee>. Fragment taken from: Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let10 (sender = Frans, 1839)

(3) *Echter daaraan gewend men zich*

‘However to that one gets used’

<gewend> is a verb in third person singular and should have a <t> added to it.

Fragment taken from: Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let08 (sender = Frans, 1838)

(4) *ik moet immers zorgen om het de jonge mensjes hier zo aangenaam mogeluk te maken*

‘I have to make sure to make it the young people here as pleasant as possible’

<zo> is with sharp long /o/ and should therefore be written as <zoo>. Fragment taken

from: Amsterdam\_Boissevain\_394\_48\_let02 (sender = aunt Schenkhuizen, 1825)

These five features together explain 97.5% of all mistakes that were made. As can be shown in the table, although within category 7 and 12 relatively many mistakes are made, these hardly contribute to the total percentage of mistakes. Most mistakes are found in category 1 and 6. Interestingly, in category 1 not only 91% of all items are wrongly spelled within that category, but the mistakes within this category also account for 91% of all mistakes made in the entire study (1,538 mistakes). Table 3 serves as an illustration. I will now discuss the amount of spelling errors per feature.

### 6.1.1. Spelling of <ij>

As was already shown in table 2, within this category, many items were found but especially many items were spelled differently than the by Siegenbeek prescribed way. According to Siegenbeek, the <y> is not part of the Dutch alphabet and should not be used. The lengthened and diphthongized <i> should be written as <ij>. However, in practice and in handwritten texts, the difference between these symbols is very small. Does the writer take the time to add dots or not? Does the writer separate the <i> and the <j> or are they glued together as one symbol, suggesting an <y>?

I distinguished four different ways of spelling: <y>, <°y> with one dot, <ÿ>, one symbol but two dots, and <ij> two symbols. As in handwritten language symbols are glued together easily, I decided to mark both <ÿ> and <ij> as according to Siegenbeek.

Way of spelling <ij>	Number	Percentage
<y> spelling	1,333	86.8 %
<°y> spelling	64	4.2 %
<ÿ> spelling	96	6.2 %

<ij> spelling	43	2.8 %
Total	1,536	100 %

Table 4. The spelling of <ij>

As table 4 shows, only 9% of the items with <ij> is spelled in the way Siegenbeek prescribes, and 91% is spelled in a different way. This is striking. Why would the writers follow Siegenbeek in all features but not in the spelling of <ij>? One may wonder to what extent the different ways of spelling distinguished in practice actually represent different symbols. In writing by hand, it is fairly easy to not take the time to add the dots, which makes the symbol look exactly like the <y> Siegenbeek claims is not part of the Dutch alphabet. It could therefore very well be that the writers actually intent to write <ij> more often than I found <ij> spelled.

### 6.1.2. Spelling of <i>

Regarding the spelling of <i> versus <y> there is no ambiguity: the symbols are not easily interchangeable. The results (table 4) show clearly that all writers fully go for the more modern and by Siegenbeek promoted variant <i>.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<i>	1,902	100 %
<y>	0	0 %
Total	1,902	100 %

Table 5. The spelling of <i>

### 6.1.3. The spelling of <ie>

Although long <ie> is a bit less frequently used as <i>, it is very clear from the data that all writers spell it according to Siegenbeek as <ie>. No one opts for the more traditional <y> spelling.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<ie>	920	100 %
<y>	0	0 %
Total	920	100 %

Table 6. The spelling of <ie>



#### 6.1.4. Diphthongs /œy/ and /ei/

Also for the spelling of diphthongs /œy/ and /ei/, the writers are very consistent and chose the modern way of writing <ui> and <ei> as prescribed by Siegenbeek. Only one writer uses the old fashioned spelling <uy> for /œy/ once.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<ui>	194	45.12%
<uy>	1	0.23 %
<ei>	235	54.65 %
<ey>	0	0 %
Total	430	100 %

Table 7. The spelling of <ui> and <ei>

#### 6.1.5. The spelling of long /a/

A previous study on Dutch spelling showed that in the seventeenth-century North Holland almost exclusively <ae> was used for long /a/ in closed syllables (Rutten en Van der Wal, 2014: 60). This way of spelling, however, changed drastically within 150 years, as in the Boissevain letters only <aa> is observed (1037 tokens, see table 7).

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<aa>	1037	100 %
<ae>	0	0 %
Total	1037	100 %

Table 8. The spelling of <aa>

#### 6.1.6. <ee> or <e> and <oo> or <o> in open syllables

Within this category writers did not always follow Siegenbeek's prescription. Most probably, because the difference between soft and sharp long /e:/ and sharp and soft long /o:/ was not audible for the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Amsterdam writers. As was already shown in table 3, in total 84 “mistakes” were made, which is 8 % of all tokens. In order to find out whether writers scored better on some of the items, I made different tables for each feature: sharp /e:/, soft /e:/, sharp /o:/ and soft /o:/.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<ee> for sharp /e:/	165	90 %
<e> for sharp /e:/	18	10 %
Total	183	100 %

Table 9. The spelling of sharp /e:/ in open syllables

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<e> for soft /e:/	468	95 %
<ee> for soft /e:/	23	5 %
Total	491	100 %

Table 10. The spelling of soft/e:/ in open syllables

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<oo> for sharp /o:/	172	83 %
<o> for sharp /o:/	35	17 %
Total	207	100 %

Table 11. The spelling of sharp /o:/ in open syllables

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<o> for soft /o:/	207	96 %
<oo> for soft /o:/	8	4 %
Total	215	100 %

Table 12. The spelling of soft long /o:/ in open syllables

These tables show that writers scored better for the soft long vowels, as they overgeneralized the use of a single vowel in open syllable context. It is interesting to compare these data with the data of a previous study on the spelling of /e:/ in open syllables for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch (Rutten en Van der Wal, 2014: 68-69). I copied their results and added mine in the diagram below.

