

# University History in the Low Countries

## Historia de la Universidad en los Países Bajos

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*Abstract:* The University history of the Low Countries is largely tributary of the different fate of the two halves of that region. In the South (present-day Belgium), in fact a unitary state from the 16th century onwards, the University of Louvain, initially founded for the whole Low Countries, was long the only institution of higher education. It was temporarily joined by that of Douai (later incorporated into France). In the North (the present-day Netherlands), universities and other institutions of higher education were only founded from the independence in the late 16th century onwards, but then in huge numbers, due to the confederal character of the Dutch Republic. In the revolutionary and Napoleonic era, the whole university landscape was thoroughly altered, and most of the institutions in the North suppressed. After 1815, new universities were founded on the same footing in both countries, then again temporarily united. Although the Netherlands and Belgium went their own way ever

*Resumen:* La historia de la Universidad de los Países Bajos es en buena medida heredera del destino diverso de cada una de las dos mitades de la región. En el Sur (actualmente Bélgica), de hecho, un estado unitario desde el siglo XVI en adelante, la Universidad de Lovaina, fundada inicialmente para el conjunto de los Países Bajos, fue durante mucho tiempo la única institución de educación superior. Se unió temporalmente por ello a Douai (más tarde incorporado en Francia). En el Norte (Holanda hoy en día), universidades y otras instituciones de educación superior sólo se fundaron a partir de la independencia, a finales del siglo XVI en adelante, cuando crecerían exponencialmente, debido al carácter confederal de la República Neerlandesa. En la era revolucionaria y napoleónica, todo el panorama universitario quedó alterado y la mayoría de las instituciones del Norte suprimidas. Después de 1815, se fundaron nuevas universidades en el mismo nivel en ambos países, que otra vez quedarían temporalmente unidos. Aunque los

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since their separation in 1830, both countries show a similar institutional evolution, in spite of the linguistic problems in the South. This is reflected in the cooperation between scholars on university history of the whole Low Countries region. In this article, I first sketch briefly the political evolution of the Low Countries and that of the university landscape and its institutional provisions, compulsory for a good comprehension of the university historiography. After a survey of the process of institutionalisation of university history in the European context ever since the 1980s, the (bi-)national associations and the renewal of the focus on the social dimension of university history and the history of science are briefly discussed. Throughout the article, the most important studies and memorial volumes of the last decades are quoted.

*Keywords:* historiography, Low Countries, universities, colleges, Latin schools.

Países Bajos y Bélgica siguieron sus propios caminos desde su separación en 1830, ambos países muestran una evolución institucional similar; a pesar de los problemas lingüísticos en el Sur. Esto se refleja en la cooperación entre los estudiosos de la historia de la universidad de los Países Bajos en toda la región. En este artículo, primero presento un breve esquema de la evolución política de los Países Bajos y de la universidad y sus disposiciones institucionales, algo obligatorio para una buena comprensión de la historiografía universitaria. Después de un estudio del proceso de institucionalización de la historia universitaria en el contexto europeo desde la década de 1980, las asociaciones (bi)nacionales y la renovación de la atención a la dimensión social de la historia universitaria y la historia de la ciencia se discutirán brevemente. A lo largo del artículo, se darán cita también los estudios más importantes y volúmenes conmemorativos aparecidos en las últimas décadas.

*Palabras clave:* historiografía, Países Bajos, universidades, colegios, escuelas latinas

The Low Countries constitute a territory in northwestern Europe that, in spite of its apparent geophysical, social and cultural unity, is characterized by a huge variety of political destinies, institutional histories and cultural legacies. Its university history is closely related to the political evolution and the historical fate of the different parts of this territory. In order to understand the history of the universities in the Low Countries, it is therefore important to be aware of the rather complex history of the territories concerned. My approach of university history will therefore be divided into two parts: in the first part, I shall focus on the universities of the Low Countries, in the second part on the writing of their history. This is a huge domain, that in the past has been mainly covered by an institutional approach (in particular by monographies commanded or written at the occasion of university centenaries and other celebrations), and, because of the importance of the Low Countries in the history of science and scholarship, by monographic studies on individual scholars and/or their publications or their achievements. The choices that had to be made for this article focus in particular on the aspects for which the universities of the Low Countries were and still are known in the international world of learning. A history of student movements, ideological struggles in the arts and sciences, or the recruitment of students and professors, to name only some hot topics in the social history of the university, would

require a different approach and a much longer development. Similarly, the most recent turbulent periods of the university's history have produced a host of publications on its present-day social, political, institutional or cultural development, many of a rather dubious historical character. I will not go into that direction. Yet, in the works cited hereafter, many elements may be found to tackle such themes.

*The Low Countries: territorial unity and divisions*

Behind the shared destiny of the different elements of the area commonly known as the Low Countries, now united by several bonds in the Benelux (in all close to 30 million inhabitants), their historical trajectory embraces in fact three present-day nation-states with very different university histories, in spite of quite visible cultural similarities: the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg<sup>1</sup>. With the exception of Flanders and Artois subject to the French King, they were during the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance part of the Holy Roman Empire, until Emperor Charles V of Habsburg united the seventeen duchies, counties, prince-bishoprics and territories into one single centralized state, a process finished by the conquest of the duchy of Gelderland and county of Zutphen, ratified by the Treaty of Venlo between the Duke and the Emperor on 7 September 1543. Henceforth they were called together the Low Countries, graphically represented in the symbolic image of a lion, as designed in the early 1580s by Michael Aitsinger<sup>2</sup>. United in the Circle of Burgundy (created in 1512), the seventeen provinces, now including Flanders and Artois, were made an autonomous part of the Empire by the Treaty of Augsburg of 26 June 1548. Outside the Low Countries, other members of this new state were the Burgundian homelands Franche-Comté and Charolais, situated between France and Switzerland. The new state had its own centralized government, first at Malines where the high administration was located, after 1572 at Brussels in the duchy of Brabant next to the court. In Franche-Comté, Dole was from the start the political center, until Besançon took over this role, together with the university, at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Around 1550, two universities existed in this huge territory administe-

<sup>1</sup> General information on the history of the Low Countries (Benelux): J.C.H. Blom & Emiel Lamberts (eds.), *History of the Low Countries* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998; 2<sup>d</sup> ed. 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Aitsinger (or von Aitsing, Eytzing) *De Leone Belgico, eiusque topographica atque historica descriptione liber* (Coloniae Ubiorum, 1583), many reimpressions.

red by the Habsburgs: one at Dole, founded in 1422 by the Duke of Burgundy, and one at Louvain (in Dutch: Leuven), founded in 1425 by the Duke of Brabant<sup>3</sup>. Both served for the whole territory; many students from the Netherlands attended the University of Dole. In fact, even after the foundation of Louvain University, many Netherlandic students continued to attend other universities in the Holy Roman Empire, first of all Cologne, which remained for a long time the cultural capital of the Low Countries part of the Hanseatic area, but also to Prague, Erfurt, etc. From of old, the universities of Paris (arts and theology) and Orleans (law) had an important number of students from the Low Countries<sup>4</sup>. The establishment of a university at Besançon by the Emperor in 1564 was revoked by the Pope three years later, but after the conquest of Franche-Comté by the French King and its incorporation into the French monarchy at the Peace of Nijmegen (1678), the King transferred the University of Dole to Besançon in 1691. In the context of the necessary re-organization of the Netherlandic<sup>5</sup> provinces as a fully-fledged state, and the

<sup>3</sup> Erik Van Mingroot, *Sapientie immarcessibilis. A Diplomatic and Comparative Study of the Bull of Foundation of the University of Louvain* (December 9, 1425), documentation M. Nelissen, transl. from the Dutch by A. Fritsen [Medievalia Lovaniensia, Series I/Studia XXV] (Leuven: Universitaire Pers, 1994); Marc Nelissen, et al., *De Stichtingsbul van de Leuvense Universiteit 1425-1914* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers, 2000); the original foundation document of Louvain university has perished in the fire of 1914. The bibliography until the 1970s of the university of Louvain has been published by Jacques Paquet in Sven Stelling-Michaud (ed.), *Bibliographie internationale de l'histoire des universités*, I (Genève: Droz, 1973), with a continuation: Jacques Paquet, 'Bibliografie der geschiedenis van de oude Universiteit Leuven (1425-1797). Publikaties in de jaren 1972-1976 uitgegeven, met toevoegingen voor de voorgaande jaren', *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis*, 62 (1979): 267-294. Many documents have been published by E. Reusens, 'Documents relatifs à l'histoire de l'université de Louvain', *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*, 17 (1881) - 23 (1892).

