

FROM THE STUDY OF NICOLAES WITSEN (1641-1717).

HIS LIFE WITH BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS.

MARION H. PETERS

Published in 1994 in: *Lias*. Sources and documents relating to the early modern history of ideas.

21 / 1, pp.1-49

"The government keeps heaping so much work on me", Nicolaes Witsen once complained to his friend Gijsbert Cuper, "that I can hardly spare an hour to think of our studies, and this is becoming so bothersome, that I wished, to speak with Thomas a Kempis, that I could just sit down somewhere with a book, and spend the rest of my time in peace and quiet."

This complaint can surely be said to be typical of Witsen's life. Jostled to and fro between his numerous official duties and his love of scholarship, he finally became the victim of frustration and depression. There was only little time for reading and contemplation, as the list of his many public offices goes to show. He was thirteen times burgomaster of Amsterdam, treasurer, counsellor and deputy of the States General, special delegate of the States General for England, board member of the East Indian Company, curator of the Hortus Botanicus, commissioner of the pilotage and general collector of the lighthouse and beacon taxes north of the Meuse, twice deputy in action in the war against France, Lord of the Manors Amstelveen, Urk, and Emmeloord, commissioner of the Amsterdam waters and canals - and this is only a selection of the innumerable duties Witsen was burdened with.

That his activities did not stop here is also shown by his tireless efforts on behalf of the liberation of the Christian slaves in Algiers, as well as by his unselfish help to Huguenot refugees. For this reason, he was honoured by the Amsterdam "town historian" Gregorio Leti with the title "Consolateur des François Affligez". In his letters to the tsar the Russian delegate Andrej Matwejew

(1)

even referred to him as their single friend, since it was only Witsen who was always prepared to act in their interest.

And in addition to all these demanding activities, Witsen was also a passionate amateur of sciences. In order to quench his thirst for knowledge, he conducted an impressive correspondence with people and authorities both at home and abroad. The facts he learnt were sometimes so remarkable, that he sent them to the Royal Society: that famous meeting-place for scholars and amateurs in London of which he had become a Fellow in 1688. His contributions were eagerly accepted; sometimes even so eagerly, that they were "lost" while being passed from hand to hand by the members, - and missed thus the opportunity to be published in their periodical *Philosophical*

Transactions.

Nicolaes Witsen was a maecenas and a patron to all those who furthered the causes of learning and Christian faith. As one preacher wrote after his death, his house was a "Meeting-place for widely-travelled, learned, and inquisitive Compatriots and Foreigners: which made his own Person a general Oracle in The Netherlands". His motto was "Labor omnia vincit" (work conquers everything), and there was nobody, as the astonished story went, who had ever seen him do nothing.

Finally, this man was the writer of two books, *Aeloude en hedendaegsche Scheepsbouw en Bestier* ("Ancient and Modern Shipbuilding and Government", 1671) and *Noord- en Oost Tartarije* ("North and East Tartary", 1692). The latter meant as a textual guide to the great map of that area he had published seven years before, - an area with the size of present-day Siberia, Mongolia, China and Persia taken together. Throughout his life he kept working at perfecting these works, but as should be clear by now, his many other duties prevented him from publishing definitive editions in his lifetime.

* * *

A look round his study seems the most appropriate way to gain insight into this inquisitive, many-sided regent. This, after all, was the place that was closest to his heart. Here he had his library of more than two-thousand books, manuscripts, engravings and maps; his marvellous collection of artificialia, among which there were coins, antique sculptures, paintings, ethnographic artefacts, weapons and mathematical instruments; and his cabinets with naturalia - dried plants, minerals, fossils, shells, corals and other marine vegetation. Here he also had his hundreds of bottles of East and West Indian animalia "in embalming spirits" (among which there were a young bear, a tiny Surinam child, and the foetus of a hippopotamus, as well as five "whale lice", fish, birds and snakes in all shapes and sizes) - and all those other specimens from the animal and vegetable kingdom, which he kept in boxes, cases and caskets, stuffed, pinned up or dried, standing up, lying down or hanging from the walls.

(3)

The study was also the room in which Nicolaes Witsen preferred to welcome his visitors. Struck by this impressive manifestation of Nature, the visitor could not help being moved to awe of its Maker. Witsen himself channelled this awe into activities by making a careful study of everything under the sun and the moon. "Soli Deo Gloria" he therefore concludes each volume of *Noord- en Oost Tartarije* in heavy type: honour only to God.

Although the same thought finds expression both in the books Witsen collected and in the use and display of his other collections, this article will deal mainly with his library. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the items from Witsen's other collections were likewise considered "readable" information, and that the concept of a "book" was therefore flexible. In this article, "book" will cover all that in which textual information is predominant, and which could, so to speak, be contained in a binding. It should also be pointed out that a book, just as well as an object, could be labelled a "curiosity", irrespective of its relative rarity, peculiarity or value.

Libraries are sometimes compared with mirrors: they reflect their owners' culture, mentality, and personality. However, one should ask oneself: which reflection? A mirror image depends on the

angle from which it is approached, and not just on the "quality" of the mirror. Hence every new perspective yields a different image. To capture such a kaleidoscope of points of view in one coherent whole is impossible. One has to take up a position: choices are inevitable.

In addition, the composition of this article also imposes certain limitations. In investigating Nicolaes Witsen's library one is confronted with so many different aspects of the case, that it becomes necessary to provide first of all an introductory, schematic overview of the collection, before dealing with its more specific aspects. For more detailed information, the reader is therefore referred to the footnotes [here on internet: endnotes].

This study of Witsen's library is part of a Ph.D. research project on the place of Witsen's amateur studies within the whole of his activities; the organisation involved in the book and map of Noord-en Oost Tartarije occupies a central place in this research.