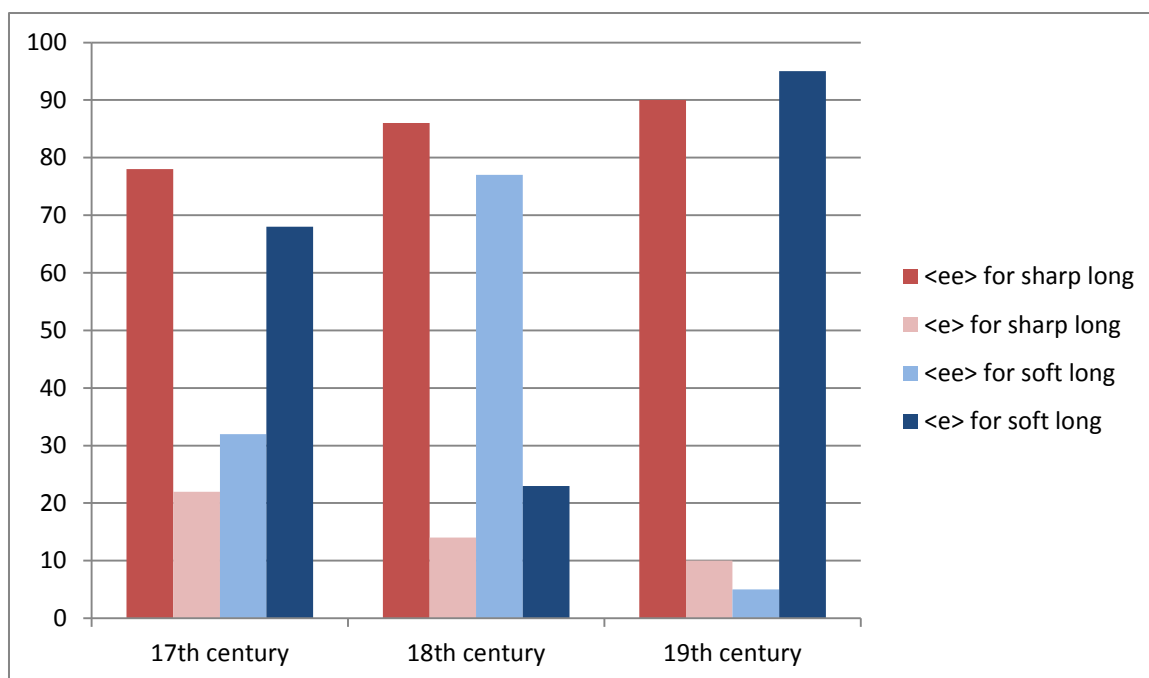


Diagram 1. The use of <ee> and <e> for both sharp and soft long /e:/ throughout the centuries

This diagram shows that throughout the centuries, writers more and more used <ee> for sharp long /e:/. Siegenbeek’s rule very much compiled with this existing trend. For the spelling of soft long /e:/ interestingly a slightly different picture emerges. The way of writing in the seventeenth century was still based on the phonology of the sounds as a difference between sharp and soft /e:/ might have been still audible. This “phonologically oriented distribution” gave way to “syllabification of the writing system, with <ee> for all long e’s in open syllable” (Rutten and Van der Wal, 2014: 69). Whereas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the use of <ee> in open syllables was overgeneralized, the original system, based on historical phonology, was reintroduced and implemented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is quite striking that this rule was so successfully used among the Boissevain writers. Also, as noted above, the use of <e> was overgeneralized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which shows a nice shift towards a more modern writing system in which only single vowels are used in open syllables.

#### 6.1.7. Verbal ending –eren or –eeren

Within this category it is clear that writers do not really know what to do. The distribution of <-eren> (according to Siegenbeek) and <-eeren> (not according to Siegenbeek) is almost fifty/fifty. However, because of the low amount of tokens, this may also just be a coincidence.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
-eren	5	55.5 %
-eeren	4	44.5 %
Total	9	100 %

Table 13. The spelling of suffix <-eren>

#### 6.1.8. The use of ‘foreign’ letter signs such as <c>, <q> and <x>

As table 14 shows, the ‘foreign’ letters <q> and <x> were hardly ever used. For <c> this was very different, as quite many items with <c> were observed. However, Siegenbeek’s spelling book was very often unclear about how to spell words that occurred with <c>: was the use of a <c> in these cases correct (because the word was a loan from French)? Or was there a good Dutch alternative with <k> or <s>? Because many words were not found in the word list, the ‘correctness’ of many items (over 72 %) remains unclear. Of only slightly more than 10 % I can be sure that Siegenbeek would have approved the use of <c>.

