The little-known author Jan van Naaldwijk, whose two early sixteenth-century Dutch chronicles of Holland are preserved in autograph manuscripts in the British Library, wrote at a moment reputed to be the turning point between medieval and Renaissance modes of historical writing. While he primarily relied on the medieval historical tradition of Holland, he expanded it in ways that allow us to appreciate the broader impact of innovations occurring at the same time in more ‘professional’ scholarly circles.

This is the first in-depth study of these chronicles and their relation to their sources, placed in the wider context of history writing running from the mid-fourteenth century into the eighteenth, providing new insights into the continuities and transitions that characterized the historical tradition of Holland from the late middle ages well into the early modern period. An accompanying CD-ROM contains transcriptions of both Jan’s chronicles.
Jan van Naaldwijk’s Chronicles of Holland
Jan van Naaldwijk’s Chronicles of Holland

Continuity and Transformation in the Historical Tradition of Holland during the Early Sixteenth Century

Sjoerd Levelt
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Note</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preface: Jan van Naaldwijk and his Chronicles of Holland</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ‘Wt voel boecken ende autoeren’</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From many books and authors’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historiographical Tradition of Holland before Jan van Naaldwijk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to Pre-Modern Historical Texts</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Histories of Medieval History Writing in the Low Countries</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van Naaldwijk’s Sources</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historiographical Tradition of Egmond</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Beke’s Chronographia</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historiographical Tradition in Holland after Jan Beke</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claes Heynenzoon, ‘Herald Beyeren’</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘Anonymous Clerk from the Low Countries by the Sea’</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘Chronicle of Gouda’</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannes Gherbrandi a Leydis</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dutch Fasciculus temporum</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing the Tradition of History Writing about Holland around 1500</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ‘Ghenomen, vergadert ende ghetranslateert ende ouergheset’</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compiled, collected, translated and adapted’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van Naaldwijk’s First Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Jan van Naaldwijk’s First Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I The Opening Pages of the Manuscript of Jan van Naaldwijk’s First Chronicle of Holland</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van Naaldwijk at Work: An Image and a Description</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van Naaldwijk’s List of Sources</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of contents

**Part II  The Textual Sources of Jan van Naaldwijk’s First Chronicle of Holland**  
80
The Historical Canon of Holland  
80  
Jan Beke, *Chronographia*, Dutch translation and continuation (‘Dutch Beke’)*  
80  
‘Several printed chronicles’ and the *Fasciculus temporum*  
83  
Chronological Expansion  
85  
The ‘Most Excellent Chronicle of Brabant’  
85  
Geo-Political Expansion: Chronicles of France  
87  
Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*  
88  
Robert Gaguin, *Compendium de origine et gestis Francorum*  
92  
Expanding Beyond the Region: The New Universal Chronicles  
96  
Antoninus Florentinus, *Chronicon*  
97  
Jacobus Philippus Foresti Bergomensis, *Supplementum supplementi chronicarum*  
100  
Hartmann Schedel, *Liber chronicarum* (‘The Nuremberg Chronicle’)  
102  
Flavio Biondo, *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romanorum imperii decades*  
103  
The Expanding World: *Itinerarii*  
104  
Marco Polo, *De consuetudinibus et conditionibus orientalium regionum*  
105  
Johannes de Hese, *Itinerarius per diversas mundi partes*  
106  
Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam*  
107  
Miscellaneous Historical Sources  
108  
Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II), *Cosmographia*  
108  
Jean Lemaire de Belges, *La légende des Vénitiens et l’Histoire du prince Sophy*  
109  
Poggio Bracciolini, *Epistola de morte Hieronymi Pragensis*  
111  
Willem Hermans, *Olandie Gelrieque bellum*  
114  
Biographical sources  
115  
Martial d’Auvergne, *Les vigiles de la mort de Charles VII*; Jacobus Philippus Foresti Bergomensis, *De claris mulieribus*  
115  
‘The Life of Jean Tristan’  
116  
‘The Chronicle of the Countess of Hennenberg’  
118  
Giovanni Simonetta, *Commentarii rerum gestarum Francisci Sfortiae*  
121  
Unhistorical Histories: Anecdotes  
122  
*Gesta Romanorum*  
122  
Poggio Bracciolini’s *Facetiae*, French translation by Guillaume Tardif  
125  
Johannes Vitalis, *Defensorium Beatae Virginis Mariae*  
126
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Other poems and privileges’</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Jan van Naaldwijk and the Sources of his First Chronicle</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part III</strong> Automotive Elements in Jan van Naaldwijk’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotes from Jan’s Own Experience</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Information about Jan</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan’s Earlier Works</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: King Donkey’s Ears</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 ‘Dit boek hoert toe Jan van Naaldwijk’</strong></td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This book belongs to Jan van Naaldwijk’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van Naaldwijk’s Second Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Divisiekroneien</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prologue to Jan’s Second Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus, Willem Hermans and Cornelius Aurelius</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van Naaldwijk and the Divisiekroneien</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning Humanist Historiography: The Batavians</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan’s Use of the Divisiekroneien</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions from Other Sources</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Naaldwijk Family</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoeken and Kabeljauwen</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unfinished End</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 ‘Veel fabuleuse dingen’</strong></td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Many fabrications’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval Chronicles in the Early Modern Period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emanuel van Meteren as a Reader of Jan van Naaldwijk’s Chronicles</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval Chronicles and the Popular Printing Press</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelskroneien</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Affairs and Topical Histories</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern Historical Writing and the Medieval Chronicle Tradition</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Medieval History and the Dutch Republic</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Prologue, Jan van Naaldwijk’s First Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jan van Naaldwijk’s List of Sources</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Prologue, Jan van Naaldwijk’s Second Chronicle of Holland</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of contents

**Bibliography**

- Manuscripts 247
- Printed Books 249

**Index** 273

Transcriptions of London, British Library,
MSS Cotton Vitellius F xv and Cotton Tiberius C iv CD-ROM
Acknowledgements

Over the years, my teachers and tutors, in particular Jos Biemans, Jan Burgers, Helen Cooper, Anne Hudson, Willem Kuiper, Jennifer Miller, Malcolm Parkes, Herman Pleij, Richard Sharpe and Karin Tilmans, have each contributed to shaping my thinking. I owe special gratitude to David d’Avray and Greg Dening for their roles at the start of this research. I am grateful to Julia Crick, Graeme Dunphy, Bunna Ebels and Arnold Hunt for interesting discussions and for references I would have otherwise missed.