I. HISTORY

The Heirs

Nicolaes Witsen died on 6 August 1717, seventy-six years old. According to the inventory, he not only left over a million guilders worth of securities, houses, land, and the like, but also a "beautiful library, and a precious cabinet filled with rarities, besides several other beautiful objects". And then there was his lonely widow, since all their six children had died at very early ages.

Many years later, the *Amsterdamse Courant* of 18 March 1747 published the following advertisement:

On the Monday of 18 March and on subsequent Days, the sale will take place in Amsterdam in the house of Salomon Schouten, Bookseller, in the Kalverstraet, of an excellent Library in many Faculties and Languages, among which there are many considerable, well-preserved Works. Left by the Hon. Mr. Nicolaes Witsen, in his Nob. Lifetime Alderman and Counselor of Amsterdam. The Catalogue is available from the Booksellers in the surrounding Towns, and from S. and Petrus Schouten. The Books are on display today. (Only notice)

This was the announcement of the auction of the books of Witsen's nephew Nikolaas Lambertz, who was the son of his second brother and named after him. Nikolaas Lambertz had died on 6 August 1746, at the age of sixty-four. According to a notarial act of 4 October 1725 this nephew,

(6)

henceforth to be called Nikolaas II so as to distinguish him from his uncle, had inherited his uncle's library. In this act his aunt, Witsen's widow Catharina Hochepped, is forced by a decision of the Supreme Court to part with all the goods her late husband had brought into their marriage. It shows that Nikolaas II had been left "the entire library with all the Manuscripts", with the exception of "several Dutch books (...) to be specified later". Although the widow was by then totally blind, she was allowed to keep those books during her lifetime. After her death the books had to be "restored" to Nikolaas II, or to his heirs.

It is a pity that we cannot identify these books. However, a painted portrait of her from the same

period by Nicolaas Verkolje (1673-1746) makes it clear that they must have been important to her. It shows her leaning against a table covered with tomes, dressed in a black robe and widow's veil, and glancing at the beholder in a curious, almost inward-looking way. What mainly catches the eye, however, is the little book she keeps open with her middle finger. Did she wish to signify with this that books - i.e. religious works - were the only source of consolation left to her?

Nikolaas Lambertz Witsen

The fact that Nikolaas II inherited his uncle's collection of books and manuscripts does not entail that he was never to buy any books himself any more. In other words: how do we assess, after an interval of thirty years, the possible value of the auction catalogue for research into Nicolaes Witsen's library? For which books belonged to Nikolaes I, and which books were added by Nicolaes II?

There is obviously no problem as far as the books published after 1717 (the year of Witsen's death) are concerned. There happen to be relatively few of these: 51 lots (lots corresponding with titles, here), on a total amount of 2031 lots, over a period of nearly thirty years. Of the other books, it is more difficult to determine who brought in which book. It is true that there is a conspicuously high number of books in different editions, as well as of lots containing duplicates (145). What to think, for instance, of the double occurrence of the *Europische Mercurius* (a periodical) or of the travel accounts in 28 volumes of the Leiden publisher and bookseller Pieter van der Aa? And what of six times Quinault's popular novel *Amadis van Gaule*?

In order to find out what the nephew's contribution to the book collection may have consisted of, he should be given some closer attention.

Nikolaas Lambertz seems to have had a close relationship with his uncle. It is to him that the only surviving private note by Witsen's hand is addressed. At the death of Nikolaas II's father in 1697, Witsen had partly taken over responsibility for his brother's children. Nikolaas Lambertz, therefore, owed it to his influential uncle that he was given the lucrative but little strenuous office of postmaster. His degree in law he likewise owed to him, as is proven by a note, dated 19 April 1702, to Witsen's friend, the Leiden professor Anthonius Matthaëus:

Nicolaes Witsen, my brother's son, I send to Leiden to obtain his degree in law. I request that he be aided therein. He is already employed here and only needs the title for his honour. I hope You will find him suitable.

(8)

Plate: Portrait of Nicolaes Witsen, aged 47. Engraving from a painting by Michiel van Musscher 1688. (Photo Ferry André de la Porte)

(9)

At home, Nikolaas II had a large portrait of his gold uncle (Plate).

We know little about Nikolaas Lambertz's own merits. There is no doubt that his seat in the government of Amsterdam as alderman and counsellor will also have been obtained through the

agency of his relatives.

When he was twenty-seven years old, Witsen promised him by a notarial act on 5 May 1709 to leave him his library and manuscripts. That it was he who was favoured and not, for instance, his elder brother Lammert must have been connected with the fact that he was named after his uncle. With prospects like these it seems plausible that Nikolaas Lambertz did not develop a policy of fervent bookbuying. Nor did he do this after his uncle's death, if we can go on the 51 books published after 1717 in a period of 30 years. That his interest was actually quite shallow is also shown by the history of the chest containing rare books, maps, and manuscripts: on obtaining it, Nikolaas the nephew would have preferred to capitalize on it immediately. It was not until the very last moment that he went back on his decision, but the chest would never leave the auctioneering firm again.

(10)

Maybe his bad health was also to blame. When he was no more than forty years old, he felt so ill that he sent for a notary to draw up a will, and after that his condition only got worse. This is also why we know that the auction catalogue comprises Nicolaes Witsen's entire collection of printed books and not just a part of it. For almost immediately after Nikolaas Lambertz the nephew came into possession of the books from his aunt's house, he had it set down in his will, dangerously ill as he still was,

that his books, with the exception of the manuscripts and such books as the guardians see fit to keep for his children, will have to be sold, and that all the manuscripts are and will remain the possession of his eldest son Nikolaas Witsen, to whom he hereby bequeaths all these.