Way of spelling	Number		Percentage
<c> approved by Siegenbeek	10	Correct	10.75 %
<c> unknown	67	Unknown	72.04 %
<x> not approved by Siegenbeek	2	Incorrect	2.15 %
<q> not approved by Siegenbeek	3	Incorrect	3.23 %
<c> not approved by Siegenbeek	11	Incorrect	11.83 %
Total	93		100 %

Table 14. The use of <c>, <q> and <x>

#### 6.1.9. <d> or <t> word finally

To this category belong nouns that have a final /t/ in singular and an intervocalic /d/ in plural form. It also includes adjectives that get a /d/ intervocalically when they are conjugated: *brood* – *broden* ‘bread – breads’, *goed* – *goede* ‘good – good’. Siegenbeek prescribes a <d> also for forms like *brood* and *goed*, although this /d/ is unvoiced. Interestingly, this rule is applied very well by the Boissevain writers, as is shown in table 15.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
Word final <d>	507	99.6 %
Word final <t>	1	0.2 %
Word final <dt>	1	0.2 %

Total	509	100 %
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Table 15. The spelling of word final <d>

#### 6.1.10. <gh> or <g> before high/front vowels

The spelling of <g> in onsets before high/front vowels is used according to prescription. Only two times <gh> is used, in the verb *moghe(n)* ‘may’.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<g>	1259	99.8 %
<gh>	2	0.2 %
Total	1261	100 %

Table 16. The spelling of <g> before high/front vowels

#### 6.1.11. <ck> or <k> syllable final

Also this feature (the spelling of syllable final <k>) is spelled for 100 % according to Siegenbeek’s spelling.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<k>	1092	100 %
<ck>	0	0 %
Total	1092	100 %

Table 17. The spelling of <k> syllable final

#### 6.1.12. Verbal conjugation for stems ending in <d>

The verbal conjugation for stems ending in <d> did not go that well. Writers made many mistakes (30 %), especially for the third person singular for which they often forgot to add a <t> to the stem. Conjugating verbs for the first person was less of a problem. In fact, it is surprising that no items without <d> and just with <t> were found, as one would expect from the phonetics, e.g. *ik zent* ‘I send’ was never attested, but always: *ik zend*.

Way of spelling	According to Siegenbeek?	Number	Percentage
1 <sup>st</sup> person -d	yes	12	25.5 %
2 <sup>nd</sup> person -dt	yes	2	4.25 %
3 <sup>rd</sup> person -dt	yes	19	40.5 %
1 <sup>st</sup> person -dt	no	2	4.25 %
2 <sup>nd</sup> person -d	no	0	0 %

3 <sup>rd</sup> person -d	no	12	25.5 %
Total		47	100 %

Table 18. Verbal conjugation for stems ending in <d>

#### 6.1.13. The use of <cht> and <gt>

On this feature the writers scored rather well; mostly <gt> and <cht> were used in the words for which Siegenbeek had prescribed them, e.g. *regt* ‘straight or really’, but *slecht* ‘bad, gezigt ‘face’ but *gedicht* ‘poem’. The <cht> combination was slightly overgeneralized as in 8 % of the cases where <cht> was written actually <gt> would have been correct.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<gt> correct	102	96 %
<gt> incorrect	4	4 %
Total	106	100 %

Table 19. The spelling of <gt>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<cht> correct	130	92 %
<cht> incorrect	11	8 %
Total	141	100 %

Table 20. The spelling of <cht>

#### 6.1.14. The use of <sch> instead of <sg>

In onset position, Siegenbeek prescribed <sch> for /sx/. All writers consistently applied this rule, as <sg> was never observed in the data.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<sch>	216	100 %
<sg>	0	0 %
Total	216	100 %

Table 21. The spelling of <sch>

#### 6.1.15. The use of connecting <w>

Connecting <w> is not only required between vowels as in *vrouwen* ‘wives, women’, but also at the end of a word, e.g. *vrouw* ‘wife’. Although the ending of *vrouw* sounds the same as the

ending of *zou* ‘should’ for which no <w> is required because of the infinitive being *zouden*, writers did not make any spelling mistake within this category. Words with <ouw> occurred more often than words with <auw> or <ieuw>, mainly because of words like *vrouw* ‘wife’, *mevrouw* ‘madam’ and *trouw* ‘faithful’ and *trouwen* ‘to marry’.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<auw>	4	5.8 %
<ouw>	48	69.6 %
<ieuw>	17	24.6 %
<au>	0	0 %
<ou>	0	0 %
<ieu>	0	0 %
Total	69	100 %

Table 22. The use of connecting <w>

#### 6.1.16. The use of connecting <j> in verbs

Within this category unfortunately only a very small number of items were found. Two examples from the Boissevain letters are given below.

- (1) ... *doet my gloeijen van vreugde* (letter of Grietje)  
‘... makes me glow of joy’
- (2) ... *en [wij] bemoeien ons met anderen niet* (letter of Naatje)  
‘... and [we] do not interfere with others’

Grietje uses the form as Siegenbeek would have liked to see it: a <j> connecting *gloei* with *en*. As only five items were found in total and the connecting <j> is used in about half of the cases, nothing really can be said about this category.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
verb with -ijen	3	60 %
verb with -ien	2	40 %
Total	5	100 %

Table 23. The use of connecting <j> in verbs

#### 6.1.17. The use of connection <j> in nouns and adjectives

A bit more adjectives than verbs were found, as table 23 shows, but still the total number of nouns and adjectives with either the ending *-ije* or *-ie* is low: ten. Some examples:

*vermoeijenis* ‘a tiring thing’ (letter of Jan) and *mooijer* ‘prettier’ (letter of David). It seems as in this category items are mostly spelled according to Siegenbeek (80 %), but it is hard to draw conclusions based on ten items.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
noun with -ijen	1	10 %
adjective with -ije	7	70 %
noun with -ien	1	10 %
adjective with -ie	1	10 %
Total	10	100 %

Table 24. The use of connecting <j> in adjectives and nouns

#### 6.1.18. The spelling of <ch> intervocalically

The spelling of <ch> intervocalically after a short vowel is very interesting, as Siegenbeek prescribes ‘doubling’ <ch> with a <g>, e.g. *ligchaam* ‘body’. This is a rule which is typical for Siegenbeek’s spelling (Matthijssen, 1988) and would have therefore been a nice test case for the Boissevain writers. Unfortunately, again only a hand full of items was found.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<gch>	4	67 %
<chg>	2	33 %
<chch>	0	0 %
<ch>	0	0 %
Total	6	100 %

Table 25. The spelling of <gch> intervocalically

Interestingly, it seems that the writers know about the rule as they either apply it correctly or they mix the two symbols up and write <chg>. A single <ch> is never observed; even though this way of spelling (e.g. *lichaam*) was more common in the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Rutten and Van der Wal, 2014: 77) and is also the form that is used in current Dutch.

#### 6.1.19. The spelling of word final <sch> and <s>

Within this category hardly any mistakes are made, which is surprising, as this is one of the features representing an etymological spelling with a phonological distinction that is no longer present in the early nineteenth century.



Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
-sch correct (e.g. <i>mensch</i> ‘human’)	71	99 %
-sch incorrect	0	0 %
-s incorrect (e.g. <i>fles</i> ‘bottle’)	1	1 %
Total	72	100 %

Table 26. The spelling of word final <sch>

### 6.1.20. Lexical items

The selected lexical items which I expected to have a relatively high frequency in the Boissevain letters were in fact not used that frequently. In total, I found only 13. However, of these 13 items 12 (92 %) were spelled according to the Siegenbeek spelling. Especially for the items *Dingsdag* ‘Tuesday’ and *Zaturdag* ‘Saturday’ this is surprising, as their spelling was typical for Siegenbeek and not prescribed by his colleagues (Mathijssen, 1988). The fact that *Dingsdag* and *Zaturdag* were found five times each indicates that the writers were familiar with the Siegenbeek spelling system.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage	According to S.?
Junij	2	15 %	yes
Julij	0	0 %	yes
Dingsdag	5	38.5 %	yes
Zaturdag	5	38.5 %	yes
Juni	0	0 %	no
Juli	0	0 %	no
Dinsdag	0	0 %	no
Zaterdag	1	8 %	no
Totaal	13	100 %	

Table 27. The spelling of the lexical items

## 6.2 Gender effect

For the analysis of gender effect, the categories with only a few tokens were excluded. To be included in the analysis a category needed at least twenty tokens. I also excluded the unknown category with items with <c>, <x> and <q>, but I kept the items with <c> of which I was sure whether they were spelled according to Siegenbeek’s prescription or not. In total five categories out of twenty were excluded (7, 16, 17, 18 and 20) and part of category 8 (‘foreign’

symbols). Still, in total, 10,455 items were found. Although there was more data for the men, the percentages of spelling according to Siegenbeek are similar: 86 % for the men and 84 % for the women.

	Men		Women	
spelling according to Siegenbeek	5,684	86 %	3,244	84 %
not according to Siegenbeek	901	14 %	626	16 %
total items	6,585	100 %	3,870	100 %

Table 28. Gender differences

However, as category 1 (the spelling of <ij>) can be argued to be ambiguous, as in handwriting one may just miss out on the dots which makes the <ij> similar to <y>, I decided to also delete this category to see what that would do to the data. The results are shown in table 29 below.

	Men		Women	
spelling according to Siegenbeek	5,583	98.85 %	3206	98.01 %
not according to Siegenbeek	65	1.15 %	65	1.99 %
total items	5,648	100 %	3,271	100 %

Table 29. Gender differences (excluding category 1 <ij>)

The main difference between table 27 and 28 is that the percentage of spelling not according to Siegenbeek decreases enormously. Only 1-2 % of all items are spelled incorrectly. Still, no differences can be observed between men and women. Women seem to make slightly more “mistakes”. Table 30 shows in which categories most mistakes are made.

Nr.	Spelling category	Men	%	Women	%
4	<uy> instead of <ui>	1 / 264	0.4	0 / 166	0
6	sharp and soft <ee> and <oo>	37 / 695	5.3	47 / 401	11.7
8	spelling of <c>	8 / 16	50	3 / 5	60
9	spelling of word final <d>	0 / 336	0	2 / 173	1.2
10	<gh> instead of <g>	2 / 784	0.3	0 / 477	0
12	verbal conjugation	8 / 32	25	6 / 15	40
13	mixing up <gt> and <cht>	9 / 160	5.6	6 / 87	6.9
19	word final <sch> / <s>	0 / 43	0	1 / 28	3.6

Total	65 / 2,330	2.8	65 / 1,352	4.8
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Table 30. Spelling categories in which writers used an alternative spelling

What table 30 shows is that overall men and women made most mistakes within the same categories: category 6, 8, 12 and 13. When comparing the percentages, it may be noted that, again, women use slightly more alternative spellings than men do. For the spelling of <c> there might not be enough items to make any claims, but it can be said that women make more “mistakes” with sharp and soft <ee> and <oo> (category 6), verbal conjugation (category 12) and with mixing up <gt> and <cht> (category 13). Especially in category 6 and 12 the percentages of alternative spellings are clearly higher for women than for men.