<sup>4</sup> In general: Hilde De Ridder-Symoens, 'Mobility', in: Walter Rüegg (general ed.), Hilde De Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe. Volume I: Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 283-304, and *Volume II: Universities in early modern Europe (1500-1800)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 416-448; also published in Spanish translation: *Historia de la Universidad en Europa* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, Servicio Editorial). For the attendance of the Dutch at Cologne University in the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, see the many publications by Rainer Christoph Schwinges and his research team in Germany and Switzerland.

<sup>5</sup> In conformity with some American colleagues, I prefer using the form Netherlandic (i.e., pertaining to the Low Countries as a whole) because 'Dutch', often used in foreign publications, as well as 'Netherlandish' (for the Netherlands) cover only part of the area, i.e. the present-day kingdom of the Netherlands. Similarly, the name Flemish (Flanders), which in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was currently used for the whole Dutch-speaking area, covers now only part of the Southern Netherlands and should be avoided as a general term for the Low Countries.

rise of Protestantism, a third university was established at Douai (Flanders) in 1559, of a clear Counter-Reformation inspiration<sup>6</sup>. Simultaneous university projects for the Northern provinces (Utrecht, Gouda) did not materialize because of the growing political, social and religious unrest that in the 1560s culminated in the long-standing Revolt against the Habsburg regime. However, one of the very first initiatives of the victorious rebels was the highly symbolic foundation of a university (with a faculty of Reformed theology) in early January 1575 in the city of Leiden (county of Holland), just after its liberation from a long and murderous Spanish siege.

On 6 January 1579, the southern provinces concluded the Union of Arras in favor of the ruling Catholic sovereign, the King of Spain. Two weeks later, on 23 January 1579, the seven rebellious provinces in the North – Gelderland (in union with Zutphen), Holland (with West-Friesland), Zeeland, Friesland, Groningen, Utrecht, and Overijssel – seceded and united themselves into the Republic of the United Provinces (commonly called The Dutch Republic), whose central institutions were established at The Hague, the ancient seat of the count of Holland. Though the quest for political liberty ('*libertatis ergo*') was for many rebels the main motive of their revolt, next to the freedom of religious choice ('*religionis ergo*'), and certainly not all rebels had embraced the Reformed confession, the religious issue quickly became the breaking point of the relations between the provinces of North and South. The independence of the Northern Dutch Republic was recognized in 1648 by the Peace of Westphalia, at the end of the Eighty-Years War, finishing at the same time its association with the Holy Roman Empire. In the meantime, the Dutch had conquered the northern part of Brabant (around the cities of Breda and 's-Hertogenbosch [Bois-le-Duc]), the core province of the greater Netherlands, and some parts of Flanders, which henceforth remained under the rule of the States-General of the Dutch Republic and were known as the Generality Lands. The whole territory roughly corresponded to the present-day Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Reformed religion of Calvinist confession was recognized as the 'public church', but adherence was never compulsory, individual liberty of conscience and of confessional choice was guaranteed, and other confessions were more or less tolerated in the private space, although they could not publicly establish church buildings or formal institutions of education, less alone universities. At least one third of the

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<sup>6</sup> Georges Cardon, *La Fondation de l'Université de Douai* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1892). For the bibliography on Douai University, see: Simonne Guenée, *Bibliographie de l'histoire des universités françaises des origines à la Révolution*, II (Paris : Picard, 1978), 146-170.

overall population finally remained Catholic, though in various proportions over the provinces.

The southern part of the Low Countries, called the Spanish Netherlands, however, remained uniformly Roman Catholic (with very small Protestant minorities in some cities and places) and under Habsburg rule until 1792, but at the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, it was transferred from the Spanish branch to the Austrian branch of the ruling family. Henceforth it was called the Austrian Netherlands. Besides, the Low Countries were considerably larger on its southern border until in the course of the second half of the seventeenth century the French king conquered and gradually integrated into the French monarchy important parts of Flanders (Lille, Dunkirk, Cassel, Douai), Artois (Arras, Saint-Omer, Béthune) and Hainault (Cambrai, Valenciennes). These annexations (called 'reunions' by the French) were sanctioned at the Peace of Nijmegen in 1678. Until the revolutionary era (1795), the prince-bishopric of Liege along the Meuse, now included in Belgium, was an independent state, but without a university – Liege students went principally to Louvain, Douai, Cologne, and Trier (Trèves). In the revolutionary era, starting in the Dutch Republic briefly in 1787 but resumed in 1794, and in Belgium in 1792, the Low Countries went through several changes of political regime until they were incorporated into the Napoleonic Empire, the northern part however not before 1810, after the short period of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Holland (1806-1810). The educational policy of the revolutionary regimes and their Napoleonic successors overturned completely the university landscape of the Low Countries, in particular in the North, where most of the five provincial universities and ten illustrious schools (see hereafter for a definition) were suppressed, just like, in the South, the university of Louvain.

In the post-Napoleonic period, the Northern Netherlands and Belgium formed one single 'United Monarchy' under the house of Orange-Nassau, from 1815 until the Belgian Revolution of 1830. After the declaration of independence of Belgium, a monarchical regime under the house of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was adopted in 1831. The grand duchy of Luxemburg came in 1815 under King William's personal rule. In 1839, the French-speaking part of Luxemburg was attributed to Belgium (now a province), whereas the German-speaking part remained under the personal rule of the Orange King. However, contrary to the Netherlands (where from 1890 to 2013 only queens have ruled), the Luxemburg constitution did not admit a female successor. When in 1890 no male successor was available in the Orange family, Luxemburg was taken over by another branch of the house of Nassau, still the

ruling family today. After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles (1919) attributed some minor parts of Germany to Belgium, on its eastern frontier. Nevertheless, roughly the two monarchies of the Netherlands and Belgium have conserved the same territory until the present day. Ever since 1944, however, many attempts have been made to reinforce the political and economic union and the cultural and linguistic cooperation between the three countries of the Benelux, including a Linguistic Union of the Dutch-speaking countries. Three languages officially are in use: Dutch (as a regio-language also called Flemish), French (in Wallonia, and since several centuries also in originally Dutch-speaking Brussels), and German on the eastern borders of Belgium and in Luxemburg; in the North, the ancient regional language Frisian remains current in parts of Friesland, but has no academic use.

### *The university landscape of the Low Countries*

At the separation of the Northern and Southern Netherlands, around 1580, three universities were in existence in the Low Countries: Louvain, Douai and Leiden<sup>7</sup>. However, from that period onwards, both halves of the Low Countries followed very different ways, due to their political regimes and religious choices. During the last centuries of the past millennium, the linguistic problems in Belgium still have added to this complex situation, due to the diversity of the languages, their political, social, and cultural status, their expansion, and the ongoing shifts in the equilibrium between the linguistic communities, the international status of Brussels being at then origin of a complex complementary problem. In 1978-1980, these dissensions motivated the complete breaking up of the ancient university of Louvain into two linguistically distinct universities: Leuven in the eponymous town, speaking Dutch, and Louvain-la-Neuve at Ottignies, speaking French. Already in 1969-1970, the Free University of Brussels, of free-thinking persuasion, had been split into

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<sup>7</sup> See the data on the single universities in: Lubor Jílek (ed.), *Historical compendium of European Universities / Répertoire historique des universités européennes* (Genève: CRE, 1984), and the introductions by Hilde De Ridder-Symoens on Belgium (p. 19) and by Willem Frijhoff on the Netherlands (p. 43-46). For the Ancient Regime, more generally: Walter Rüegg (general ed.), Hilde De Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe. Volume II: Universities in early modern Europe (1500-1800)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), in particular chapter 2: 'Patterns' (by Willem Frijhoff), 43-110, with maps; Spanish translation: *Historia de la Universidad en Europa. Vol. II: Las universidades en la Europa moderna temprana (1500-1800)* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, Servicio Editorial, 1999), 45-112.



two independent entities next to each other, speaking respectively Dutch and French. This university had been founded in 1834, shortly after the independence of Belgium, by the liberal and anticlerical bourgeoisie supported by the free-masonry, in response to the creation, at the initiative of the bishops of Belgium, of the Catholic University of Malines (soon transferred to Louvain when in 1835 the Belgian government changed the status of Louvain university from public into private).