I thank my fellow students and friends, especially the following, who have helped me with small queries: Sietske Fransen, Ulrike Kern, Julia Kindt, Marisa Libbon, Johanne Cornelia Linde, Ernst-Jan de Munnik, Natasha Romanova, Dirk Schoenaers, Stefan Sippell, Gwendolyn Verbraak and Hanna Wimmer. I also thank the organizers and fellow participants of the Exeter Medieval Seminar (Yolanda Plumley), the Liverpool Centre for Medieval Studies (Godfried Croenen), the International Conference of the Medieval Chronicle (Erik Kooper), the UCL Low Countries Seminar, the Queen Mary Renaissance Seminar and contributors of Medtext-L.

My gratitude goes out to the staff of the following libraries and archives: Bodleian Library, British Library, Dutch Church in London, Hampshire Record Office, Institute for Historical Research, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Den Haag, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, Nationaal Archief, Noord-Hollands Archief, Regionaal Archief Alkmaar, Regionaal Archief Leiden, Senate House Library, Tresoar, Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, University of Winchester Library, Utrechts Archief, the Warburg Institute. The following digital repositories have greatly facilitated my research: Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren (www.dbnl.nl), Gallica (gallica.bnf.fr), Google Books (books.google.com), Internet Archive (www.archive.org), JSTOR (www.jstor.org), Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum (mdz.bib-bvb.de). My indebtedness to the following digital databases is greater than could be reflected in the footnotes: Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle (forthcoming; currently available in print), Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (istc.bl.uk), Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections (www.mmdc.nl), Narrative Sources (www.narrative-sources.be), Repertorium van Eigennamen in Middelned-
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Warburg Institute for the uniquely fitting and inspiring environment it provided for this research, and for its financial support towards student fees and a travel grant for study in the Netherlands. I am also grateful to the Royal Historical Society which funded attendance of a conference, and to the Central Research Fund of the University of London for a grant towards acquisition of digital images from Jan van Naaldwijk’s manuscripts. With great gratitude I acknowledge the generous contributions of the Erasmus Fund of the Warburg Institute, Dr Hendrik Muller’s Vaderlandsch Fonds, J.E. Jurriaanse Stichting and M.A.O.C. Gravin van Bylandt Stichting which have made this publication possible.

I also wish to acknowledge the constructive criticism and thoughtful suggestions of the attentive and patient readers of earlier versions of this book, including my examiners, Ben Kaplan and Elisabeth van Houts. I am in particular greatly indebted to Jill Kraye and Rembrandt Duits; I could not have wished for more engaged and supportive supervisors. All errors and deficiencies in this study are my own, but many more would have remained if it were not for their guidance and scrutiny of my work.

Most importantly, Eylem, herşeyim benim. This book, despite carrying only my name on its cover, is in truth the product of our collaborative effort, for which I cannot thank her enough. If there are some good thoughts expressed in this study they are there because she challenged me to them, and it is with great gratitude, love and affection that I dedicate it to her. Eylem, this book belongs to you, as do I.
Throughout this study, I have preserved the orthography found in the primary sources, both manuscript and printed, which I have cited. I have, however, expanded abbreviations; and the most obvious errors have been silently corrected. In citing Latin titles, I have normalized the letters ‘u’ and ‘v’, ‘y’ and ‘i’, according to modern conventions. A full bibliographical reference is given the first time a work is cited in each chapter, with a short reference for further citations within that chapter. The prepositions ‘van’ and ‘te’ and the article ‘de’ in Dutch names are ignored for the purposes of alphabetization, as are articles at the beginning of titles. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

I avoid the term ‘the Netherlands’ on the grounds that it is anachronistic and confusing before the Dutch Revolt. Instead, I use ‘Low Countries’ throughout for the coastal regions of the Rhine, Scheldt and Meuse delta – roughly, but not exactly, corresponding to present day Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg, including parts of northern France. It is not meant to refer to a precisely defined geographical or political region. The word ‘Holland’ is used for the medieval county of Holland; ‘Dutch’ is employed exclusively in a linguistic sense, to indicate the collection of dialects of the Germanic language spoken throughout this region.
Illustrations


Fig. 1 Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS BPL 2429, fol. 1r: Jan Beke, *Chronographia*, manuscript c. 1360. Image kindly provided by the Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, Digital Special Collections.

Fig. 2 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 130 C 10, fol. 153r: Jan Beke, *Chroniken*: successive additions of the second half of the fifteenth century. Image provided by Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 3 The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, MS 10 C 14, fol. 1r: a late fifteenth-century manuscript of Claes Heynenzoon’s chronicle of Holland. Image kindly provided by Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, The Hague.

Fig. 4 Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 1177 (6 E 9), fol. 36r: a late fifteenth-century manuscript of the chronicle of Holland of the ‘anonymous clerk’. Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

Fig. 5 *Cronike of hystorie van Hollant van Zeelant ende Vrieslant ende van den sticht van Utrecht* (Gouda, 1478), sig. a2r: ‘Chronicle of Gouda’, prologue. Groene Hart Archieven, Streekarchief Midden-Holland, depot 2366 A 9. Image provided by Groene Hart Archieven, Streekarchief Midden-Holland.

Fig. 6 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 H 34, fol. 18r: ‘Chronicle of Gouda’, manuscript copy after a printed exemplar. Image provided by Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 7 Alkmaar, Regionaal Archief, MS 128 A 1, fol. 2r: Johannes a Leydis, chronicle of Holland, with early sixteenth-century interpolations. Image kindly provided by Regionaal Archief Alkmaar.

Fig. 8 Werner Rolevinck, *Fasciculus temporum* (Leuven: Johannes Veldener, 1475), fol. 22r, showing different branches of history around the central time line. Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek ex MS 346 (4 C 9). Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

Fig. 9 Author portrait of Jean Mielot, from Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek / Bibliotheque Royale, MS 9278-80, fol. 10r. Image provided by Koninklijke Bibliotheek / Bibliotheque Royale, Brussels.