All in all, it may be noted that the differences between men and women are to be found on a micro level, as table 28 and 29 did not show any remarkable differences. However, when comparing the categories in which writers used an alternative spelling, there seem to be some differences between men and women and women seem to use an alternative spelling more often than men do.

### 6.3 Individual differences

Although the comparison between men and women does not show a clear effect, it may well be that there are many differences between individual writers. That is why in this section I will discuss the results per writer. Because the spelling of <ij> (category 1) proved to be a difficult category to take into account, I decided to make separate tables for this category, as it is nice to see how writers differ in whether they add dots or not. I also excluded the unknown category for ‘foreign’ symbols. As the below sections show, there are small differences between writers. They all use at least one alternative spelling, but the percentages of alternative (non-Siegenbeek) spellings differ from 0.25 % to 4.3 %. No extreme differences clearly, but still a hierarchy can be formed with those spelling best according to Siegenbeek at one end of the pole and those scoring worst at the other. The rank order looks like this: Jan (m), Frans (m), Gideon (m), Naatje (f), Walrave (m), Bernard (m), Caroline (f), Maria (f), Willem (m), Edouard (m), Sara (f), Paul (m), Grietje (f), David (m), and aunt Schenkhuisen (f). What this rank order shows is that the density of men is a bit higher at the pole with the writers that score best on Siegenbeek’s spelling. About the “best” writers Jan, Frans and Gideon it is known that they came from a relatively rich family and they can therefore be expected to have enjoyed good education. Unfortunately, not much is known about the writers that are at the other end of the pole: Paul, Grietje, David and aunt Schenkhuisen.

### 6.3.1 Gideon Jérémie Bossevain

Gideon proves to be a very consistent writer. He faithfully follows the Siegenbeek spelling, as he only uses an alternative spelling six times in total (not even 1 %). Most “mistakes” (four) are made within the category of sharp and soft /e:/ and /o:/ (category 6). The other two mistakes are found in the categories of verbal conjugation (category 12) and in the spelling of <c> (category 8).

As Gideon is very consistent in following the Siegenbeek spelling, it may be assumed that the 88 <ij>’s he writes without dots are meant to be <ij> and not <y>. In 42 % of the cases Gideon adds one or two dots.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	88	58.3
<°y>	40	26.5
<ÿ>	19	12.6
<ij>	4	2.6
Total	151	100 %

Table 31. Gideon’s spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	876	99.3 %
not according to Siegenbeek	6	0.7 %
total items	882	100 %

Table 32. Gideon’s spelling

### 6.3.2 Maria van Heukelom (1801-1866)

As her husband, Maria is very consistent in her way of spelling. She uses slightly more alternative spellings than Gideon does, as in total 1.2 % of her spelling is not according to Siegenbeek. These seven “mistakes” are found in the following categories: six in category 6 (sharp and soft /e:/ and /o:/) and one in category 19 in which Maria spelled *fles* ‘bottle’ without <ch>. As for her way of spelling <ij>, she rarely finishes this symbol by putting the dots. Most of her <ij>’s therefore resemble <y>.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	120	98.4 %
<°y>	1	0.8 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %

<ij>	1	0.8 %
Total	122	100 %

Table 33. Maria's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	586	98.8 %
not according to Siegenbeek	7	1.2 %
total items	593	100 %

Table 34. Maria's spelling

### 6.3.3 Caroline Charlotte De Clercq-Boissevain

Also Gideon's sister Caroline is very consistent in her way of spelling. She makes only two mistakes. However, as there is less data of her hand, the percentage of alternative spellings is similar to that of Maria (1.1 %). Caroline once spelled <cht> in the word *oprecht* 'sincere' where she should have used <gt>. Also, she once used a single <o> in an open syllable for a sharp long /o:/ for which Siegenbeek prescribes <oo>. In her spelling of <ij> Caroline is also consistent, although she mostly does not use dots at all, which makes her <ij> resemble <y>.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	32	94 %
<°y>	2	6 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	34	100 %

Table 35. Caroline's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	173	98.9 %
not according to Siegenbeek	2	1.1 %
total items	175	100 %

Table 36. Caroline's spelling

### 6.3.4. Willem de Clercq

As the writers already discussed, Willem is a very consistent speller and very faithful to Siegenbeek's spelling system. He uses only ten alternative spellings (1.3 %): one time he spells *vloeien* 'to flow' instead of *vloeijen*, and once he makes a mistake with spelling a word

with <c> (*character* ‘character’ instead of *karakter*). All other “mistakes” are made in category 6 (sharp and soft /e:/ and /o:/). In Willem’s letters no dots on the <ij>’s can be found, as he consequently spells them similar to <y>.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	139	100 %
<°y>	0	0 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	139	100 %

Table 37. Willem’s spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	743	98.7 %
not according to Siegenbeek	10	1.3 %
total items	753	100 %

