

# FACULTEIT LETTEREN & WIJSBEGEERTE

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**DOCTOR IN DE GESCHIEDENIS**

van

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*Wijn in Nederland, een verlokkelijk panacee  
voor economie en gezondheid. Een  
cultuurgeschiedenis tussen 1670 en 1970*

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**ABSTRACT**

This is a cultural history about the importance of wine trade and wine consumption in the Netherlands during the years 1670-1970. Partly it deals with the huge economic importance of wine in the years before 1800 and the following back fall until its consumption rise during the sixties in the twentieth century. Inevitable it also becomes a social history of wine merchants and wine consumers and their preferences for certain types of wine.

For another part this research is about the kind of historical linguistics used to describe wine quality and its flavours. Following that particular subject it deals with the underlying health claims ascribed to wine. The wine trade in the Republic had been major pillar for the Dutch economy and granted a great number of inhabitants wealth and considerable political influence. After 1800 the Dutch wine trade dramatically decreased in importance. Yearly wine consumption rates dropped from 20 to 30 litres per capita to a very low minimum of one to three litres and became an exclusive habit of higher classes. During the nineteenth and twentieth century rates stayed at that relative low level until the 1960s. From time to time during the nineteenth and twentieth century, and in spite of the economical non-importance for Dutch economy, discussion about wine quality stayed in the midst of political discussion.

A very distinctive characteristic of the Dutch wine merchants was their preference to import wine by barrel in order to blend, bottle and label their wine under own name. This habit continued throughout 1960 and is an explanation for their reluctance in the 1930s to accept legal control of wine origin like the French AOC-system. After 1960 the Dutch wine merchant organisation (CNVW) became a propagandist by means of sponsoring popular books about wine which were addressed to the middle classes with their increasing purchasing power. From that time forth wine consumption became gradually as popular as before 1800.

The surprising result of research is the continuous health claim for wine by various stakeholders. In the seventeenth century as part of a galenic diet, further on in time as a scientific panacea for human physical discomfort and in the twentieth century as a solvent for 'medical' extracts. In popular expression moderate wine consumption became a health solution based on semi-scientific mumbo-jumbo or on echoes from a galenic era.