Fig. 10 Hartmann Schedel, *Liber cronicarum* (Nuremberg, 1493), fol. 79v. Image kindly provided by the Library of the Warburg Institute.

Fig. 11 Hartmann Schedel, *Liber cronicarum* (Nuremberg, 1493), fol. 63r. Image kindly provided by the Morse Library, Beloit College.

Fig. 12 London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 49r: The Mountain of Fortune. ©The British Library Board.
Illustrations

Fig. 13 London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 165v: Countess Margaret of Holland. ©The British Library Board.

Fig. 14 London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 251r: Count Dirk I receiving the county. ©The British Library Board.

Fig. 15 London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 54v: Count Willem II, emperor-elect. ©The British Library Board.

Fig. 16 Willem van Naaldwijk (c. 1455-1506), cousin of Jan van Naaldwijk: Schilderijverzameling Historisch Archief Westland, Naaldwijk. Image kindly provided by Historisch Archief Westland, Naaldwijk.

Fig. 17 London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 19v: Jan van Naaldwijk, first chronicle of Holland, frontispiece. ©The British Library Board.

Fig. 18 Divisiekroniek, title page: Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, THO: RAR 3-27. Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

Fig. 19 Divisiekroniek, fol. 55v: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1084 A 6. Image kindly provided by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 20 Hartmann Schedel, Liber cronicarum (Nuremberg 1493), fol. 193v. Image kindly provided by the Library of the Warburg Institute.

Fig. 21 Divisiekroniek, fol. 175r (190x280mm): The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1084 A 6. Image kindly provided by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 22 Hartmann Schedel, Liber cronicarum (Nuremberg 1493), fol. 204r (305x450mm). Image kindly provided by the Library of the Warburg Institute.

Fig. 23 London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C iv, fol. 1r: Jan van Naaldwijk, second chronicle of Holland, prologue. ©The British Library Board.

Fig. 24 Divisiekroniek, fol. 1r: Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, THO: RAR 3-27. Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

Fig. 25 London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C iv, fol. 8r: Jan van Naaldwijk, second chronicle of Holland, descriptio. ©The British Library Board.

Fig. 26 King Donkey’s Ears according to the printer of the Divisiekroniek, fol. 49r: Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, THO: RAR 3-27. Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

Fig. 27 Chronyke van de geschiedenissen in Holland, Zeeland, en Vriesland, en van de bisschoppen van Utrecht, op nieuws overgezien en van fouten verbeterd (Amsterdam, 1802); Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, KK 05-136. Image provided by Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 28 Kronijcxken van alle de gedenkwaerdigste geschiedenissen, bound with Niewe alkmaerder Almanach ... 1749 (Alkmaar, n.d.); Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Mini 514 (3). Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam (UvA).

Fig. 29 Historien ende waerachtighe gheschiedenissen van alle het ghedenckweerdichste datter gheschiedt is ’tzedert den jare 1400 (Amsterdam, n.d.); The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 26 F 12. Image provided by Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 30 Historien ende waerachtighe gheschiedenissen van alle het ghedenckweerdichste datter gheschiedt is ’tzedert den jare 1400 (Amsterdam, n.d.), sig. b6r; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 26 F 12. Image provided by Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Fig. 31 Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 1185 (6 D 9), fol. 95v: Jan van Naaldwijk in the genealogy of his family in the adelskronieken. Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.
Fig. 32 Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 1185 (6 D 9), fol. 2r: Dutch adels-kronieken, second half of the sixteenth century. Image provided by Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

Fig. 33 Alkmaar, Regionaal Archief, Inventaris stadsarchief Alkmaar voor 1815, no. 2005-2006, no. 4: copy of a rentbrief, early seventeenth century. Image taken with kind permission of the staff of the Regionaal Archief Alkmaar.

Fig. 34 Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Losse collectie van aanwinsten (inv. 176), no. 1045, p. 24: Anthonius Hovaeus, Chronyck ende historie van het edele ende machtige gheslachte vanden buyse van Egmondt, in manuscript (photocopy). Image taken with kind permission of the staff of the Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem.

Fig. 35 Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Ltk 841, fol. 29r: eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the ‘Dutch Beke’. Image taken with kind permission of the staff of the Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden.
Jan van Naaldwijk was the son of a Dutch nobleman. Between 1513 and c. 1520 he wrote two unpublished Dutch prose chronicles of Holland. In his first chronicle, he lamented that he had not been able to gain access to the most recent scholarship concerning the history of Holland. Therefore, he based his work on the Dutch version of Jan Beke’s chronicle of Holland and Utrecht, the principal source for the history of the region. In addition, he claimed to have used more than thirty different additional sources. Shortly after he completed this text, a large vernacular chronicle of Holland, which later became known as the *Divisiekroniek* (‘Division Chronicle’), was published. Recognizing that this new work presented a different perspective on the history of Holland, he decided to supplement his first chronicle with a second one, largely an abridgement of the *Divisiekroniek*, but with some additional material from other sources. Jan van Naaldwijk’s two chronicles of Holland are preserved only in their autograph manuscripts: London, British Library, mss Cotton Vitellius F xv and Cotton Tiberius C iv. There is no indication that he intended to publish either chronicle.

The two manuscripts came into the possession of Sir Robert Cotton via his friend Emanuel van Meteren (Demetrius, Meteranus), merchant and historian, son of an Antwerp trader who had been the financier of one of the earliest English printed bibles. Van Meteren was the commercial consul for the Netherlands in London and also the author of a history of the Dutch Revolt. There are a significant number of Dutch historical manuscripts in the Cotton collection, some of which have been identified as having been brought to England by van Meteren’s efforts; and my investigation of the manuscripts of Jan van Naaldwijk’s chronicles has shown that they, too, passed through his hands: marginal notes in both manu-

---


2 London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C xi, one of the most important early historiographical collections from Holland, is known to have been supplied by van Meteren, as was MS Cotton Vespasianus D ix, art. 10, a copy of the ‘Chronicle of Gouda’: Tite, *Early Records*, p. 14.
scripts can be identified as written by him. While van Meteren was actively on the lookout for manuscripts for Cotton whenever he was in the Low Countries, and probably brought them over as a lucrative business enterprise, these two manuscripts came to him by a unique route: from a seventeenth-century genealogy, we learn that Jan’s daughter, ‘Miss Barbara van Naaldwijk, married Sir van Kuyck, lord of Meteren.’ The coincidence suggests that the manuscripts passed from Jan to his daughter Barbara, eventually reaching Emanuel van Meteren through family connections. They would have been acquired by Cotton in 1612 at the latest, on van Meteren’s death. In the early 1620s they were recorded, side by side and together with another manuscript coming from van Meteren, in the earliest catalogue of the Cotton collection; lists of their contents were added on the verso sides of their cover leaves at this time. On its cover page, the second chronicle, which breaks off mid-sentence in 1461, was described by van Meteren as ‘finishing anno 1461’; the first, which ends in 1514, was mistakenly identified by him as ending in 1414. These indications led later historians to misdate both texts, assuming that they were written in the fifteenth century.