It is therefore surprising that both the announcement of the auction and the title page of the auction catalogue make no mention at all of the fact that this is actually the collection of the burgomaster Nicolaes Witsen, whereas this certainly would have been favourable to the sale. All the more so, since fourteen years later this was in fact stated in the auction catalogue of the *Verzameling van Oude en zeer Seldsame Manuscripten en Kaarten* ("Collection of Old and very Rare Manuscripts and Maps"). But the heirs apparently thought differently of it... Before this topic can be pursued, we first have to examine the auction catalogue itself.

(11)

The auction catalogue

The purpose of an auction catalogue has always been to make as much profit as possible through a system, that was both easy to use for the buyer and at the same time gave the least work to its compiler. This system involved the arrangement on format, usually folio, quarto, octavo and duodecimo, and classification according to subject or field of knowledge. And, if convenient, according to language. In the case of languages, a typographical differentiation was made by means of characteristic typefaces. The number of categories usually depended on the amount of books on offer.

In the 72 page catalogue of the Bibliotheca Witseniana, the books are classified according to format and number in the following categories:

Table 1.

Format	2°	4°	8°	12°	Total
Libri Theologici	69	92	79	12	252
Dutch Theological Books	35	84	74	-	193
Libri Juridici	50	42	67	8	167
Dutch Legal Books	20	58	13	-	91
Libri Historici	93	72	38	11	214
Dutch Historical Books	101	76	65	-	242
Libri Medici, Philosophici & Alii	38	56	68	11	173
Medical and Philosophical Books	-	29	-	-	29
Historiae Naturalis Scriptores	19	13	-	-	32
Libri Miscellanei	34	37	112	46	229
Livres François	-	31	192	48	271
Libri Numismatici & Antiquarii	-	29	-	-	29
(Dutch) Poetical Books (a.o.)	-	32	33	-	65
Dutch Books	-	-	-	44	44
Total	459	651	741	180	2031

On the final page, five bookcases are offered in addition, "two of which of extra size". Overall, the catalogue contained 2031 lots.

It turns out, however, that in many cases these lots consist of several books, among which there frequently occur two or more copies of the same book (duplicates). When these lots are divided into separate books, it turns out that 2307 books were auctioned. This is a difference of no fewer than

(12)

276 books. The classification of categories also seems to have been inspired by practical considerations. Both in language and subject, we find books in categories that we would, strictly speaking, expect somewhere else. Although they are grouped together, the heading only partly applies. Religious and historical books appear under "Libri Miscellanei" and "Livres François" as well as under "Nederduitsche Boeken" (Dutch books); a group of English books is found among the category of French books. Conversely, French and Dutch books are scattered over other categories. Travel accounts are certainly not only covered by "Libri Historici", since a great many of these can be found under "Livres François". So at least in the case of this auction catalogue one has to avoid jumping to conclusions with regard to the number and nature of the books on the basis of the number of lots and their categorization.

A new categorization

In order to reach a well-founded conclusion about the book collection, every book has been newly categorized for the sake of this research project. Such a large-scale analysis of a private library has not been attempted before in the Netherlands. In France, however, developments have gone a great deal further. There, micro and macro analysts have been applying a classificatory system designed by François Furet since 1965. This system consists of the main categories Theology, Law, History, Arts & Sciences, and Literature. Although certain objections can be raised against this system (partly because it is exclusively inspired by eighteenth-century French libraries and because the category Arts & Sciences is rather cumbersome), it has been opted for here on the one hand because it is the most generally applied system, and on the other because any possible classification is arbitrary in the end. What is more important, however, is that this system allows an unambiguous, broad analysis that is easily manageable.

When we now subdivide the totality of titles into these five categories (counting the duplicates within a lot as one), indicating the relevant formats and numbers, the following picture appears:

(13)

Table 2.

Format	2°	4°	8°	12°	Total
Theology	85	155	183	41	464
Law	79	115	88	13	295
History	205	210	240	49	704
Arts & Sciences	91	147	123	28	389
Literature	31	60	137	58	286
Total	491	687	771	189	2138

Four items fall outside this classification, namely: 24 volumes and a parcel of "various Political, Legal, Poetical, Theological and other Treatises", another five volumes of "rare Treatises", "Several Parcels of Disputations and Orations as well as Various others" and "Several Engravings and Maps".

Using this classification, the books can also be subdivided according to language:

Table 3.

Field	T	L	H	A&S	L	Total
Latin	203	174	265	229	178	1049
Dutch	193	108	221	74	51	647
French	50	9	179	60	47	345
German	7	4	15	14	2	42
English	7	-	12	7	6	32
Italian	3	-	13	4	1	21
Greek	1	-	-	1	-	2
Russian	1	-	-	-	-	1
Spanish	-	-	-	1	-	1
No language	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	465	295	705	390	285	2138

(14 & 15)

Graphs

(16)

Development of the library

Taking into account that "ancient knowledge" was appreciated differently in Witsen's days, there still turn out to be many old books in the collection when the books are arranged chronologically according to date of publication. This can be illustrated by choosing a date as dividing line, for instance the year 1669 (Nicolaes Witsen, 28 years old, had then just returned from his Grand Tour. In the same year, his father Cornelis died). Counting the numbers of books before and after this date results in 1322 books dating from before 1669, against 769 books of later dates (up to and including 1717).

1. Graphs

When we add up all the books from the auction catalogue that were published every ten years since 1480 (the date of the oldest book) up to and including 1746 (the year of Nikolaas Lambertz's death) and put these in graphs covering the various fields of knowledge, the resulting curves show remarkable similarities. (See fig. 3) These similarities become apparent in two undulations occurring around 1570 and 1620, and in two peaks around 1660 and 1700. Undulations and peaks imply valleys and ravines. Unfortunately, there is insufficient available material on fluctuations in Dutch book production; this is why it is not possible to compare these figures with the heyday and crises in Dutch book trade. We would also have to know the Dutch places of origin: the auction

catalogue supplies only scanty information about these, and insofar as this information has been supplied, quite a few books turn out to be of foreign origin. Nevertheless, there seems to be a certain correspondence with Dutch welfare. The disaster year of 1672 for instance and the following war with France, England, Münster and Cologne may well have been the cause of the most conspicuous dip. As it happens, Nicolaes Witsen himself also suffered from a depression in 1673. The peak which then followed will most likely have been a combination of the increased book production and Witsen's own growing demands. However, there is another possible explanation for the curious chronological structure of the library.