Table 38. Willem’s spelling

### 6.3.5 Edouard Constantin Boissevain

Although Edouard’s total number of alternative spellings is a bit higher than for the other writers so far (19), the relative number (1.3 %) is similar to that of the other writers. He makes two “mistakes” in category 13 (mixing up <cht> and <gt>), two in category 12 (verbal conjugation) in which he doesn’t add a <t> to the verbal stem for third person singular. Two times, Edouard uses a <c> where Siegenbeek prescribes something else and ten “mistakes” are made in category 6 (sharp and soft long /e:/ and /o:/ in open syllables). Interestingly, Edouard is the only writer of all Boissevain writers who spells a word with <gh> twice in the word *moghen* ‘may’, as in: *O moghen allen my verstaan en begrypen* ‘Ah may all comprehend and understand me’. Finally, Edouard spells ‘Saturday’ once as *Zaterdag*. As for his <ij>, Edouard is quite consistent in not adding the dots.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	251	99.2 %
<°y>	1	0.4 %
<ÿ>	1	0.4 %
<ij>	0	0 %

Total	253	100 %
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Table 39. Edouard's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	1426	98.7 %
not according to Siegenbeek	19	1.3 %
total items	1445	100 %

Table 40. Edouard's spelling

### 6.3.6 Sara van Houten - van Heukelom

As the writers discussed so far, Sara follows Siegenbeek's spelling nicely as only six times (1.4 %) she uses an alternative spelling. Two "mistakes" are made in the use of <c>, as Sara writes *docter* 'doctor' twice, whereas Siegenbeek prescribes *dokter*. Three mistakes are found in category 6. Interestingly, in these cases Sara overgeneralizes the use of a double vowel where a single vowel is required. She writes *verveelen* 'to be bored' and *apoteeker* 'pharmacist' instead of *vervelen* and *apotheker* and also *betoverends* 'magical' instead of *betoverends*. The final "mistake" is found in the verbal category in this phrase: *maar ik hoop dat de heeren zich niet op zyn engelsch zyn gaan kleeden, want dat vindt ik al heel leelyk* 'but I hope that the gentlemen will not dress in English way, because I find that very ugly', in which *vind* 'find' should be without a <t> for the first person singular.

As most of the writers so far, Sara mostly does not take the time to add the dots on her <ij>'s, although for some items one dot is observed.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	69	97 %
<°y>	2	3 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	71	100 %

Table 41. Sara's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	431	98.6 %
not according to Siegenbeek	6	1.4 %
total items	437	100 %

Table 42. Sara's spelling

### 6.3.7 Bernard van Houten

Also Berard is very faithful to Siegenbeek's spelling. He uses two alternative spellings only, which can be found in category 6: he spells *zo* 'so' and *geloven* 'believe' with <o>, whereas Siegenbeek prescribes <oo> for these sharp long /o:/s. In his handwriting Bernard takes a bit more time than most of the writers so far, as he adds one or two dots for 32 % of his <ij>'s.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	21	68 %
<°y>	5	16 %
<ÿ>	5	16 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	31	100 %

Table 43. Bernard's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	213	99 %
not according to Siegenbeek	2	1 %
total items	215	100 %

Table 44. Bernard's spelling

### 6.3.8 Walrave van Heukelom

Walrave, in the only letter that we have from his hand, is very consistent in following Siegenbeek's spelling. The only "mistake" he makes is found in category 12 (verbal conjugation), as he writes: *Het gebeuren in Frankr<sup>o</sup>yk houd alles in eene groote spanning* 'what happens in France keeps everything in strongly tensed', in which *houd* 'holds / keeps' should be conjugated with third person singular France and therefore get a <t>. In his spelling of <ij> Walrave shows more variation than most writers. He clearly tries to add the two dots in which he is successful in over 40 % of the cases.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	3	15.8 %
<°y>	8	42.1 %
<ÿ>	5	26.3 %
<ij>	3	15.8 %
Total	19	100 %

Table 45. Walrave's spelling of <ij>



Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	115	99.1 %
not according to Siegenbeek	1	0.9 %
total items	116	100 %

Table 46. *Walrave's spelling*

### 6.3.9 Jan van Heukelom

In his letter to his sister and brother in law, Jan is very consistent in his spelling in which he nicely follows Siegenbeek's prescriptions. He makes only one "mistake" (not even 1 %), when he signs his letter with *Uwen oprecht liefh Broeder* 'your honestly loving brother', in which he should have written *oprecht* with <gt;. His <ij>'s Jan mostly writes without dots.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	65	95.6 %
<°y>	0	0 %
<ÿ>	1	1.5 %
<ij>	2	2.9 %
Total	68	100 %

Table 47. *Jan's spelling of <ij>*

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	410	99.75 %
not according to Siegenbeek	1	0.25 %
total items	411	100 %

Table 48. *Jan's spelling*

### 6.3.10 Frans van Heukelom

As the other Boissevain writers, also Frans is very consistent both in his way of spelling <ij> (without dots) and in his way of spelling according to Siegenbeek's prescriptions. He uses an alternative spelling six times. Three times he uses a "wrong" verbal conjugation in category 12; for the first person singular he adds a <t> whereas for the third person singular he forgets to add the required <t> twice. Two "mistakes" are made in category 7 (verbal ending *-eeren* instead of *-eren*) and one in category 6 in which Frans uses only one <o> for a sharp long /o:/.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	162	99.4 %

<°y>	0	0 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %
<ij>	1	0.6 %
Total	163	100 %

Table 49. Frans' spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	1,107	99.5 %
not according to Siegenbeek	6	0.5 %
total items	1,113	100 %