Once they had entered the Cotton library, Jan’s chronicles led a dormant existence until the 1760s, when the first printed notice of the manuscripts was published by Jean Paquot, whose account of the texts was faulty in almost every detail. He claimed that the manuscript of the first chronicle (Vitellius F xv) ended in 1363 (as mentioned above, it ends in 1514). Believing the second chronicle to be written ‘anno 1461’, he misidentified the author as an older homonymous second cousin of Jan’s who died in 1489; and he erroneously claimed that the two chronicles together were the same as the work known under the title Het oude Goutsche chronycxken (‘The Old Short Chronicle of Gouda’). This last statement in particular has been the cause of much confusion in the following two and a half centuries.

4 British Library, MS Cotton Julius C iii, fols 138r-142r, letters by van Meteren to Sir Robert Cotton.
6 London, British Library, MS Harley 6018: nos 157 (Tiberius C iv) and 158 (Vitellius F xv); no. 156 (MS Cotton Tiberius C xi) is another van Meteren manuscript.
7 Such tables were usually added during Sir Robert’s life: Tite, Early Records, fig. 4b, p. 21, and p. 15, n. 89.
8 MS Cotton Tiberius C iv, cover leaf: ‘Historie ofte cronycke van Hollant ende Zeelant, daer den authuer in seijt een vermeerderinge te sijn van syn eerste chronijcke al bescreuen bij Johan van Naeldwijck edelman van Hollant eijndende anno 1461’.
9 London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 1r: ‘Croonijcke van Hollandt van Jan van Naeldwijk tottende jaar 1414’.
10 J.N. Paquot, Memoires pour servir à l’histoire litteraire des dix-sept Provinces des Pays-Bas, de la principauté de Liege, et de quelques contrées voisines, 18 vols (Leuven, 1763-70), IX, pp. 99-100; the manuscript must have been in a very poor state, and its quires may have been gathered incorrectly when Paquot consulted it, though the current binding reveals no irregularity around fol. 178, which contains events of 1363.
11 Up to the present day, the ‘Chronicle of Gouda’ is advertised by antiquarian booksellers as probably written by Jan van Naaldwijk. I have not been able to trace the basis for the unlikely attribution of editions of the ‘Most Excellent Chronicle of Brabant’ to Jan van Naaldwijk, found not only in Google Books, but also in the sup-
In the mid-nineteenth century, Laurens van den Bergh subjected Jan’s chronicles to renewed examination and found that they were not the same as the ‘Chronicle of Gouda’, but instead a hitherto unknown work.\[12\] He described the two texts as ‘a chronicle, written in the vernacular, with an accompanying continuation’.\[13\] Copying from the description on the cover leaf of the manuscript, he stated that the first chronicle ended in 1414 (an improvement on Paquot’s 1363, but still a century off), and that the second chronicle constituted a continuation to 1461 (in reality, it is not a continuation, but a supplementary chronicle, which stops abruptly, unfinished and incomplete, in this year).\[14\] Assessing the merits of the texts, van den Bergh cautiously concluded that an edition might be useful for the study of the history of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\[15\]

Three decades later, however, Samuel Muller Fz. published an article in which he warned others against investing any more energy in studying the chronicles.\[16\] He established that the two manuscripts did not comprise a chronicle and its continuation, but ‘two chronicles, or rather two versions of the same chronicle’.\[17\] Moreover, he made clear that the author was not the mid-fifteenth century Jan van Naaldwijk identified by Paquot, even expressing doubt as to whether he had belonged to the same aristocratic family. Reading the first chronicle would have cured him of this scepticism.\[18\] He dated the first chronicle to 1514 or shortly after. Muller assumed, but did not verify, that in this work Jan had followed his main source, the Dutch version of the chronicle of Jan Beke, verbatim, only occasionally adding material from Latin and French sources.\[19\] As for the second chronicle, he concluded, on the basis of a comparison, that it was ‘merely a compilation from, or worse, a copy’ of the *Divisiekroniek* of 1517.\[20\] He believed that Jan van Naaldwijk had been unlucky – his attempt to find a publisher for his first chronicle had been thwarted by the publication of the much superior *Divisiekroniek*, making his work redundantly more reputable Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren Basisbibliotheek (http://www.dbnl.org/basisbibliotheek/). For Jan’s use of the ‘Most Excellent Chronicle of Brabant’, see below, Chapter 2, pp. 85-87.


\[14\] Ibid., p. 120.

\[15\] Ibid., p. 121.


\[17\] Ibid., p. 393: ‘twee kronieken, of liever twee bewerkingen van dezelfde kroniek’.

\[18\] Ibid., but the author himself traces his ancestry: MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 149v.

\[19\] Muller Fz., ‘De kronieken’, p. 394.

\[20\] Ibid., p. 396: ‘slechts eene compilatie, erger nog, eene kopie’. 
dant. Jan’s attempt to write a second chronicle, derived from the *Divisiekroniek*, was evidence of a profound lack of judgement. In Muller’s opinion, after his study of the manuscripts and his edition of the introductions, there was no need for further research: 21

our author does not deserve any great effort. And this would be necessary: the opportunity to have the manuscript investigated by an authority on our medieval history is lacking while it is in London. I cannot recommend anyone to make the journey for this reason. The only possibility would be to produce an anthology of everything he reports about Naaldwijk, Loosduinen and the region in his first version: perhaps we shall find some pieces of information among the village gossip. 22