At the two universities that before 1600 flourished in the South, Louvain and Douai, an oath of adhesion to the Catholic faith was compulsory for all staff and students at their matriculation<sup>8</sup>. These Catholic institutions continued to attract also quite a lot of Catholics from the North, the more so as the fiction of political unity between North and South was maintained until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, the University of Leiden, and on a smaller scale the universities founded later on in the North, got a very important influx of immigrants and refugees from the Southern provinces. Due to their regime of religious toleration, they also attracted Protestants and dissenters from England, Huguenots from France, and Calvinists as well as Lutherans from many German territories, Switzerland, Scandinavia and the different countries of Central Europe, including even a fair number of Catholics from the Northern provinces themselves. University colleges were rare in the North: students had to rent a room in town, but some former convents served as dormitories, and several professors maintained quite a number of boarders in their home. Louvain and Douai, on the contrary, practiced the college system. Both cities were provided with numerous colleges for teaching or student residence, and for members of the religious orders. In both universities special missionary colleges existed too for the *Missio Hollandica*, the recovery of Catholicism in the North, more or less supervised by the Roman authorities. Moreover, next to the full-fledged universities, various formulas for higher education on the semi-university level existed. In the South they included theological seminaries, study centers for the religious

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<sup>8</sup> For Douai : Gilbert Dehon, *L'Université de Douai dans la tourmente (1635-1675). Heurs et malheurs de la Faculté des Arts* (Villeneuve d'Ascq : Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998) ; Hilde De Ridder-Symoens, 'Étude du rayonnement national et international d'une université sans livres matricules : le cas de l'Université de Douai (1559-1795)', in : Michel Bideaux & Marie-Madeleine Fragonard (eds.), *Les Échanges entre les universités européennes à la Renaissance* (Genève : Droz, 2003), 45-60.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Willem Frijhoff, 'Politiques discriminatoires en pays protestant: les étudiants catholiques néerlandais (fin XVIe-XVIIe siècle)', in: Patrick Féréty & Caroline Barrera (eds.), *Étudiants de l'exil. Migrations internationales et universités refuges (XVIe-XXe siècles)* (Toulouse : Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2009), p. 37-54.



orders, and some major grammar schools (called Latin schools in the Low Countries), equivalent to the *collèges de plein exercice* in France, where the six years humanities or arts course was followed by a two years philosophy cycle of semi-university level, often under Jesuit administration, as was the case in the great Jesuit colleges at Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Malines, Brussels, Bois-le-Duc, Roermond (Ruremonde), or Maastricht<sup>10</sup>. A short-lived Calvinist academy of theology functioned at Ghent in 1578-1584<sup>11</sup>. However, after a considerable part of Flanders had been united with France, including Douai and its university in 1667, there was only one full-fledged university left in the Spanish (after 1713 Austrian) Netherlands: Louvain.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. for France François de Dainville, *L'Éducation des jésuites (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)*, introd. par Marie-Madeleine Compère (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1978 ; 2<sup>d</sup> ed. 1991). Beside many local monographies there exist some global or comprehensive studies for the Low Countries. The best, corresponding in its conception to the marvelous inventory by Marie-Madeleine Compère & Dominique Julia, *Les collèges français, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, 3 vol. (Paris: INRP/CNRS, 1984-2002), is certainly the recent repertory of the Latin schools of the Southern Netherlands by Eddy Put, Mark D'hoker, Jürgen Vanhoutte & Johan Van der Eycken (eds.), *Latijnse scholen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (16de-18de eeuw), Repertorium en archiefgids* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2007, limited however to the territory of present-day Belgium and exclusive of the regions now pertaining to France and to the Netherlands. For the present-day Netherlands, see the general surveys by Bernard Kruithof, Jan Noordman & Piet de Rooy, *Geschiedenis van opvoeding en onderwijs. Inleiding, bronnen, onderzoek* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1982); P.Th.F.M. Boekholt & E.P. de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen & Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987), with an extensive bibliography; on the Latin schools: J. Spoelder, *Prijsboeken op de Latijnse school: een studie naar het verschijnsel prijsuitreiking en prijsboek op de Latijnse scholen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, ca. 1585-1876* (Amsterdam & Maarssen: APA-Holland Universiteits Pers, 2000). Regional surveys include the excellent works by: E.P. de Booy, *Kweekhoven der wijsheid. Basis- en vervolgonderwijs in de steden van de provincie Utrecht van 1580 tot het begin der 19de eeuw* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1980); René Bastiaanse, Hans Bots & M. Evers (eds.), *'Tot meesten nut ende dienst van de jeught'. Een onderzoek naar zeventien Gelderse Latijnse scholen ca. 1580-1815* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1985); Huib Uil, *De scholen syn planthoven van de gemeente. Het onderwijs in Zeeland en Staats-Vlaanderen, 1578-1801* (Bergschenhoek: Marberg Media, 2015). E.J. Kuiper, *De Hollandse 'schoolordre' van 1625* (Groningen: Wolters, 1958) provides the regulations for the Latin schools in the province of Holland. The important migration of teachers of all levels from the South to the North has been meticulously documented by J.G.C.A. Briels, 'Zuidnederlandse onderwijskrachten in Noordnederland 1570-1630. Een bijdrage tot de kennis van het schoolwezen in de Republiek', in: *Archief voor de geschiedenis van de Katholieke kerk in Nederland* 14 (1972), p. 89-169, 277-298, and in several other learned articles.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Frédéricq, *Note sur l'Université Calviniste de Gand (1578-1584)* (Ghent: Vanderhaeghen, 1878), reprint from the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*; Léon-E. Halkin. 'L'Académie calviniste de Gand (1578-1584)', in: *La Réforme et l'éducation* (Toulouse: Privat, 1974), 95-100.

As several historians have suggested, it was probably in the later part of the fifteenth and most of the sixteenth century that innovations in the domain of learning and scholarship intensively pervaded the educational domain<sup>12</sup>. A major example are the humanist schools, linked with convicts of the Brethren of the Common Life and the spirit of the Modern Devotion, and ancestors of the *modus parisiensis*, which was itself one of the sources of the French *collèges de plein exercice*. The most important humanist schools were those at Zwolle (the very first, reformed after 1377 by Joan Cele), Deventer, and other towns of the greater Netherlands and the Rhineland. Well-known humanists like Erasmus of Rotterdam and other future scholars received at the highest classes of these schools their first education in the arts, before continuing at a full-fledged university<sup>13</sup>. Rising standards of literacy and changing cultural demands quickly transformed the educational landscape by splitting up the old faculties of arts into a first level of grammar schools providing close-to-home, useful education to a number of pupils who in any case would have matriculated at a university far away, and a second level of arts courses for those who aspired at some other occupation requiring a certain level of literacy<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, while the foundation of new universities became a new prerogative of sovereigns and urban magistracies,

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<sup>12</sup> Willem Frijhoff, 'The University and Innovation. Some Reflections on the Early Modern University and its Missions', in Christian Hesse & Klaus Oschema (eds.), *Aufbruch im Mittelalter – Innovationen in der Gesellschaft der Vormoderne* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2010), 159-176; and the status conflict between a university and an 'illustrious school' in Willem Frijhoff, "What is an early modern university? The conflict between Leiden and Amsterdam in 1631", in Helga Robinson-Hammerstein (ed.), *European Universities in the Age of Reformation and Counter Reformation* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 149-168.