2. Parental home

In order to show how the library was probably passed on from generation to generation, we have to go back to the situation of Witsen's parental home. The family stayed together for a long time: Nicolaes, who wrote his book *Scheepsbouw en Bestier* there, did not leave home until he was thirty-three years old, and married Catharina Hochepeid. At first, this parental home was Herengracht 165, but in 1660, this house was sold by his father, who then moved with his wife and five nearly grown-up sons to the much more spacious premises at Keizersgracht 327. For three generations the Witsen lived there, until the house was sold after the death of Lammert Lambertz, Nikolaas II's elder brother, in 1747.

The portrait of the father Cornelis Witsen (1605-1669) is best known for its appearance in Bartholomeus van der Helst's civic guard group portrait in the Rijksmuseum, painted in celebration of the Peace of Münster in 1648. There he occupies a prominent position as captain. This painting also provides evidence for his active involvement in Amsterdam political and social life: Cornelis Witsen held various offices there, among which that of bailiff, deputy of the States General, board member of the West India Company, counsellor of the admiralty and commissioner of the pilotage - and he was also four times burgomaster. The last time he held this office, he exchanged it for the more lucrative position of head bailiff. Not for long, however, since he died shortly afterwards.

Cornelis was the only son of Jan Cornelisz Witsen (1569-1636), corn merchant and prominent trader with Muscovy. If there had been any question of him possessing any books and manuscripts, these would therefore certainly have been left to him. Cornelis Witsen, however, was an amateur himself. He owned ancient manuscripts and documents, pictorial works (among which there were Indian miniatures), coins, and many rarities. And, of course, he owned books.

With respect to his ancient manuscripts we have the account of Olfert Dapper (1636/37-1689), the learned writer of a series of books on foreign countries and their inhabitants and also author of *Historische Beschryving van Amsterdam* ("Historical Description of Amsterdam"; 1663). In the dedication to this book he thanks Cornelis Witsen for his help and for putting at his disposal "several ancient memorabilia and manuscripts in Your possession and kindly put at my disposal by Your sons". As it turns out, these manuscripts did not only provide Dapper with the incentive to start this work, but they also gave him the strength to persevere with it. Other illustrious personages, however, had been less cooperative; they had, he wrote, "contemptuously rejected" his request for access to their ancient documents.

Cornelis's amateur interests were not devoid of scholarly love. This is shown by the many notes and sketches Nicolaes found in his house after his death, which would become the starting-point for his ambitiously designed study *Scheepsbouw en Bestier* (1671).

When Cornelis Witsen died in 1669, all of his sons were still living with him in his house at the Keizersgracht. None of them had married by then. (See family tree, Appendix C) Jan, the eldest, was thirty-three years old and town secretary; Lambert, captain and knighted by Louis XIV, was thirty-one; Nicolaes was twenty-eight and had only just returned from his Grand Tour; Cornelis was twenty-four and captain of a company of foot-soldiers, and Jonas, finally, was a twenty-two year old youth, still at his "studies". All these sons, with the possible exception of Cornelis, who preferred to keep his eyes open in a different way and sought adventure in faraway countries, were real lovers of the arts and sciences.

Of the eldest, Jan, the famous French physician and numismatist Charles Patin (1633-1693), who visited him in the house at the Keizersgracht in 1671, even went so far as to say that his cabinet was the most magnificent of the whole of Amsterdam. It seemed, he wrote in a letter, as if the house had been built for pleasure rather than accommodation. Its visitor was greeted with beauty and symmetry everywhere. It was impossible to tell whether the cabinet was designed as an ornament to the house, or the house to that of the cabinet! He owned paintings, books, busts, antiquities, and all the best in their kind. "On peut dire que ce qui est rare par tout, se trouve en abondance chez luy". The same could be said of his collection of coins. Joachim Oudaen used it when writing his well-known book *Roomsche Mogentheid* ("Roman Empire"; 1669), which deals with the collecting of coins in the form of dialogues. And brother Nicolaes described a series of these coins in *Scheepsbouw en Bestier* (1671). Jan died, still unmarried, in 1676.

(19)

So as not to go into too much detail about the family history - what we are concerned with is after all the coming into being and development of Nicolaes Witsen's book collection -, when Nicolaes' mother died nearly thirty years after her husband in 1698, her middle son Nicolaes was the only one of her children still alive. The youngest, Jonas, had died when he was just twenty-seven years old, and had only been married for two weeks; he had, however, lived long enough to produce an heir: Jonas II. A year later, Jan had died, and in 1680, Cornelis's fall from a horse had had fatal results. At the time of their death, all three of them were still living in the house at the Keizersgracht. With regard to their possessions, especially their books, we have no information to go on. One could ask oneself whether one is right in speaking of a family library, or that everyone had his own book-case. The latter was probably the case. When Nicolaes describes a series of memorial coins in his book *Scheepsbouw*, he explicitly states that they "were kept in the drawers of Johan Witsen, secretary to the town of Amsterdam, my brother". Although the collection involved here was a "serious" one, and the attitude towards common books, meant for "consumption", was perhaps different, they will have shared the use of the books (as of the coins), even if they all owned their own book-cases.