Not surprisingly, a long period of neglect followed Muller’s indictment, interrupted from time to time by short notices in bibliographies (generally drawing on the earlier descriptions) 23 and by publications on the ‘Chronicle of Gouda’, still occasionally attributed to Jan van Naaldwijk, 24 though elsewhere his authorship was explicitly dismissed. 25

In recent decades, however, the chronicles have received renewed attention from scholars in the Netherlands. In the course of her research into the sources and context of the *Divisiekroniek*, Karin Tilmans of the University of Amsterdam acquired microfilms of the two manuscripts, which she shared with colleagues, thereby increasing the accessibility of Jan’s chronicles to Dutch scholars. 26 Tilmans herself erroneously identified Jan’s first chronicle as a source for the *Divisiekroniek*; 27 and

---

21 Some later scholars have taken him on his word: thus, the passage about Jan van Naaldwijk in J.A.L. Lancée, *Erasmus en het Hollands humanisme* (Utrecht, 1979), pp. 92-6, is best ignored, as it is based exclusively on a faulty reading of Muller’s article, and riddled with additional errors.

22 Muller, ‘De kronieken’, pp. 399-400: ‘Doch onze schrijver verdient niet, dat men veel moeite om hem doe. En dit zou nodig zijn: de gelegenheid om het handschrift door een grondigen kenner onzer middeleeuwse geschiedenis te doen onderzoeken, ontbreekt zolang het te Londen is. Ik kan niemand aanraden, daarvoor de reis te doen. Het eenige, dat mogelijk ware, zou zijn eene bloemlezing te doen vervaardigen van hetgeen hij in zyne eerste redactie over Naaldwijk, Loosduinen en den omtrek mededeelt: wellicht komen ons onder de dorpspraatjes nog wetenswaardige zaken onder de oogen.’


25 Romein, *Geschiedenis*, p. 107; *Narrative Sources*, no. NL0177.


on several occasions she has referred to the relationship between the production of Jan’s two chronicles and the publication of the *Divisiekroniek*.28 In 1987, Bunna Ebels–Hoving noted that the chronicles deserve further study;29 but, until now, this call has not been answered.30

In recent years, some interest has been shown in the chronicles as a source of historical data. Michel van Gent, Livia Visser-Fuchs and Willem den Hertog have made efforts to locate certain of Muller’s ‘pieces of information among the village gossip’ in Jan’s first chronicle. Van Gent drew on it for his history of political strife in fifteenth-century Holland;31 Visser-Fuchs employed material from it for her account of the exile of King Edward IV of England in 1470–71;32 and den Hertog made extensive use of it for his history of the abbey of Loosduinen,33 to which he appended a biographical account of Jan, based on the information provided in the chronicle. Supplemented by the will of Sir Hendrik van Naaldwijk, Jan’s guardian after the death of his father Sir Adriaan van Naaldwijk, the chronicle showed that Jan was indeed a descendant of the aristocratic Naaldwijk family.34 Finally, Jan Bondeson consulted the manuscripts for his research on the miracle of Countess Margaret of Hennenberg’s 365 children.35

The current work presents the first in-depth study of the two chronicles of Holland written by Jan van Naaldwijk. It is a study of historiography, aiming to understand how an early sixteenth-century author set out to write about the history of Holland. To achieve this, I have explored a number of questions. Which sources did he use? What reasons did he have for his choice of sources? How did he shape

---


32 L. Visser-Fuchs, ‘“Il n’a plus lion ne lieppard, qui voruelle tenir de sa part”: Edward IV in Exile, October 1470 to March 1471’, in J.-M. Cauchies (ed.), *L’Angleterre et les pays bourguignons: relations et comparaisons (XVe-XVIe s.*)* (Neuchâtel, 1995), pp. 91-106, at 98-100. She erroneously ascribes (p. 98, n. 25) the location ‘Cotton Vitellius B xv’ to the manuscript of Jan’s first chronicle, and claims that ‘there is no printed edition because the Divisie-kroniek used van Naaldwijk’s text.’ See further below, Chapter 3, nn. 36 and 66.


34 Ibid., pp. 439-43. Den Hertog argues that he was possibly Adriaan’s illegitimate son. However, most of Jan’s biography is conjectural, and this as well as other claims, such as that made by Tilmans, *Historiography*, p. 89, that Jan was ‘a priest in Loosduinen’, are unsupported by evidence, in spite of Jan’s apparent ties to Loosduinen, for which see below, Chapter 2, pp. 118-19. Tilmans possibly based the assumption on the unreliable Lancée, *Erasmus*, at p. 92 (see above, n. 21). See for Jan’s biography also below, pp. 137-41.

the material at his disposal into a new history? By answering these questions, I have attempted to establish the place of Jan van Naaldwijk’s chronicles in the tradition of historical writing about Holland.

The wider goal of this study is to examine the continuities and transitions within that tradition in the early sixteenth century, a period of intense experimentation in Dutch history writing. Jan van Naaldwijk participated in these developments. He sought a connection to contemporary learned circles, but wrote at a remove from more traditional institutional contexts such as the monastery or the county court, from now well-established urban environments supportive of historical writing, and from the newly emerging industry of the printing press. His chronicles, while rooted in the historical tradition of Holland, nevertheless expanded it in ways that, for all their idiosyncrasy, can help us to appreciate the broader impact of innovations occurring at the same time in more ‘professional’ scholarly circles. What do Jan’s writings tell us about contemporary reactions to developments which have been identified as significant in the culture of the period, particularly the printing press and humanism, and about their relation to continuing medieval cultural currents? It has been necessary, therefore, to look not only at Jan’s chronicles themselves, but also at the broader historical context, examining what came before and after.

Chapter 1 contains a critical appraisal of the late medieval chronicle tradition of Holland from the middle of the fourteenth century up to the point at which Jan encountered it in the early sixteenth century. Central to this tradition were Jan Beke’s Latin Chronographia (c. 1346) and its Dutch translation, which laid the foundation for later historiographical discussions and experiments, including those of the first decades of the sixteenth century. I shall argue that a strong continuity existed within this chronicle tradition, based on repeated use of Beke’s chronicle as a source, as well as continuous renegotiation of some of its core characteristics.