<sup>13</sup> Classic surveys are P.N.M. Bot, *Humanisme en onderwijs in Nederland* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1955); R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); H. de Voocht, *History of the foundation and the rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense 1517-1550*, 4 vol. (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1951-1955); and Anthony Grafton & Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge Mass, Cambridge University Press, 1986). See also J. Sperna Weiland & W. Frijhoff (eds.), *Erasmus of Rotterdam, the Man and the Scholar. Proceedings of the Symposium held at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 9-11 November 1986* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), and many items of the huge literature on Erasmus and his immediate colleagues in the Low Countries.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Marie-Madeleine Compère, *Du collège au lycée (1500–1850). Généalogie de l'enseignement secondaire français* (Paris : 1985), and some of the contributions to Dominique Julia, Jacques Revel & Roger Chartier (eds.), *Les universités européennes du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Histoire sociale des populations étudiantes*, 2 vol. (Paris : Éd. de l'EHESS, 1986–1989), in particular Willem Frijhoff, 'Université et marché de l'emploi dans la République des Provinces-Unies', vol. I, 205-243.

escaping henceforth the exclusive authority of popes and emperors, science and scholarship started to emancipate themselves from the domination of these very church and state authorities, and to develop secular paradigms that allowed the flourishing of liberal thought and experimentation, free of specific dogmas and ideologies, that we currently consider to be the essential foundations for path-breaking innovation<sup>15</sup>.

This gave room for the foundation of new universities. The formula adopted was a new vision of the university and of learning, the *Academia* – not to be confused with the learned *academies* of the civil society of southern Europe, in particular Italy. This new Northern European university model was no longer based on the legacy of medieval Christianity – as in a *studium generale* or a *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* which in final analysis was committed to the service of God and his earthly representatives and aimed at constructing international scholarship embedded in the supranational structures of the ecclesiastic community itself – but rather imitated the classical and secular university model that the scholars of Renaissance humanism had expounded and propagated. This model was for the first time formally and concretely put forth at the foundation of Wittenberg University in 1502, the first to proudly call itself *Academia* – the *Academia Vitebergensis* – and as such, one that would soon launch a powerful reform movement of the universities' curriculum, and indeed of all the affairs pertaining to church and theology studies, including the Reformation by Wittenberg professor Martin Luther. It is exactly this formula that Leiden and its Dutch sister institutions embraced at their foundation: they remained *Academiae*. They may have sometimes called themselves *hogeschool* (high school), but they never assimilated themselves to the traditional university ideal that continued to prevail in the Mediterranean countries and in the ancient institutions elsewhere in Europe, and they steadfastly avoided calling themselves *Universitas*. In fact, they tried to shape themselves as broad academic centres

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<sup>15</sup> Willem Frijhoff, "Autonomie, monopole, concurrence: le facteur urbain dans la construction du réseau universitaire dans les Provinces-Unies", in Thierry Amalou & Boris Noguès (eds.), *Les Universités dans la ville, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 25-49 ; id., "L'Université à l'époque moderne, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles. Réflexions sur son histoire et sur la façon de l'écrire", in Pierre Hurtubise (ed.), *Université, Église, Culture. L'Université Catholique à l'époque moderne, de la Réforme à la Révolution, XVIème-XVIIIème siècles. Actes du Troisième Symposium, Universidad Iberoamericana, México, 30 avril-3 mai 2003* (Paris: Fédération Internationale des Universités Catholiques, 2005), 11-36, re-edited in Frédéric Attal, Jean Garrigues, Thierry Kouamé & Jean-Pierre Vittu (eds.), *Les universités en Europe du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours : Espaces, modèles et fonctions. Actes du colloque international d'Orléans, 16 et 17 octobre 2003* (Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 2005), 157-176.

of learning and to make place for new approaches and specialities, such as oriental languages, botany, experimental physics, surgery, political science, or modern history<sup>16</sup>.

First of all, the *Academia Lugduno-Batava* was founded in 1575 at Leiden, enjoying a monopoly position for the provinces of Holland and Zeeland<sup>17</sup>. Next came similar foundations in the other provinces of the Dutch Republic, at Franeker (1585), Groningen (1612/14), Utrecht (1636), Harderwijk (1648), and briefly at Nijmegen (1655-1679)<sup>18</sup>. However, in fact they found themselves trapped in a redoubtable dilemma. On the one hand, they were virtually obliged to adopt the traditional university configuration and their centuries-old faculty and curricular structure, which made them fashionable in the European world of learning and able to attract students who could perform in a less innovating environment. On the other hand, the university sought to serve the emerging Dutch nation with its new needs, embedded in an expanding economy and a demanding culture, and still uncovered by the traditional encyclopaedia of knowledge that in former centuries had been transmitted through the teaching of the nearby universities of Cologne and Louvain. Many young students from the Dutch Republic, not only the members of the nobility as in Central Europe, but mostly burgher sons from the rising or settled middle classes, therefore, added to their formal university training at home a broad range of skills to be learned during their *peregrinatio academica* to towns of learning and culture in Germany, England, France, Switzerland and Italy<sup>19</sup>. They were often accompanied by brothers, cousins,

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<sup>16</sup> Frijhoff, 'Patterns' ; id., "University, academia, Hochschule, college: Early modern perceptions and realities of European institutions of higher education", in Jan Hendryk de Boer, Marian Füssel & Jana Madlen Schütte (eds.), *Zwischen Konflikt und Kooperation: Praktiken der europäischen Gelehrtenskultur (12.-17. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2016), 67-88.

<sup>17</sup> The bibliography until the 1970s of the universities of Leiden and Franeker has been published in Sven Stelling-Michaud (ed.), *Bibliographie internationale de l'histoire des universités*, II (Genève: Droz, 1976).

<sup>18</sup> Y.H. Rogge, "De Academie te Nijmegen", *Oud-Holland*, 18 (1900): 153-180; Hans Bots & Toon Kerkhoff, *De Nijmeegse Pallas. De geschiedenis van de kwartierlijke academie en medische faculteit 1655-1679* (Nijmegen: UMC, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the synthesis by Willem Frijhoff, "Éducation, savoir, compétence. Les transformations du grand tour dans les Provinces-Unies à l'époque moderne", in Rainer Babel & Werner Paravicini (eds.), *Grand Tour. Adeliges Reisen und europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert. Akten der internationalen Kolloquien in der Villa Vigoni 1999 und im Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris 2000* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2005), 609-635; Willem Frijhoff, "La circulation des hommes de savoir: pôles, institutions, flux, volumes", in Hans Bots & Françoise Waquet (eds.), *Commercium litterarium. La communication dans la République des Lettres / Forms of communication in the Republic of the Letters, 1600-1750* (Amsterdam & Maarssen, APA-Holland Univer-

or friends, sent out to learn the skills of international trade. Moreover, in the German *nationes* of university towns like Orleans (France) and Padua (Venice), the prevailing formal regime of confessional tolerance allowed many Dutch students in law, arts, or medicine to practice a universal tolerance of learning that would soon be the academic ideal of the 'Republic of Letters' and the international showpiece of learning in their new Republic.