Whatever inheritance there was before or after the mother died, it must have ended up with Nicolaes, his pupil Jonas II, and Lambert, or his wife and children, since Lambert had died nearly two years before his mother.

Lambert was Nikolaas II's father. Ever since he was a child he had worked at "all liberal and honest studies, especially also in the science of fortification and more suchlike mathematical studies." It seems likely that he had a collection of books. Although he fathered a whole line of children, only Lammert and Nikolaas II lived long enough to be involved in the inheritance. In the case of Lammert, who was unmarried and the last Witsen to live in the house at the Keizersgracht, we know of an auction catalogue of 1747 listing 82 paintings, but there are no indications that there was a

(20)

comparable list of books, - which does not mean, of course, that he did not possess them.

It is quite conceivable that the books stayed together as a collection after the inheritance had been divided, but it may just as well be true that each made his own choice of the books. How many and which books were involved will always remain a matter of speculation. Be that as it may, if we look at the 1747 catalogue of auctioned books of Nikolaas Lambertz's library, it should not be ruled out that the books were not only a combination of the library of his uncle Nicolaes and his own books, but that they quite possibly numbered among them books once owned by his father Lambert. It is also possible that both from the side of his uncle Nicolaes and of his father, books were added that once belonged to uncle Jan and grandfather Cornelis. Perhaps this suggests an explanation of the fact that burgomaster Nicolaes Witsen's name did not appear on the auction catalogue... It would also provide an explanation of the fact that several editions of the same book occur so frequently in the catalogue.

Taken together, it can be said that Nicolaes Witsen will have used the books in the house of his parents at least until his marriage in December 1674, when he was thirty-three. After that, it is uncertain which course the possession of his books may have taken, but with respect to the period from the death of his last brother Lambert in 1697 to his own demise in 1717 we may assume, that the books mentioned in the auction catalogue must for the most part have been acquired by him. Translated into figures we see that the decade up to 1700 with 232 books and the following ten years with 178 represented the absolute peak in the acquisition of books. Of these, the historical books take the lion's share with 108 and 71 books respectively - and these were the books that Nicolaas Witsen was mainly interested in in these years. By this time, the dates of publication will have become nearly synchronous with the dates of acquisition.

II. COMPOSITION

1. Problems of classification

A well-known French historian opens his article on an eighteenth-century collector and his library of 3400 books with the question: "Une bibliothèque est-elle un état d'âme?" The outcome of his attempt to find an answer to this question by means of François Furet's classificatory system in combination with biographical data suggests that the "state of mind" of the owner is rigorously controlled and pigeonholed indeed. Pursuing a course of one's own choosing, however, shows that every outcome is subjective and manipulable. Every book, after all, contains a universe in its own right, many books can be classified under various fields of knowledge and the reasons for their presence are often innumerable. Shifts in interest, books unread, lost, lent or not returned are other factors which obscure the overall picture.

The application of Furet's main plan to the Witsen library is satisfactory insofar as it brings out the general outline of the composition and the growth of the library. But this is no longer the case when one attempts to deal with the labyrinth of subcategories - Furet's extract of eighteenth-century auction catalogues from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Besides, it remains to be seen whether these sub- and sub-sub-categories should be let loose on a seventeenth-century library. The

thousands of pages written about the development of libraries in the seventeenth century provide a picture of an intricate cosmic structure which is given a completely different aspect in Furet's plan.

Yet, in order to give an impression of what kind of books were present in Witsen's library in which numbers, Appendix A steers a middle course. Starting from Furet's five categories, a different, "natural" classification has been made on the basis of order in auction catalogues and regularly recurring titles, a classification more specifically geared to the library at hand. The advantages of this more detailed approach are, that it can first of all be assimilated in other counts, that, secondly, it

(22)

brings the more specific characteristics of the library to the fore, and that finally subjects are not restricted by the limits set by particular fields of study.

Books about "navigation" for instance represent a field in which Witsen was closely involved. In 1671, he published his book *Scheepsbouw en Bestier*; nineteen years later he saw to the publication of a fully revised edition. He was the designer of a number of nautical charts, and furthermore he was a board member of the East Indian Company and commissioner of the pilotage. Furet's system loses track of these books: they are found under law (18), history (9), arts & sciences (19), and literature (5), and their respective sub-categories. Taken together, this results in 51 books which are not identifiable as such. With this new classification, books like Tjassen's *Zee-Politie* ("See-police"; Law), Gietermaker's *Kunst der Stuurlieden* ("Art of Steersmen"; Arts & Sciences), and the *Dictionaire des Termes de Marine* by Des Roches (Literature) can now also be found in a separate group. Navigation is taken in a wide sense: poetical works like Antonides's *Ystroom* ("Y-stream", 1671), or Jan Vos's *Zeekryg* ("See-battle", 1653) are placed in this group. The above also applies to "dictionaires", "classical authors", etc.

How Nicolaes Witsen arranged his books on the shelves we do not know, but it seems plausible that he used a system of sorts, if only to prompt his memory. In his correspondence with Cuper, there are innumerable remarks about not being able to retrieve a book, picture, or a manuscript, because he put it in a different place. For that matter, on libraries and all facets of the acquisition of knowledge, he owned a very thorough work, Morhoff's three-volume *Polyhistor* of 1708. The reason why he owned this book is a typical example of the ambiguous motives which may be at the basis of Witsen's ownership of books. What, for instance, do we find when we look up page 435 of the first volume, *Polyhistor Literarii, liber ii "methodicus", caput vii "De Methodis Variis"*, section 77...? A eulogy on Witsen's *Architectura Navalis*. Morhoff knew that this book was in the possession of the French bibliophile and scholar Melchisédech Thévenot. In his discussion about the systematic acquisition of knowledge the author mentions Thévenot as one of those rare figures who were always trying to

(23)

collect as much material as possible in particular fields; he owned, for instance, every relevant book on the *artes mechanicae*, - among which was Witsen's excellent book on Dutch shipbuilding. The fact that Witsen owned Morhoff's *Polyhistor* may therefore very well indicate a special interest, but certainly also shows a tendency towards "self-glorification".