Chapter 2 describes how, in 1514, Jan van Naaldwijk produced a chronicle of Holland, based on traditional historical writing about the county, but extending it in new directions and drawing on over twenty sources, in Dutch, Latin and French, in both manuscript and print. Expanding the framework handed to him by Beke, Jan enlarged the chronological and geographical scope of his chronicle of Holland, while also adding materials from other genres, such as itineraries, biographies and anecdotes. As a result, while thoroughly grounded in the historical tradition of Holland, Jan presented a highly individual view on Holland’s history, in which he showed himself to be influenced by and alert to recent cultural developments such as the introduction of the printing press and the growing impact of humanist scholarship.

In 1517, what was to become the most influential vernacular chronicle of Holland, the so-called Divisiekroniek, was printed. Chapter 3 examines how Jan
responded to the publication of the most significant new chronicle of Holland to appear in his lifetime by making it the main source for a supplement to his first chronicle. His use of the *Divisiekroniek* shows that contemporaries perceived the work differently from modern scholars.

The rise of humanist and antiquarian studies of the Dutch past from the early sixteenth century onwards did not end the medieval chronicle tradition of Holland. Chapter 4 explores its continuing existence in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, side-by-side with new approaches to writing history, revealing the enduring influence of the medieval historical tradition in the early modern period.

Appendices present transcriptions and translations of the introductions of both Jan’s chronicles as well as the list of sources he appended to his first chronicle, while full transcriptions of both Jan’s chronicles can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.
Chapter 1

‘Wt voel boecken ende autoeren’

‘From many books and authors’
The Historiographical Tradition of Holland before
Jan van Naaldwijk

Approaches to Pre-Modern Historical Texts

In the introduction to his first chronicle of Holland, Jan van Naaldwijk made it clear that his work was part of an ongoing historiographical tradition and mentality:

I, Jan van Naaldwijk, aspired to write this chronicle of Holland according to my rough intellect, to be corrected by those who are more knowledgeable. I compiled, collected, translated and adapted into Dutch this history, *gest* and chronicle from many French and Latin books and authors.¹

The historiographical context Jan imagined for his work was formed, on the one hand, by the written texts which served as the sources for his history and, on the other, by the historical knowledge and consciousness of readers of such works, to whom he appealed with his request for the correction of his chronicle. This request, however, was a standard modesty trope, which is further weakened by the fact that Jan gives no indication anywhere in his chronicle of the readership he imagined for the work. That he thought of his chronicle and its context primarily in textual terms is confirmed by the impressive list of words he uses to describe his activity as an historian: he ‘compiled, collected, translated and adapted’ his sources into a new product, for which he also had three different words: a history, a *gest*, a chronicle.

In modern scholarship, medieval historical writings are categorized on a generic scale ranging from annals to chronicles to histories, that is, from those presenting the most succinct enumeration of facts in chronological order to more sophisticated analytical works. The distinction between the different genres is not entirely without precedent in medieval theories;² but, as Jan’s characterization of his own

¹ London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 2r: ‘Doe heb je jan van naeldwick voer mij ghenomen dese cronijck van hollant te willen maken na mijn arm rudelic verstant ende tot correxien der gheenre dijet beter weten ende heb dese historie ijeste ende cronijck ghenomen vergadert ende ghetranslateert ende ouergheset wt den walschen ende latijne in dijtsche wt voel boecken ende autoeren’.
work attests, the applicability of established generic categories is limited, and allowance should be made for additional terms such as Jan’s ‘ijeste’, gest, presumably to be understood as a true account of the deeds of important men. Moreover, even when medieval authors were conscious of the differences between annals, chronicles and histories, this awareness never led them to exclude one genre in favour of another when selecting sources for their own works. Furthermore, the identification of texts as histories was not always the main factor in classifying them: only from the late fourteenth century did histories start to be grouped together in library collections. The fluidity of the terms Jan used when describing his activity as an historian – partly distinct, partly overlapping – highlights the problem of approaching medieval texts through a rigid system of classification. Modern analytical notions such as `genre’ often fail to account for the flexibility of medieval literary practice and can invite anachronistic misinterpretations of medieval texts.

Perhaps most significantly, the four terms used by Jan to describe his activity as an historian – compile, collect, translate and adapt – each denote a process which entails deriving material from other works. While the disclaimer of originality is certainly a common topos in the Middle Ages, it is entirely appropriate to much of medieval historical writing and, especially, to chronicles. In the medieval chronicle, the activity of historiography most clearly overlaps with that of compilatio: unlike the commentator, a compiler was not expected to add expositional matter to his sources; but, unlike the scribe, he was ‘free to rearrange’.

Approaching the medieval chronicler as a compiler does not mean that we should consider him to have been, as has been argued, ‘a slave to his documents’; the question of whether gesta existed as a medieval historiographical genre is raised by E.M.C. van Houts, Gesta Normannorum duum: een studie over de handschriften, de tekst, het geschiedwerk en het genre (Groningen, 1982), pp. 143-5, 179-80; the foundational study of medieval historiographical genres is B. Guenée, ‘Histoires, annales, chroniques. Essai sur les genres historiques au moyen âge’, Annales. Économies Sociétés Civilisations 28 (1973), pp. 997-1016.


Consider, for example, the received opinion that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae is fiction, not history, which ignores the fact that medieval readers approached the work as a history: S. Levelt, ‘Wurzeln und Zweige: die Prophetien Merlins und einige Vorschläge zur Lektüre mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung’, in K. Brodersen (ed.), Prognosis: Studien zur Funktion von Zukunftsvorhersagen in Literatur und Geschichte seit der Antike (Münster, 2001), pp. 97-120, 129-41. While P. Strohm, ‘Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romance, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives’, Speculum 46 (1971), pp. 348-59, is correct in warning against the false friends in medieval nomenclature and modern theoretical terminology, I am not certain whether ‘mediaeval terms would assist modern critics in their quest for a sympathetic response to works written in other places, other times’ (ibid., p. 359), unless one incorporates the flexibility and fluidity of medieval – or any other historical – practice into the analysis, as does R.L. Colie, The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance (Berkeley, etc., 1973).