Reformed theological seminaries were incorporated into the universities. As the toleration towards Protestant religious minorities grew, autonomous seminaries could be established in Amsterdam for the Mennonites, the Remonstrants (Arminians, i.e. the more liberal branch of Calvinism), and the Lutherans. Besides, since the ruling political ideology proclaimed the sovereignty of the city councils, in particular in matters of religion and culture, several cities or regional boards founded a so-called 'illustrious school', i.e. a semi-university with a changing, mostly limited, number of chairs or faculties, ensuring university-level teaching but destitute of graduation rights for which the students had to go to a full university or abroad. Such schools were successively founded at Middelburg, Deventer, Amsterdam (the forerunner of present-day Amsterdam University, chartered in 1877), Dordrecht, Rotterdam, 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc), Breda, Nijmegen, Maastricht and Zutphen. The institution of higher education founded in 1630 at Deventer, and then briefly attended by René Descartes, had been set up as a full university but failed to obtain a provincial charter and remained therefore an 'illustrious school'; the universities of Utrecht and Harderwijk had also started as 'illustrious schools' but obtained later university status. Attempts to found a university with private funds at The Hague (1747) and at Zierikzee (1756) were prevented by the pretention of Leiden University to enjoy a university monopoly for the provinces of Holland and Zeeland – in fact the most prosperous provinces, totalizing about half the population of the Dutch Republic.

The Grand Tour and the facility to take degrees abroad depended very much on the degree of religious toleration. Therefore, Dutch students initially went to the French and some Italian universities where often a German nation or even a Dutch association existed. In France this was the case, until the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes at Orleans (law only), Montpellier (medicine), Paris (arts), Bourges, Poitiers Angers, Caen and later on also in Reims,

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sity Press, 1994), 229-258; Gerrit Verhoeven, *Europe within reach: Netherlandish travellers on the Grand Tour and beyond (1585-1750)* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), and more generally the articles by Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, 'Mobility', in eadem, *A History of the University in Europe*, I, 280-304, and II, 416-448.

and Orange (then a possession of the Dutch stadtholder family of Nassau); in Italy mainly at Padua in the state of Venice (where Protestant students enjoyed a free status), Bologna and Siena. Some Catholic Dutch students went to Rome for taking a degree in theology, but most of them continued to attend nearby Louvain and Cologne, or Dole in Burgundy under Spanish regime, and Pont-à-Mousson in Lorraine. Protestants went to Herborn (a Reformed semi-university in Nassau territory), Basel, Heidelberg and Marburg, and later on to Göttingen. However, from the later 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, more and more students remained at their home university. The University of Duisburg planned in the 1560s but realized only in 1654 in the tolerant duchy of Cleves, near the border of the Dutch Republic, was an exception, attracting growing numbers of students, Protestants as well as Catholics<sup>20</sup>. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the confessional character of all the universities was waning: the inter-confessional tensions in Dutch society were replaced by growing ideological differences within the churches (such as Jansenism in the Catholic Church), the secular character of non-religious culture increased.

In the era of the Revolutions, everything changed. During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a crisis slowly installed itself in the whole Netherlandic university system. In many European countries, absolutist governments took drastic measures to amend the university system. The same happened in the Southern Netherlands, under the Austrian Emperor Joseph II. In the Dutch Republic, Franeker barely survived a severe budget cut and reorganization, the so-called *Plan de ménage* (1774). In France, the revolutionary regime suppressed in 1793 all the universities and replaced them by a more rational system of disciplinary schools for applied science and research institutes. When the French Revolutionaries took over the government in the Low Countries, similar actions were taken: The University of Louvain was suppressed in 1797; after much dispute and several attempts to reform, all Dutch universities and illustrious schools experienced the same fate in 1811.

In 1815, King William I<sup>st</sup> of Orange-Nassau, the new monarch of the greater Netherlands, founded or restored state universities in Leiden, Utrecht, and Groningen in the North, and in 1816-1817 he did the same at Louvain, Ghent, and Liège in the South. Besides, minor teaching institutions without graduation rights (*Athenaea*) were established at Amsterdam, Franeker, Harderwijk and Deventer, the latter more or less short-lived.

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<sup>20</sup> Dieter Geuenich & Irmgard Hantsche (eds.), *Zur Geschichte der Universität Duisburg 1655-1818* [Duisburger Forschungen 53] (Duisburg: Mercator Verlag, 2007).



In 1876 the university system was thoroughly reformed in the Northern Netherlands in the spirit of Humboldt's university model<sup>21</sup>. The reform was pushed by a new impetus for the sciences as the backbone of the Dutch 'Second Golden Age'<sup>22</sup>. In 1890-91 the adoption of organic laws brought a solution to the long-lasting debates on the universities in Belgium<sup>23</sup>. During the past two centuries, many other institutions of higher education have been added: general universities and university colleges as well as technical universities or commercial schools. Roughly, this 19<sup>th</sup>-century system has continued until far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After World War II, an increasing tendency to Americanization of the Dutch University system is notable, especially in recent years<sup>24</sup>. This includes the creation of Anglo-Saxon style, high level University Colleges at Middelburg, Utrecht, Amsterdam, and elsewhere. Before the present diversification of the supply of higher education, the Netherlands counted thirteen full-fledged universities: general universities at Leiden, Amsterdam (2), Utrecht, Groningen, Nijmegen, Rotterdam, Tilburg and Maastricht, technical universities at Delft, Enschedé and Eindhoven, a university of agriculture and life sciences at Wageningen, and an Open University. Belgium counted similar institutions in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2), and its extension at Courtrai, Brussels (2), Ghent, Liège, Antwerp, Mons, Namur, Diepenbeek-Hasselt, and an agricultural university at Gembloux, not to mention the autonomous theological faculties and other religious teaching institutions.

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<sup>21</sup> M. Groen, *Het wetenschappelijk onderwijs in Nederland van 1815 tot 1980. Een onderwijskundig overzicht*, 9 vol. (Eindhoven: Technische Universiteit, 1983-1987); Joseph C.M. Wachelder, *Universiteit tussen vorming en opleiding: de modernisering van de Nederlandse universiteiten in de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992); Goffe Jensma & Harry de Vries, *Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> See in particular the publications by Bastiaan Willink, "Origins of the Second Golden Age of Dutch Science after 1860: Intended and Unintended Consequences of Educational Reform", *Social Studies of Science*, 21 (1991): 503-526; 'On the Structure of a Scientific Golden Age. Social Change, University Investments and Germany's Discontinuous Rise to 19th-Century Scientific Hegemony', *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 19 (1996): 35-49; *De Tweede Gouden Eeuw: Nederland en de Nobelprijzen voor natuurwetenschappen 1870-1940* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1998). Also the older study by Frits Henry Brookman, *The Making of a Science Policy. A Historical Study of the Institutional and Conceptual Background to Dutch Science Policy in a West-European Perspective* (PhD Diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1979).

<sup>23</sup> Pieter Dhondt, *Un double compromis. Enjeux et débats relatifs à l'enseignement universitaire en Belgique au XIXe siècle* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> J.C.C. Rupp, *Van oude en nieuwe universiteiten. De verdringing van Duitse door Amerikaanse invloeden op de wetenschapsbeoefening en het hoger onderwijs in Nederland, 1945-1995* (The Hague: Sdu, 1997).



*Institutionalization of the history of universities in the Low Countries*

In the Low Countries, in the Netherlands as well as in Belgium, the 1980s may be considered as a turning-point in the historiography of the universities. In 1980, in volume 7 of the new 15-volume General History of the Low Countries, counting several thousands of pages, only short articles were devoted to the history of the universities: 13 pages (but only 7 pages of text) for the early modern universities in the North, 5 pages (but only 3 pages of text) for the university of Louvain in the South, the university of Douai, now in France, being altogether neglected<sup>25</sup>. These scanty pages were followed by 75 pages on the history of the sciences in the Low Countries – a history of performances, publications and heroes of science and scholarship, from Gerardus Mercator and Gemma Frisius, to Simon Stevin and Hugo Grotius, Christian Huygens and Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, Herman Boerhaave and Petrus Camper. In the volumes on the modern and contemporary history, the universities of the Low Countries were only briefly tackled in the chapters on the history of education, in some isolated paragraphs, without any general presentation. The disproportion between the social and cultural history of the universities in society on the one hand, and their intellectual performances on the other, is typical for the state of university history in that period: the intellectual approach and the scientific performances of scholars really were what mattered to the historians and other scholars of the humanities. It is reflected in the well-known quotation of two scholars of the Paris École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Roger Chartier and Jacques Revel, on the history of universities: “Traditionally, the history of the European universities has massively been written as one of the Middle Ages, of institutions, and of scholars”<sup>26</sup>. This severe judgment applies, *mutatis mutandis*, also to the late medieval and early modern Low Countries, in spite of their much shorter medieval university trajectory. It holds the more for these regions, as its two major universities throughout history, Louvain and Leiden, have been and still are internationally recognized centers of learning, science and scholarship. Quite evidently this discrepancy has therefore also something to do with the glorious myth of the Dutch Golden Age and its scientific achievements, and, *mutatis mutandis*, with the predominant place of Louvain in the cultural life of the Southern Netherlands.