Table 50. Frans' spelling

### 6.3.11 Naatje van Heukelom

Naatje is also faithful to the prescribed spelling, as she uses an alternative spelling eight times (not even 1 %). Four “mistakes” are found in category 6, as Naatje writes for example *leeven* ‘to live’ instead of *leven*. Three items are found in the categories 16 and 17; Naatje writes: *moeielykheden* ‘difficulties’ instead of *moeijelijkheden*, *mooie* ‘nice’ instead of *mooije* and *bemoeien* ‘to interfere’ instead of *bemoeijen*. Also, she writes *docter* ‘doctor’ once, whereas Siegenbeek prescribes *dokter* with <k>. Her <ij>’s Naatje almost always writes without dots.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	162	98.8 %
<°y>	2	1.2 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	164	100 %

Table 51. Naatje's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	966	99.2 %
not according to Siegenbeek	8	0.8 %
total items	974	100 %

Table 52. Naatje's spelling

### 6.3.12 David van Walree

Although his way of spelling is still pretty much according to Siegenbeek’s prescriptions, David is clearly a writer that uses more alternative spellings than the other writers do, as he makes twenty “mistakes” (more than 4 %). Most spelling errors are found in category 6, where David interestingly overgeneralizes the use of double vowels (as Sara did too) on a large scale (11 mistakes). David writes: *leeven* ‘live’ (2 times), *steeden* ‘cities’ (3 times), *geeven* ‘give’, *deeden* ‘did’, *koomen* ‘come’ (2 times) and *vooren* ‘front’, instead of writing these words, which have a soft long vowel, with a single vowel in the open syllable as Siegenbeek prescribes. Also, David uses the symbol <c> three times in words for which Siegenbeek prescribes the use of a <k>: *calm* ‘calm’, *character* ‘character’ and *canal* ‘canal’ instead of *kalm*, *karakter* and *kanaal*. Finally, six “mistakes” are made in category 13: *bracht* ‘brought’ (2 times), *ingericht* ‘furnished’ and *recht* ‘straight’ (3 times) should have been written with <gt>

Conversely, while making these “mistakes” David does more often finalize his <ij>’s with dots as Siegenbeek would have loved to see it for the other writers as well.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	4	6.1 %
<°y>	2	3 %
<ÿ>	56	84.8 %
<ij>	4	6.1 %
Total	66	100 %

Table 53. David’s spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	460	95.8 %
not according to Siegenbeek	20	4.2 %
total items	480	100 %

Table 54. David’s spelling

### 6.3.13 N.C. Schenkhuisen

Gideon’s aunt, Mrs. Schenkhuisen, has a similar score as David on the general spelling, as she also uses relatively many alternative ways of spelling (43 – 4.3 %). Most “mistakes” occur in category 6, as Mrs. Schenkhuisen uses 30 times (out of 125 – 24 %) the wrong amount of vowels in open syllables for /e:/ and /o:/. Four mistakes are made in category 13 in which

<cht> and <gt> are mixed up and five verbal conjugations go wrong, as Mrs. Schenkhuizen never adds a <t> for third person singular where this is required according to Siegenbeek. In category 9, Mrs. Schenkhuizen is the only Boissevain writer making mistakes: she writes *kint* ‘child’ instead of *kind* and *stadt* ‘city’ instead of *stad*. However, 51 times her spelling within this category is according to Siegenbeek (with <d>). The two final “mistakes” are made in category 7 (*-eeren* instead of *-eren*) and category 18 where Mrs. Schenkhuizen spells *allerbelachgelykst* ‘most ridiculous’. Still, this shows that she is somehow familiar with Siegenbeek’s spelling, as otherwise one would expect her to spell *allerbelachelijkst*. Also, she has one “correct” item within this category: *ligchaam* ‘body’.

In her spelling of <ij> Mrs. Schenkhuizen usually does not add dots on the symbol, although still in almost 20 % of the cases she does.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	148	80.9 %
<°y>	1	0.5 %
<ÿ>	6	3.3 %
<ij>	28	15.3 %
Total	183	100 %

Table 55. N.C. Schenkhuizen’s spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	949	95.7 %
not according to Siegenbeek	43	4.3 %
total items	992	100 %

Table 56. N.C. Schenkhuizen’s spelling

#### 6.3.14 Paul

Somewhat between the level of spelling of David and Mrs. Schenkhuizen and the other writers, is the spelling of Paul, who spells most of the items according to Siegenbeek, but still makes 6 (2.3 %) “mistakes”. These alternative spellings are found in six different categories: 4 (*tuyn* ‘garden’ instead of *tuin*), 6 (*zo* ‘so’ instead of *zoo*), 7 (*accompagneeren* ‘to accompany’ instead of *-eren*), 8 (spelling with <c>), 12 (*houd u ondertussen gezond* ‘keep healthy in the meantime’ instead of *houdt u ondertussen gezond*) and 18 (*lachgen* ‘laugh’ instead of *lagchen*). Paul is very consistent in spelling his <ij> without dots, like a <y>.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	47	100 %
<°y>	0	0 %
<ÿ>	0	0 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	47	100 %

Table 57. Paul's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	255	97.7 %
not according to Siegenbeek	6	2.3 %
total items	261	100 %

Table 58. Paul's spelling

### 6.3.15 Grietje

As for Grietje not so many items were found, it is hard to say what her data shows. She uses an alternative spelling four times (3.4 %), but three “mistakes” are made for the same item: *zoo* ‘so’ is spelled three times as *zo*, although the sharp /o:/ requires a double <oo> according to Siegenbeek. Also one “mistake” is made in category 13 in which Grietje writes *zagtheid* ‘softness’ which should have been *zachttheid*. Her <ij>’s are mostly observed without dots.