G.M. Spiegel, ‘Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography’, in her The Past as Text: The
such an approach denies the potentially creative nature of the process of selection and reorganization. Those approaches to medieval historiography are more fruitful which do not presuppose categories, but instead trace in detail the process of change over time in the transmission of texts, as it affects their narratives, ideologies and structures. Such approaches have the benefit of being able to account for the cross-pollination of texts from different genres, different institutional settings, different languages, different ages and different moments and locations of reception. The ability of these approaches to explain influence which runs counter to chronology is perhaps most relevant to the study of the impact of Renaissance humanism on historical thinking, where ancient texts were used to reinterpret or supplant later (medieval) traditions; but they also help to describe the medieval practice of revision of older texts on the basis of newer ones.

Approaches that attempt to trace textual traditions over time can explain, above all, the precise significance of alterations and variations in the transmission of narratives, ideas and texts. Although it is the received wisdom that medieval chronicles, in particular, are repositories of material transmitted almost mindlessly, this view is unsatisfactory not only because it fails to account for the continuous repetition of this supposedly mindless activity throughout the ages, but more importantly because it ignores the fact that, especially in manuscript culture, no two versions of any text were identical and that the space between copies and versions (and different texts, for that matter) was a grey area where medieval scribes, compilers and

---


9 The concept of ‘meme’ can be a useful tool in the study of historiographical traditions. It is fruitfully applied to the study of medieval and Renaissance romance by H. Cooper, The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare (Oxford, 2004), who defines the concept as ‘an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures’ (p. 3).

10 A case in point is the revision Henry of Huntingdon made to his own Historia Anglorum, which was based on Bede’s Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum, after his ‘discovery’ of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae (Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum, ed. and transl. D. Greenway [Oxford, 1996], pp. lxii, 538-83), which itself used an earlier version of Henry’s Historia (ibid., p. 60, n. 176); Levelt, ‘Wurzeln’.

authors exercised considerable creativity. Small changes can make a big difference, and the accumulation of many small changes can create a new historiography.

Histories of Medieval History Writing in the Low Countries

Nineteenth-century literary historians in Belgium and the Netherlands, like their counterparts throughout Europe, showed little interest in historical texts as literature. The early histories of Dutch literature are narrowly concerned with texts written in Dutch verse, and primarily those originally composed in Dutch, with an emphasis on their aesthetic value. Prose works were virtually ignored because, in the words of the discipline’s founder, Willem Jonckbloet, they ‘do not belong to the realm of Art’. Latin and French texts also for the most part fell outside the scope of Dutch literary history. In encyclopaedic histories of Dutch literature, the most significant historical texts were mentioned; yet even in more recent reference works they are still often explicitly located in ‘the fringe of literature’, and up to the present day how that fringe is related to its presumed centre has never properly been examined. The study of medieval literature and the study of medieval historiography were, and largely remain, distinct disciplines.

12 The assumption can also lead to an inappropriate negation of the meaning conveyed by a text, based on conjectures about its genesis. Thus, e.g., noting apparent political bias in the ‘Chronicle of Gouda’, A. Janse, ‘De ge-
laagdheid van een middeleeuwse kroniek. De ontstaansgeschiedenis van het zogenaamde Goudse kroniekje’, Queeste. Tijdschrift over middeleeuwse letterkunde 8 (2001), pp. 134-59, at 156, writes: ‘Het is mogelijk dat zijn bron hiervoor verantwoordelijk is’, thereby erroneously implying that if indeed the source could be held responsible, the author and his text would be absolved of partiality.
13 This point appears to be slowly catching on. It has recently been made, e.g., by R. McKitterick, Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), p. 4.
14 Even nowadays many readers of medieval historiography still do not; consider, e.g., R.M. Stein, ‘Literary Criticism and the Evidence for History’, in N. Partner (ed.), Writing Medieval History (London, 2005), pp. 67-
87, at 72, who asks, without a hint of irony: ‘What are the precise grounds by which we accept a part of an ancient narrative as providing a clear window onto the past and dismiss the rest?’
16 Consider, ibid., pp. 7-9, where te Winkel criticizes Jonckbloet’s ‘critical-aesthetic’ (‘critisch-aestetisch’) approach, but argues any literary history should be ‘historical-aesthetic’ (‘historisch-aestetisch’).
18 Ibid., I, p. 3: ‘De Nederlandsche Letterkunde bestaat natuurlijk uit werken, geschreven in de Nederlandsche taal’.
20 The most recent history of medieval Dutch literature, F. van Oostrom, Stemmen op schrift: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse lettercultuur vanaf het begin tot 1300 (Amsterdam, 2006), which goes up to 1300, is no exception, all but ignoring the Latin historical tradition in the Low Countries; however, this situation may well be remedied by the forthcoming second volume.
21 One notable exception is the admirable attempt to bridge the divide by A.L.H. Hage, Sonder favele, sonder liegen. Onderzoek naar vorm en functie van de Middelnederlandse rijmkroniek als historiografisch genre (Groningen, 1989).
Dutch scholars who did take an interest in medieval historical texts, again similar to elsewhere in Europe, generally did so with a strictly historical focus. The first extensive survey of Dutch historical writers was produced in the 1830s, but it merely listed the sources, presenting no analysis and ignoring the connections between them. Samuel Muller Fz.’s list of chronicles of the northern Low Countries, published in 1880, was somewhat more comprehensive and analytical. Medieval historical sources of the northern Low Countries, in particular, however, remained to a significant extent inaccessible, since there was no Dutch equivalent to national editions such as the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* or the ‘Rolls Series’ in Britain. The medieval Dutch historical tradition – like, perhaps, medieval Dutch literature in general – was regarded as devoid of interest: ‘grey and paralysed like an overcast November day in the flat country where it came into being and where no summit, not even a turn of the road offers unexpected vistas’.