<sup>25</sup> V.B. Voss, ‘De universiteiten in het Noorden’, in: *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, VII (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1980), 288-300; Jan Roegiers, ‘De universiteit van Leuven’, *ibid.*, 301-305.

<sup>26</sup> R. Chartier & J. Revel, ‘Université et société dans l’Europe moderne: position des problèmes’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 15 (1978): 353-374.

Yet, a new wind was already blowing. In the late 1960s and the 70s, some Anglo-Saxon historians had actively advocated a fundamental shift in the focus of university history. In the footsteps of Lawrence Stone, the godfather of the new prosopography, Richard Kagan, Fritz Ringer, Jürgen Herbst, and their colleagues, whose seminal studies remain important examples, French historians in the 1970s also started a radical innovation of what they considered the fossilized research paradigm of university history. In their opinion, historians of the university had primarily to focus on more recent periods, on the functions of higher education, on the role of the university in society, and including on the students themselves who were often, and still are many times, the neglected *raison d'être* of all forms of education. They found a new inspiration in the cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, whose work on the cultural reproduction by the system of higher education added just the social, political and intellectually challenging dimension that lacked in traditional university history. Quite rightly, the author of the 1980 article on the Dutch universities asked therefore for a new approach; he finished his paper by a call for a broad revision of university history seen from the perspective of the new social history. Since then the social history of the universities, working with sociological models and methods, has been enriched by an anthropological twist that has redirected the research towards a cultural history of the university, focusing on patterns of sociability, symbolic forms of speech and behavior, emblematic rituals, cultural practices and transfers (a theme aptly put on the agenda by Michael Werner), professionalization, memorial culture, biography and prosopography, self-image, and identity formation by groups and institutions. This whole new bundle of questions, characteristic for the new humanities with their sociological, anthropological and cultural orientation, has become the dominant image of the new style university history. Much more than before, it turns towards the contemporary period, although the expanding student numbers make it ever more difficult to master by the established sociological methods, let alone by prosopography. For the Low Countries, many of those themes covering the history of the Dutch universities after the 1876 reform can be retrieved in the annual volumes of papers in the collection *Universiteit en samenleving* (University and Society) published since 2006 by the university historians L.J. (Leen) Dorsman (Utrecht) and P.J. (Péjé) Knegtmans (University of Amsterdam).

In 1981, the author of this article, then still working at the EHESS in Paris, published his *Annales*-inspired PhD (Tilburg University) on the social history of the early modern Dutch university system, largely based on the quantitative processing of the graduation registers of all early modern Dutch universities,

enriched with the in-depth study of a single city, but with a focus on the social roles and meanings of higher education, not on science or scholarship itself<sup>27</sup>. Elaborating on the research methods exposed in the *Cahier des Annales* that I published six years earlier in collaboration with Dominique Julia on the social dimension of the recruitment of some French grammar schools, this work soon has set a standard for a renewal of the research habitus and practices in university history in the Netherlands, and the introduction of a social history perspective<sup>28</sup>. The reconstruction of individual curricula and family clusters, genealogy and prosopography, statistical elaborations, graphic presentation, and interpretations in the spirit of the new *histoire sérielle* (Pierre Chaunu) were the features of this upcoming sociocultural approach. However, the quantitative data still had to be processed manually, or with the simple machines of the time. Digital equipment was not really available for work in cultural history in those starting years, and the universities themselves, which would have been able to facilitate this, were – and quite often still are – barely interested in non-celebratory history. But ever since some important studies have innovated our vision of single Dutch universities, in particular Leiden<sup>29</sup>, Utrecht<sup>30</sup>, Franeker<sup>31</sup>, and Groningen<sup>32</sup>, and even of the whole provinces of

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<sup>27</sup> Willem Frijhoff, *La Société néerlandaise et ses gradués, 1575-1814. Une recherche sérielle sur le statut des intellectuels à partir des registres universitaires* (Amsterdam & Maarssen: APA-Holland University Press, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> Willem Frijhoff & Dominique Julia, *École et société dans la France d'Ancien Régime. Quatre exemples: Auch, Avallon, Condom et Gisors* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1975) 120 p., ill. [Cahiers des Annales, 35].

<sup>29</sup> Martine Zoeteman-van Pelt, *De studentenpopulatie van de Leidse universiteit 1575-1812. 'Een volk op zijn Siams gekleet eenige mylen van Den Haag woonende'* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Hervé Jamin, *Kennis als opdracht: de Universiteit Utrecht 1636-2001* (Utrecht: Matrijs, 2001); in replacement of the older G.W. Kernkamp, et al., *De Utrechtse Universiteit 1636-1936*, 2 vol. (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1936), and H.W. von der Dunk, et al., *Tussen ivoren toren en grootbedrijf: de Utrechtsche Universiteit 1936-1986* (Maarssen: Gary Schwartz, 1986). A bibliographical database on the history of Utrecht University is available at: <http://bibe.library.uu.nl>.

<sup>31</sup> G.Th. Jensma, et al., *Universiteit te Franeker 1585-1811. Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Friese Hogeschool* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1985); F. Postma & J. van Sluis, *Auditorium Academiae Franekerensis* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Pieter A.J. Caljé, *Groningse Studenten en hun Academie. De inbedding van de universiteit in de samenleving in de negentiende eeuw* (PhD Diss Groningen, 2006), published as: *Student, universiteit en samenleving. De Groningse universiteit in de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009); A.H. Huussen Jr (red.), *Onderwijs en onderzoek aan de academie van Groningen in de 17<sup>e</sup> en 18<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003); Kaas van Berkel, *Universiteit van het Noorden. Vier eeuwen academisch leven in Groningen. 1: De oude universiteit 1614-1876* (Hilversum, Verloren, 2014). Early histories written by authors with a literary touch include: W.J.A. Jonckbloet,

North Brabant<sup>33</sup> and Friesland<sup>34</sup>. The long range of seminal studies of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens on students of the Southern Netherlands, performed in the same years, have had a similar innovating effect on the research agenda for Belgium. Due to her efforts for the collective *Fasti* project she has initiated, the first steps were made towards the constitution of a digital database of the actors and *suppositi* of the former universities, covering the whole of Europe, and using matriculation and graduation registers as well as disputations, orations, manuscripts of courses, and other written texts<sup>35</sup>. The Dutch research authority NWO refused to finance such a broad, long-term project, but in 1999 official support was obtained for some years in Flanders. In the digital era, the research field of student attendance and graduation rolls of the Netherlands has been taken up by scholars of Utrecht University, under the guidance of Leen Dorsman, and by other institutions, adding their expertise to the now international working group now united under the name *Heloïse, European Workshop on Historical Academic Databases* (<http://heloise.hypotheses.org>). Started in France with several members of the former research community *Fasti*, it may be considered as its direct offspring.

The works cited above inaugurated the take-off of the new university history in the Low Countries, together with the simultaneous renewal of the interest in the social dimension of the evolution of the sciences and the professionalization of the scientists themselves, promoted by historians such as Bastiaan Willink and Klaas van Berkel<sup>36</sup>. In that starting period, the *Annales*

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*Gedenkboek der Hoogeschool te Groningen* (Groningen: Wolters, 1864); Johan Huizinga, et al, *Academia Groningana 1614-1914* (Groningen: Noordhoff, 1914).