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
<y>	22	88 %
<°y>	0	0 %
<ÿ>	3	12 %
<ij>	0	0 %
Total	25	100 %

Table 59. Grietje's spelling of <ij>

Way of spelling	Number	Percentage
spelling according to Siegenbeek	113	96.6 %
not according to Siegenbeek	4	3.4 %
total items	117	100 %

Table 60. Grietje's spelling

## 7. Conclusion

The sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 show the overall results, the results for men versus women and the individual results. What all these results clearly show is that the Boissevain writers overall apply the Siegenbeek spelling and not many alternative spellings are used. Only within the category of <ij> many (90 %) “mistakes” are made. This may show that this feature is difficult to test with hand written material. While writing, the <i> and the <j> symbol glue together as one symbol, resembling <y>, especially because writers forget or do not take the time to add the dots most of the time. However, Siegenbeek is clear in prescribing <ij> and not <y> both in printed and hand written language. Therefore it is striking that many writers do not follow his prescription for this feature.

The vowels <i>, <ie>, <ui>, <ei> and <aa> are mostly spelled according to Siegenbeek’s prescription (100 % according to Siegenbeek). For long /e:/ and /o:/ in open syllables, more variation is observed. Between 83 and 96 % goes according to Siegenbeek, so the overall picture is quite nice, still many “mistakes” are made. Most mistakes are made for sharp /e:/ and /o:/ which required a double spelling, as the spelling with one vowel is usually overgeneralized. Many “mistakes” are made within the category of the verbal suffix *-eren*, but as only few tokens are found, it is hard to draw any conclusions of this trend.

What makes category 8 (‘foreign’ symbols) difficult to test is the fact that Siegenbeek’s word list is not extensive. Many words that are encountered in the letters with <c> cannot be found in Siegenbeek’s word list or book. This resulted in a large number of ‘unknown’ items within this category.

Spelling features 9 (word final <d>), 10 (<g> versus <gh>) and 11 (<k> versus <ck>) go very well; (almost) 100 % is spelled according to Siegenbeek. In category 12 (verbal conjugation with stems ending in <d>) more “mistakes” are made: about 30 %, especially in the conjugation of the verb in third person singular. In category 13 (<cht> and <gt>) only few alternative spellings are used. For category 14 (<sch> in onset) all items are correctly spelled according to Siegenbeek.

Interestingly, connecting <w> is not a problem (100 % correct), but connecting <j> is (60 % correct). This may be due to the fact that connecting <w> was already in use for centuries, whereas connecting <j> was newly introduced by Siegenbeek. Throughout the year connecting <j> did not make it after *al* as it is currently not in use in the official Dutch spelling.

The doubling of <ch> with a preceding <g> intervocalically after short vowels seems to be a problem for the writers, but unfortunately not that many tokens were observed. The

spelling of <sch> at the end of words which historically had /sk/ goes surprisingly well according to Siegenbeek's prescriptions. Also the lexical items which have a typical Siegenbeek spelling, though the total number is low, show that participants seemed to be very well aware of the official spelling.

Gender differences were not very clearly present, as was expected based on previous studies on seventeenth and eighteenth century letter writing (Rutten and Van der Wal, 2014). However, the men were slightly more faithful to Siegenbeek's spelling as the women chose slightly more alternative spellings. Especially in category 6 and 12 the percentages of alternative spellings are clearly higher for women than for men.

Individual differences were present, but not extremely large. The percentage of alternative spellings (now excluding the spelling of <ij>) differed from 0.25 % to 4.3 %.

The results of this study show a surprisingly different picture than the results of similar studies on the relation between norms and usage regarding the eighteenth century (Simons and Rutten, 2014). Simons and Rutten (2014) find clear differences in the usage of spelling norms between people from the high social class and people from the low social class. Also, they find differences between men and women; men clearly apply the norms more often than women. In the light of the results of this previous study, the results of the present study are interesting. Apparently, the men and women from the nineteenth century high, wealthy middle class, where the Boissevain writers are in, are exposed to literature and education with a similar intensity, which results in small differences in their usage of spelling norms. This suggests there is a shift in the normative usage, most probably influenced by the introduction of the national spelling system, at least among writers in the high class.

## **8 Discussion**

In this thesis a case study is presented with data from wealthy middle class writers. This has proven to be a good start, as the results are contradicting results of eighteenth century data. However, it would be very interesting to compare the findings of the present study to data of writers in middle and low social classes. Was the Siegenbeek spelling only implemented in the higher classes or also in the working class? Are the gender differences similarly small for low class writers? It would be very interesting to find out.

Although the archive of the Boissevain family is extensive and also the internet (e.g. [www.boissevain.org](http://www.boissevain.org)) provides quite a lot of information on this family, it was still difficult to find out all social details of the writers in order to get a complete picture of their education and their experience with reading and writing. I wasn't able to find out to which schools all

writers went and which school books they used. For some writers, such as Grietje, Paul and aunt Schenkhuizen, I couldn't find any biographical information at all. Because of that, it is hard to tell whether their educational background was similar to the one of the Boissevain sons and daughters such as Gideon, Edouard and Caroline. These uncertainties about writers is common in the historical sociolinguistic field, as one of the disadvantages of historical linguistics is that the participants under study cannot be given a survey to fill in their personal details and background.



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**Appendixes A. and B. are attached separately.**