Johan Huizinga’s definition of history as ‘the intellectual form in which a culture renders account to itself of its past’ provided his former student Jan Romein with a new impetus and a new perspective for analysing the history of historiography in the northern Low Countries. Yet, in spite of his stated aim of writing a survey of the materials from which medieval culture could be investigated, Romein often failed to escape the precepts of the traditional approaches to historical texts, showing little genuine interest in his sources unless they had obvious literary (i.e., aesthetic) or historical (i.e., factual) merit. Consequently, he remained more intent on the descriptive information provided by those individual sources which contained...
scrap of data useful for cultural history than on the source per se as a product of medieval culture. He categorized his sources according to literary ‘circles’; but, as he himself acknowledged, these ‘circles’ were largely imaginary and did not necessarily correspond to the institutional contexts in which the texts were produced. Had Romein taken his own approach to its logical conclusion, he would have recognized that if Dutch historiography was especially uninteresting, this was all the more reason to investigate it as a product of a specific culture. 

In 1932, however, Romein’s account of the medieval historiography of the northern Low Countries was groundbreaking, and to this day it has not been superseded. The study of medieval Dutch historiographical works was given another new impetus in the early 1980s by the appearance of two works: Marijke Carasso-Kok’s *Repertorium*, which provided an extensive bibliography of medieval historical narrative sources, both published and unpublished, from the northern Low Countries; and Bernard Guenée’s *Histoire et culture historique dans l’Occident médiéval*, which presented a new methodological framework in which to study medieval historiography in general.

A modest flurry of renewed interest in Dutch historical sources ensued over the next twenty-odd years, mainly expressed in monographs on individual sources and authors, along with studies and editions of some very important and some rather obscure texts. Nonetheless, while far more works are now accessible in modern editions, many – including some of the most significant ones – remain un-

---

28 A similar point is made by Lettinck, ‘Character’, p. 321, who argues that the traditional negative assessment of medieval Dutch historiography is the result of misplaced expectations.

29 Carasso-Kok, *Repertorium*. This work is now superseded by the online database *Narrative Sources*, which covers both the northern and the southern Dutch Low Countries.

30 Guenée, *Histoire*.


A thorough study of Dutch historiographical traditions in the Middle Ages, replacing Romein’s work, is still a desideratum. To date, the most detailed analysis remains Bunna Ebels-Hoving’s 26-page article, now two decades old, ‘Dutch Historical Writing 1350-1530: An Attempt at Characterization’, which, while significantly more ambitious in scope than its modest title might suggest, does not constitute an equivalent for the Dutch Low Countries of seminal studies such as Antonia Gransden’s Historical Writing in England. Nor are there many monographs covering specific periods or themes in Dutch history writing comparable to Gabrielle Spiegel’s Romancing the Past or Eric Cochrane’s Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance. Every generation since Jonckbloet’s foundational work in the 1850s has produced its own survey of medieval Dutch literary traditions; by contrast, a more or less complete study of the history of medieval Dutch historiography has been attempted only once.

Furthermore, even when scholars started to look for more than merely ‘historical facts’ in medieval chronicles, only those considered to be of particular significance were seriously studied – and a late medieval chronicle’s significance was generally measured either by its novelty value or by the extent to which it could be regarded as a forerunner of the Dutch Golden Age: the first chronicle to be printed, the first to be written under the influence of humanism and so on. Even as recently as 2007, an academic publication could berate other scholars for having over-emphasized the ‘new’ in the chronicles which they studied, while characterizing the chronicle of its primary interest as ‘an important turning point’, ‘a highly innovative text’.

Yet, characteristics which in the past have been considered typically humanist – such as a critical approach to sources, an interest in archaeology, attention for the workings of political institutions, a focus on eloquent expression, a sense of...
achronism – are now identified throughout the late medieval chronicle tradition or, conversely, are found to be absent in texts considered to be humanist. Most importantly, perhaps especially with regard to the so-called early modern period, this emphasis on the ‘new’ is highly misleading, creating as its reverse the suggestion of a Middle Ages which was stable, unchanging, and, above all, different. It should be self-evident, however, that throughout the Middle Ages, there was change; and, as Helen Cooper reminds us in her inaugural lecture for the chair of Medieval and Renaissance English Studies at Cambridge, this ‘change continued, and we notice the changes; but we need to rediscover how to wonder at the continuities that underlie them too’. Historiography is the pre-eminent genre for the study of such continuities, due to its rigid demands with regard to both form and content.

Jan van Naaldwijk’s Sources

In the introduction to his first chronicle Jan van Naaldwijk expresses his concern over the limited availability of sources for the history of Holland and claims that he delayed the work in expectation of the publication of a better source, which he believed was being written by a certain Willem Hermans, a monk of the monastery of Stein near Gouda. The anticipated text never materialized, but the issue of the sources for his chronicle was very much on Jan’s mind: after his introduction and table of contents, and before the text of his chronicle, he inserted a list of thirty-six works on which he had drawn. Jan could have read almost all the identifiable titles in printed editions. These sources, and Jan’s use of them in the writing of his first chronicle of Holland, will be the subject of the next chapter. ‘The true text, how-

40 P. Burke, The Renaissance Sense of the Past (London, 1969), p. 1: ‘Medieval men lacked a sense of the past being different in quality from the present’; the sentiment is repeated by D. Hay, Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eight to the Eighteenth Centuries (London, 1977), pp. 90–91. D.R. Kelley, Faces of History: Historical Inquiry from Herodotus to Herder (New Haven, 1998), pp. 103–29, shows that a sense of anachronism was already present in medieval historiography; see also B. Ebels-Hoving, ‘Johannes a Leydis en de eerste humanistische geschiedschrijving van Holland’, Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden 100 (1985), pp. 26–51, at 28–9. Ebels-Hoving has recently (in a public lecture which she kindly sent me) questioned her own eagerness to ascribe humanism to Johannes a Leydis: a comment by Leydis which appeared to indicate a humanist attention to style, as it turns out, was copied from Beke. A notable example in humanist historical writing of the ‘lack of a sense of anachronism’, which medieval historians are so often faulted for, is the anachronistic use of the Batavian myth by historians of the Dutch Republic, especially Hugo Grotius. I. Bejczy, Erasmus and the Middle Ages: The Historical Consciousness of a Christian Humanist (Leiden, 2001), p. 13, points out anachronisms in the works of Erasmus.


42 MS Cotton Vitellius F xv, fol. 2r–v.


44 For a transcription of this list and identifications of the titles, see Appendix 2.