<sup>33</sup> H. Bots, I. Matthey & M. Meyer, *Noordbrabantse studenten 1550-1750* (Tilburg: Stichting Zuidelijk Historisch Contact, 1979).

<sup>34</sup> Samme Zijlstra, *Het geleerde Friesland - een mythe? Universiteit en maatschappij in Friesland en Stad en Lande ca. 1380-1650* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> Françoise Hiraux & Françoise Minguet, *Collection de cours manuscrits de l'Université de Louvain 1425-1797. Catalogue analytique* (Louvain-la-Neuve : Academia-Bruylant, 2003). Let me just quote the names of some authors having worked on the *alba studiosorum* and *promotorum* or on the registers of the student societies in the Netherlands (O. Schutte) or elsewhere: Hilde De Ridder-Symoens and C. Ridderikhoff (Orléans), J. den Tex (Padua), J.J. Poelhekke (Padua), Herman de Vries van Heekelingen (Genève), and the author of this article (Dole, Bourges, Angers, Caen), on the *acta* of the academic courts (Marc Wingens), or on stipends for students (Guillaume Posthumus Meyjes, Conrad Gietman).

<sup>36</sup> For Bastiaan Willink, see above. Dirk Jan Struik, *Land of Stevin and Huygens: A sketch of science and technology in the Dutch Republic during the Golden century* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1981); K. van Berkel (ed.), *In het voetspoor van Stevin* (Meppel: Boom, 1984); Willem Otterspeer (ed.), *Een universiteit herleeft. Wetenschapsbeoefening aan de Leidse universiteit vanaf de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Leiden: Brill, 1984); . G.A. van Gemert, J. Schuller tot

school (in reality much more a movement than a school) and the research groups inspired by it in France and elsewhere enjoyed still an immense prestige among the historians of the Low Countries, in spite of the slow but inexorable decline of the French language as an international language of scholarship and its replacement in the Dutch-speaking areas by English. But in the meantime English authors, such as John Fletcher, Lawrence Brockliss and Peter Denley had chosen the same way for a renewal of university history. Supplementary support came from the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities (CRE). The permanent committee of the CRE endorsed in 1982 the plan of a new History of the European Universities, adding explicitly 'within Society', stressing therefore the social and cultural component of teaching, learning, science and scholarship. A working group was formed that under the authority of Walter Rüegg prepared first an expurgated *Historical Compendium of European Universities* (and their extension overseas) purified from the rampant university mythology and published in 1984 by Lubor Jílek, then four volumes with thematic chapters on the history of the European universities, the first two being prepared under the direction of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens<sup>37</sup>. Simultaneously the historians concerned founded 1982 the annual review *History of Universities* (Oxford University Press), and started, under the impulse of John Fletcher to set up with a range national correspondents an annual, cumulative and exhaustive bibliography of university history that ever since has been incorporated into the annual review.

### *Associations and the new university history*

Early in 1983, inspired by these international developments, five Dutch university historians from very different boards took the initiative to found a Dutch Working Group for University History: Robert Feenstra (1920-2013), an internationally renowned and much honored historian of law on a pres-

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Peursum-Meijer, & A.J. Vanderjagt (eds.), *Om niet aan onwetendheid en barbarij te bezwijken. Groningse geleerden 1614-1989*, (Hilversum & Amsterdam: Verloren, 1989); J.C.H. Blom et al., *Een brandpunt van geleerdheid in de hoofdstad* (Hilversum & Amsterdam: Verloren, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> *A History of the University in Europe* (4 vol.; Cambridge University Press, 1992-2011); the two first volumes have been translated into German, Spanish and Portuguese. Their editor was Hilde De Ridder-Symoens, later a president of the Commission internationale d'histoire des universités (associated with the Comité international des sciences historiques/International Committee for Historical Sciences).

tigious chair at Leiden University, part of whose research had focused on student attendance at law faculties in the Netherlands and abroad; Hans Bots, professor of intellectual history at Nijmegen, editor of learned correspondences from the Dutch Golden Age and of a series of monographs and collected volumes on the history of scholarship in the arts humanities; Antonie M. Luyendijk-Elshout (1921-2012), also at Leiden, professor of the history of medicine, in particular of medical education and international relations; Corry Ridderikhoff, editor of text editions at the Grotius Institute in The Hague, in particular involved in the publication of the *Libri Procuratorum* of the German Student Nation at Orleans; and myself (then freshly appointed at Rotterdam), as a representative of the new socio-cultural history of the university. Significantly, four of the five had extensively worked on the theme of student migration, and were accustomed to look over the national borders, and none of them was the author of a monograph on a particular university. From the start, the new trend was towards the social dimension of university history and a global approach of the whole country, or the entire system of higher education. The foundation of the Working Group quite clearly answered to a broadly felt need for cooperation, because in a short time some 125 members applied<sup>38</sup>. However, it long remained a truly Dutch society, incidentally joined by Flemish members, such as Hilde De Ridder-Symoens (Ghent), by far the most important university historian of those years in Belgium, specialized in the social and cultural history of the students of the early modern Southern Low Countries<sup>39</sup>, and Jan Roegiers (1944-2013), the indefatigable archivist, librarian and historian of Leuven University, a true pivot of the new research field, and from 1993 to 2009 chair of the editorial board of *LIAS: Journal of Early Modern Intellectual Culture and its Sources*, in which university history has taken a diversified but important part<sup>40</sup>.

In an unguarded moment, the Dutch Working Group decided to call itself *Batavia Academica*. Since the ancient, humanist notion of 'Batavia' covers

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<sup>38</sup> For reviews with more details on the university historiography of the Low Countries, see Willem Frijhoff, "Vijfentwintig jaar Werkgroep Universiteitsgeschiedenis (1983-2007)", in: *Nieuwsbrief Universiteitsgeschiedenis / Lettre d'information sur l'histoire des universités*, 13: 2 (2007 [published 2008]): 57-76; id., "Honderd jaar universiteitsgeschiedenis in Nederland", in: *Studium. Tijdschrift voor Wetenschaps- en Univeriteitsgeschiedenis / Revue d'Histoire des Sciences et des Universités*, 6:3-4 (2013): 197-206.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Koen Goudriaan, Jaap van Moolenbroek, & Ad Tervoort (eds.), *Education and learning in the Netherlands, 1400-1600. Essays in honour of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. P. Delsaert, H. Schwall, D. Vanyacker, & J.-P. Delville (eds.) *The Quintessence of Lives: Intellectual Biographies in the Low Countries, presented to Jan Roegiers*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), including Jeroen Nilis, 'Bibliography of Jan Roegiers', xxi-xxxvii.



only the northern part of the northern Netherlands, this hindered the formation of a Low Countries-wide society, and the more so as French, the language of half of Belgium, was rapidly disappearing from the field of scholarship as an international working language. Other critics came from the Frisians in Friesland (the northernmost region of the northern Netherlands), who have always stuck to the concept of the Frisian nation as historically distinct from Batavia, i.e. the Netherlands as such, and from the historians of the contemporary period, who found this humanistic concept too narrow for a university history covering the whole age. Yet, the Latin name has been conserved. A third group of critics emphasized the neglect of the contemporary history of the universities, scattered into a myriad of small themes, often linked to broad social problems or politics, and research items bound to single institutions. Yet, the society has proven its utility for the constitution of a common working field on university history, it has published until 1995 a small *Bulletin*, and organized some annual meetings and conferences. Nevertheless, the new field of research added to the traditional focus on the history of university scholarship and the undisputed heroes of science, proved too diverse to permit the constitution in the long run of a healthy society of university history alone, the more as the universities themselves, and the National Organization for Scientific Research (ZWO, later NWO) were not really ready to invest in what they considered at best as a marginal, unpromising research field, far from the cutting edge of modern science, and at worst as an insignificant hobby.