2. Reasons for the presence of books

On closer examination of the library and the way Witsen operated both as a private person and as a regent, it turns out that it is possible to achieve a categorisation that is quite different from the ones mentioned above, namely on the basis of the reasons for the presence of the books. By looking upon the library in this light, the characteristic element of the books Witsen owned is emphasized, and the problem of the accumulative origin and endless enumeration of titles is avoided. The following four could be possible reasons for and causes of the presence of books, namely interest, relations, donation, and inheritance.

2.1. Interest. This seems to be the most obvious incentive for the acquisition of books. Within this category, a distinction can be drawn between "professional interest" (legal and educational works), "topical subjects" (politics, religion, religious controversy) and "private interest" (from mere *divertissement* to anything concerning Witsen's "studies", and that was a great deal indeed), but in general these motives are very closely connected. This is apparent from the extremely heterogeneous nature of the religious reading found in Witsen's collection (religious controversy, politics, personal involvement).

A similar example of the interrelation of motives is provided by the great many books on foreign countries and peoples (177): love for and amazement at God's creation, politics, trade interest, *divertissement* and study. The fact that the past was very much part of the contemporary present also explains the presence of books on several grounds. Ancient and modern history were contrasted, as

(24)

is already apparent from the titles of the books: "Ancient and Modern Rome", "Ancient and Modern Wars", "Ancient and Modern Histories", etc. And that is why we also have "Ancient and Modern Ship-building", the subtitle of Witsen's own book. That Witsen was very much aware of his own place in history, is confirmed by the many histories and biographies of great men on the list (51). They were his examples, the models of virtue that he could try to emulate.

2.2. Relations. It turns out that many books are concerned with foreign and domestic "relations", among which were friends, acquaintances, and clients. The long list of books dedicated to Witsen shows that quite a few authors and booksellers had reason to be obliged to him. There is no doubt that they will have offered their work as gifts. This, by the way, provides another explanation for the presence of duplicates in the auction catalogue.

This category also includes all those books in which Witsen is mentioned or thanked. The books concerned are usually works on foreign countries and peoples, and books on natural history. Witsen owned, for instance, fifteen different works by the great Ethiopia-expert Job Ludolf (1624-1704), who was also his correspondent in Frankfurt.

Witsen also possessed books which were dedicated to friends of his or which were particularly concerned with them. One of those friends was Gijsbert Cuper (1644-1716), the Deventer burgomaster and antiquarian, with whom he conducted a correspondence about foreign countries and peoples for over thirty years. However, with the authors of many of these books he was also

quite well-acquainted. This shows us just how small the world of the Republic of Letters actually

(25)

was. Most amateurs of letters and scholars were aware of each other's existence, either through indirect channels or through one of the many scholarly periodicals or societies. In many cases they also knew each other personally, especially when their own particular specialization was concerned,

The presence of several books by one author, or a group of authors, may suggest a relation or friendship. In this way, quite unexpected "friends" like Jan Swammerdam and his medical circle, the universal scholar Melchisédech Thévenot and the Danish geologist and anatomist Niels Stensen come to the surface. Witsen owned seven books by Stensen (Nicolaus Steno), among which there were three copies of *De Solido Prodrromus* of 1669, a book about anatomical experiments in two different editions, and two books about Stensen's conversion to catholicism. No evidence of any personal contact between Witsen and Stensen has yet been found in the literature on Stensen; the same goes for his contacts with Stensen's friends Jan Swammerdam (1637-1680) and Melchisédech Thévenot (1620-1692). It turns out, however, that Witsen had known these two from his student days, and that Stensen later became one of Witsen's contacts with the scholarly circles in Italy.

2.3. Books presented to Witsen and books of special value. These books may in the first place be recognized by their method of binding. Witsen's book collection was certainly no "showpiece library", in the sense that books were bound in uniform, orderly bindings. On the contrary, only if a book was a gift, contained a printed dedication and was (perhaps) of emotional value, it was bound in a "rib binding", a binding of calf, morocco, French or Turkish leather. Overall, there are ninety of those books, of which fourteen, moreover, are gilded.

(26)

There are no duplicates among these bindings, although there are often several exemplaries of the same book extant. Therefore, in most cases the giver will have been responsible for the leather binding.

Chronologically speaking, the first book with a special binding is the illustrated folio edition of Jacob Cats's collected works of 1655, bound in Russia leather with fastenings. Olfert Dapper's *Beschrijving van Amsterdam* of 1663 is the next in line: printed on large-size paper and bound in a gilded binding of Turkish leather, - this is the book in which Cornelis Witsen and his sons are thanked for offering access to the use of their ancient documents. From this point onwards, we come across these kind of bindings more and more frequent. It turns out that especially the French bindings contain printed dedications to Nicolaes Witsen, not seldom accompanied by his coat of arms. Only a few books are coloured: one botanical work of 1517 is painted, as is one of his four editions of Flavius Josephus's *Jewish Histories*, and a number of books of (sea)maps and atlases.

Valued trophies were the personally annotated copies by famous authors, among which there were several books from the estate of Petrus Scriverius (1576-1660). The possession of old and rare

(27)

books was also highly valued; with these, we are gradually entering the twilight zone between books and "rarities".