In 1993, ten years after its foundation, the Dutch Working Group allied itself with its Flemish and Walloon counterpart *Studium Generale*, and in 2008 all the working groups concerned were united in a new alliance with the association 'Gewina' (an abbreviation of the Dutch names for medicine, mathematics and physics) of the historians of science and scholarship, since long a well-established field of research. The cooperation of all scholars from the three regions (the Northern Netherlands, Flanders and Wallonia) and the two main research fields (university history and history of science) has been achieved by the foundation of the *Belgian-Dutch Society for the History of the Sciences and the Universities / Société Belgo-néerlandaise pour l'histoire des sciences et des universités*, better known under the ancient name Gewina. The *Bulletin* of Dutch Batavia Academica, transformed 1995 into the *Nieuwsbrief Universiteitsgeschiedenis* covering the whole territory of the Low Countries, is published since 2008 under the name *Studium* (also on-line) encompassing also the history of science and scholarship. In fact, for the moment the history of science still clearly dominates the research landscape of the university history.



Things are slowly changing, however, since the 2000s: most Dutch universities have by now a ‘university historian’, employed at least part-time, and a committee charged with the publication of a history of this particular institution and with the surveillance of the agenda of festivities at the occasion of university or faculty centenaries. Important recent histories, funded by single universities, but much more and better than the memorial histories of former decades, are those of Willem Otterspeer on Leiden<sup>41</sup>, and Peter Jan Knegtman on the University of Amsterdam<sup>42</sup>. But they include also the histories of the new universities, by Arie van Deursen on the Free University of Amsterdam<sup>43</sup> (but his critical, indeed negative assessment of recent evolution of this confessional foundation towards a more secular institution failed to please the university board that had commanded this work!), Pieter Caljé and Klaas van Berkel on Groningen<sup>44</sup>, Jan Brabers and Otto Schreuder on the Catholic University of Nijmegen (now Radboud University)<sup>45</sup>, Matthijs Dicke,

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<sup>41</sup> Willem Otterspeer (ed.), *Een universiteit herleeft. Wetenschapsbeoefening aan de Leidse universiteit vanaf de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Leiden: Brill, 1984); *De wiek-slag van hun geest. De Leidse universiteit in de negentiende eeuw*. (Proefschrift Leiden 1992); Groepsportret met Dame: I. Het bolwerk van de vrijheid. De Leidse universiteit, 1575-1672; II. De vesting van de macht, 1673-1775; III. De werken van de wetenschap 1776-1876 (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2000-2005); the fourth and last volume has been announced for 2017. This general history with a strong literary touch is complementary to the collection of learned essays by Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer & G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes (eds.), *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 1975).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Jan Knegtman, *Geschiedenis van de Universiteit van Amsterdam / A History of the University of Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2016); *Geschiedenis van het Amsterdamse studentenleven / A History of Student Life in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2017); *From Illustrious School to University of Amsterdam. An Illustrated History* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2007); *Professoren van de stad. Het Athenaeum Illustre en de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1632-1960* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2007); P.J. Knegtman, et al., *Athenaeum Illustre. Elf studies over de Amsterdamse Doorluchtige School 1632-1877* (Amsterdam: AUP, 1997). Also: Dirk van Miert, *Humanism in an Age of Science: The Amsterdam Athenaeum in the Golden Age* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009). These works replace the earlier synthesis by H. Brugmans, et al., *Gedenkboek van het Athenaeum en de Universiteit van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Stadsdrukkerij, 1932).

<sup>43</sup> A.Th. van Deursen, *Een hoeksteen in het verzuild bestel. De Vrije Universiteit 1880-2005* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 2005).

<sup>44</sup> P.A.J. Caljé, *Groningse studenten en hun academie. De inbedding van de universiteit in de samenleving* (PhD. Diss., Maastricht, 2006); Klaas van Berkel, *Universiteit van het Noorden: Vier eeuwen academisch leven in Groningen, deel 1: De oude universiteit 1614-1876* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014); K. van Berkel, *Academische illusies. De Groningse universiteit in een tijd van crisis, bezetting en herstel, 1930-1950* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Jan Brabers & Otto Schreuder, *Proeven van eigen cultuur. Vijfenzeventig jaar Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1923-1998*, 2 vol. (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 1998).

Paul van de Laar and Joop Visser on the Erasmus University at Rotterdam<sup>46</sup>, and Annemieke Klijn quite recently on the new university at Maastricht<sup>47</sup>. Klaas van Berkel wrote the history of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences, closely related to that of the Dutch universities<sup>48</sup>. In Belgium, the studies on Louvain University and the illustrated memorial volumes on that institution stand quite clearly out<sup>49</sup>. They include now those on the university's extension at Courtrai (1965)<sup>50</sup>. But new histories exist also, such as the history of Ghent University<sup>51</sup>, not to forget the work of Marie-Thérèse Isaac and others on the different forms of higher education at Mons (Hainaut) in the past centuries. The University of Liège, though founded in 1817 together with that of Ghent, remains a different story, largely unrelated to the university history of the other parts of the Low Countries<sup>52</sup>.

In all, the research on university history in the Low Countries has now reached an international level, although it remains largely enclosed in single institutions. The initiative of drafting a general history of higher and university education in the Netherlands, promoted in the years 2001-2003 by the working group *Batavia Academica* and meant to address the general, cultivated, but non-specialist public has come to nothing. Although the Northern Netherlands are now a unitary nation-state, they still suffer from the confederal reflex inherited from the time of the Dutch Republic. Global images on the national evolution often are overloaded, if not overruled by 'Hollan-

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<sup>46</sup> Matthijs Dicke, Paul van de Laar & Joop Visser, *Ambitie en identiteit. Van Nederlandsche Handels-Hoogeschool tot Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 1913-2013* (Rotterdam: Stad & Bedrijf, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Annemieke Klijn, *The Maastricht Experiment* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> K. van Berkel, *De stem van de wetenschap. Geschiedenis van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 2 vol. (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 2008-2011).

<sup>49</sup> Emiel Lamberts & Jan Roegiers (eds.), *Leuven University, 1425-1985* (Louvain, University Press, 1990).

<sup>50</sup> Jo Tollebeek & Liesbet Nys, *De stad op de berg. Een geschiedenis van de Leuvense universiteit 1968-2005* (Louvain: Leuven University Pres, 2008); also in English version: *The City on the Hill, A History of Leuven University 1968-2005* (ib., 2008); Saartje vanden Borre, *Toga's voor 't Hoge. Geschiedenis van de Leuvense universiteit in Kortrijk* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2015). For the Francophone university of Louvain, the collection *Publications des archives de l'Université catholique de Louvain* (published by Academia-Bruylant) counts already more than 30 titles.

<sup>51</sup> [Elienne Langendries & Anne-Marie Simon-Van der Meersch], *175 jaar Universiteit Gent* (Ghent: Stichting Mens & Cultuur, 1992); Gita Deneckere, *Uit de ivooren toren: 200 jaar Universiteit Gent / From the Ivory Tower. Ghwent Unibersity since 1817* (Ghent : Academia Press, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Philippe Raxhon, en collab. avec Veronica Granata, *Université de Liège (1817-2017): Mémoire et prospective* (Liège : Presses universitaires de Liège, 2017).

docentrism' (i.e., an excessive accent on what happened in the core province of Holland and its universities at Leiden and Amsterdam, in reality only two of twelve provinces, though in many aspects leading ever since the 'Golden Age'), or they present a narrative too general to satisfy a social historian. Besides, regional, provincial or local approaches still largely determine the research agenda. A similar problem plays in Belgium, where university history largely follows the prevalent linguistic divide. In fact, Flanders-Brabant and Wallonia (Liege-Hainault) are quite separate entities, not to speak of the linguistic evolution of Brussels. Therefore, a general history of the universities in the Low Countries, encompassing the whole historical territory of the Benelux (i.e. including the University of Douai and the regions incorporated into France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) still is an urgent desideratum.