2.4. Inheritance. Inheritance can, as we have already seen, also be an important factor involved in the presence of books. It should be possible to deduce through biographical data, especially in the topical religious and legal field, and through his private interests, a portion of the books that belonged to Witsen's father Cornelis. For now, dedications and duplicates provide the most helpful information. For instance of the pedagogue and theologian Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670), who lived in Amsterdam from 1656 until his death, the list contains six titles, two of which have duplicates. This Czech refugee owed a great deal to Cornelis Witsen; in 1666 he dedicated his *Janua Linguarum Reserata* to him (listed twice in the catalogue), an exceptionally popular Latin textbook, that was translated into many languages and published over the years in no fewer than 500 editions.

3. Manuscripts

However beautiful and interesting a book collection a seventeenth century collector may have had, the manuscripts, the unique specimens, were what made his collection really special. One of the best known works on the composition of a library, Gabriel Naudé's *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* of 1627, mentions them as the best, rarest, and most respected part, and this point of view is fully confirmed by other sources, such as wills and inventories of book collections. The will of Witsen's nephew and heir was no exception to this rule. As we have seen, he stipulated in 1727 that all his books were to be sold after his death - with the exception of the manuscripts; these were to go to his eldest son Nikolaas III (1709-1780). Since in 1761, the latter ordered the public sale of a chest - presumably containing the commercially most attractive manuscripts - we are relatively well-informed about Nicolaes Witsen's property in this field. Other sources that can provide information about manuscripts are the 1728 catalogue of auctioned curiosities as well as Witsen's own writings: his books, notes, letters, etc. What was left over after the auctions of 1728 and 1761, was stored in three more chests. These were lost during the French period, as is proved by a statement of the Amsterdam town archivist Jacobus Scheltema.

What manuscripts did Nicolaes Witsen have in his collection?

3.1. Family papers. In the first place there were of course the family papers: enfeoffments, legal acts, pedigrees, wills, genealogical notes, etc., that Witsen used to prove his lineage. From 1682, the year of his first appointment as burgomaster of Amsterdam, dates his prestigious *Geslagtregisters* ("Pedigrees"), a huge, leather-bound book, which measures 72,5 x 100cm when opened, and which was partly made on order, but which later also became a product of his own talents. As telling motto it bears a quotation from Rutilius from the first half of the 5th century A.D., translated in English:

Let us be not surprised that people die each day

While the greatest towns decline and fall into dismay.

(29)

The study of family trees and kinships had always been a popular and distinguished pastime for the

well-to-do, and Witsen too had a soft spot for this pursuit. The fact that he always buried himself in old books and papers is especially evident from the second part of the Geslagtregisters, the "Uitbreydinge" or commentary on the first genealogical / heraldic part. His documentation appears to be partly based on documents he found in archives and libraries elsewhere; documents, by the way, which did not always find their way back to their rightful owners.

3.2. Dossier. Furthermore, Witsen was an accurate reporter of his own activities. This made him a determined collector of all those testimonies that had to do with his political work. By the end of his life, thirty numbered files made up his "dossier", with which he, himself a jurist, wanted to account for his actions. Unfortunately these were largely lost, but historians like Jan Wagenaar were still able to put them to constructive use. This also reminds us of his precursor Olfert Dapper, who was so happy about Witsen's father allowing him access to his collection of authentic town- and other documents.

3.3. "Hand-written" or "unprinted books". In a totally different category were the manuscripts, for which Witsen also sometimes used the term "hand-written" or "unprinted books"; books which formed a complete whole, had never appeared in print before, and of which at best only several manuscript copies existed. It should be added that at that time, this category also included works which had once been published, but which had become so rare that they had become of comparable value. Witsen's collection of manuscripts consisted both of a number of manuscripts from before the

(30)

advent of the printing press and the period of the incunabula, and of works of much later dates which, for various reasons, had never been published.

3.3.1. Codices

Witsen's most valuable codex was a large format book on parchment of 1465 by Marcus Tullius Cicero. Other works by classical authors written on parchment were the hymns, etc. of Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, the works of Lactantius Firmianus of 1476 and *Le livre d'Ethiques*, a 1376 translation of Aristotle's *Ethicorum Libri X*. He furthermore owned two medieval chronicles by the famous Johannes de Beka, the writer Joost van den Vondel based himself on for his tragedy *Gysbrecht van Aemstel* (1637). The codex from 1393 was contained in a binding decorated with brass buttons, the one dating from 1350 was enriched with notes by Scriverius. The provenance of a twelfth-century Bible in Latin was quite special in that it had been saved in 1453 "from the flame" of Constantinople, when this town was burned to the ground by the Turks. This was added in Latin by Josephus Scaliger when he was given the book by his friend Sybrand Siccama.

3.3.2. Contemporary manuscripts

Witsen's other manuscripts were mostly works by authors who were employed by the East Indian Company. Examples are Rumphius's *De Generale Lantbeschrijving van het Ambonse Gouvernement*, "very neatly written and bound in red Turkish leather, in 8°", a *Description of Ceylon* by the preacher Servatius Clavius, and research by the scholar Herbert de Jager, who has been entirely forgotten, mainly because nearly all of his work was lost. Witsen, however, also owned transcripts of books which, even before they were published, were sent to him by the author

(31)

in order to serve as a reference in his studies, such as the *Discorso della Nautica degli Antichi* by the Florentine scholar Carolo Dati (1619-1676).

3.3.3. Letters

The letters make up a separate category in the manuscripts. There were historic documents such as the letter from 1636 from Hendrik Brouwer to Anthony van Diemen, both of them "supreme commanders of the Dutch Indies", about the North-East passage, a hot item at the time. Or from the king of Bali, "Deywa Agon, to the Governor General Willem van Oudshoorn, with engraved letters on a Gold Plate, being, after translation, a declaration of submission to the Noble East Indian Company." But there were also complete correspondences. Witsen must have owned quite a few of these. In the French period, as we have seen, most letters were lost, together with the three chests of notes, reports, etc. The only information we have about how Witsen stored his correspondences is a remark to Cuper. Of him he owned "a great volume of very distinguished and scholarly letters, (...) which I have just gathered together and keep among my most precious belongings."

3.3.4. Exotic writings

And then there was that "fashion" for exotic writings, which were usually doomed by the ignorance of their owners to spend their days as unread ornaments: "To the ornamentation of my library I own a fair number of Chinese books", Witsen wrote to Cuper on 9 April 1713, "although their contents are obscure to me. They were sent to me earlier from Batavia." A few years before, a Chinese physician had visited him at home, but the visit had been too short to really enlighten him: "This Chinese Gentleman could read and write everything that was Chinese", he had to confess regretfully: "If he had stayed here longer, I would have been able to get a great deal more information out of him".

(32)

If he had the right persons at his disposal and if he thought the contents of a book were important for his studies, he had a translation made. This is, for instance, what he did in the case of several Arabic works. But he also owned manuscripts of which nobody even knew with what kind of letters they were written. Having become curious about this, the well-known orientalist Adriaan Reland (1677-1718) wrote to him:

I have often been told that You, Sir, own many Indian manuscripts, among which several in unknown characters. I am very curious to know about these, since I myself own some Javanese, Malayan, Japanese, Chinese and other manuscripts, and cannot contrive what these unknown characters might be: although it is said that in some islands to the east of Java, writing is used that is still unknown to us.

In return, Witsen sent him "a book written on the barks of trees". But Reland too had to "admit openly that I do not know what the writing is: that this has never happened to me before with regard to modern writing". Apparently some advance was made later on, since the auction catalogue mentions that the note "it is said, that this writing is of the peoples of the country of Tipora near the

Ganges" has been added.

Witsen added such notes to his valuable and rare books almost as a rule. In a Coptic-Arabic dictionary he wrote:

(33)

This book was brought here by the distinguished scholar Petraeus from Egypt, as is apparent from his writing above, but reduced to poverty he left it here and it is thus, through the book-shelf of Dirk Hillensberg LL.D., that it has fallen into my hands by right of his will. N. Witsen.

That these anecdotes were not just a private eccentricity of his, but go back to a much older custom, is also shown by other manuscripts. Sometimes they record the names of whole lists of consecutive owners.

But objects too were given these little notes. On a piece of paper, strongly yellowed through the ages and folded in four, we read: "This red jar came from the house of the deceased grandfather of my grandmother, Albert Barentse, and may be even older", after which Witsen continues:

The above is copy of a note in my grandfather Optie's handwriting; so that may be calculated how long this jar has been in our family, maybe for far longer than two hundred years, so that it deserves to be preserved as a witness to the antiquity of our family. N. Witsen.

And also the next owner of the jar, the collector Gerard van Papenbroeck, added his own note to the paper.

The composition of Witsen's book Noord- en Oost Tartarije, which consists almost exclusively of a stringing together of separate notes, seems to follow naturally in this tradition; as does his map of Russia, which has a great many added notes. Perhaps this also partly explains Witsen's love of cartography: it enabled him to structure his collection of "facts" into an orderly whole.

(34)

III. USE

Witsen always put a great deal of effort into two fields, which were, moreover, very closely related, namely: in the first place the interest of the family, the "clan"; and thereafter the interests of "the commonwealth", the general interest, the "nation".

1. Family interest

Family interest also included, limiting ourselves of course to Witsen's intellectual activities, the study of kinship and its respective "antiquity". Since this was a generally popular pastime, and to many also of considerable social value, everyone was well up on the details. In the case of one quarrel, this enabled burgomaster Gillis Valkenier to give Cornelis Geelvinck, "Lord of Castricum", a sound lecturing on the basis of his background; and vice versa. Both regents threw their respective

grandfathers, one being a "salesman in peas and beans" and the other a "Leiden bargee", into each others faces, after which reconciliation became nearly impossible.

Witsen meticulously went through historical works such as those by Pontanus, Aitzema, Domselaer, Dapper, Commelin and all those other Amsterdam historians, trying to find out what had or had not been said about him or his family. A curious example of this are his "Remarks" to Casparus Commelin's *Beschryving van Amsterdam* of 1693. Curious, because his notes date from years back and seem to confirm the impression that he was constantly trying to erect a monument in his own honour.

Collections of manuscripts owned by friends also offered him a welcome opportunity to peruse these with an eye on the family-lineages. One of the most exquisite libraries of ancient books and manuscripts was that of Adriaen Westphalen in Alkmaar (1626-1695), who was characterized by Witsen as "an accurate investigator and expert on Dutch history".

With the bibliophile, philologist and geographer Vossius (1618-1689) Witsen remained in touch throughout his life, also after he had moved to England; "he was my special friend", he wrote to Cuper. He corresponded regularly with Vossius, among other things about the North-East passage and about the question whether Nova Zembla was or was not attached to land. But the friendship turned into enmity when Vossius wanted to show off Witsen's information in the *Philosophical Transactions* and to king Charles II; information that, to make things worse, had been misrepresented by Vossius. What was so painful about this matter was, that the king had become so enthusiastic that two ships were sent out on an exploratory expedition. The attempt failed, and one of the ships was shipwrecked and many lives were lost. Witsen heard this from the mouth of the surviving captain, Greenville Collins, who had become a friend of his.

(41)

Extremely little has survived of Witsen correspondence with Vossius. But at least one letter shows, that he was allowed to freely use the latter's library for his *Scheepsbouw*. (See Appendix B).

Conclusion

Witsen loved books, but he was certainly no collector. He held them dear for their contents and not because of their "neatness" or the completeness of his collection. Books in a beautiful binding were, it turns out, usually presents, whereas the number of hand-coloured books are negligible. It was only because of what they had to say, because he thought them important in the "public interest", that he campaigned several times for their publication.

The fact that he owned so few auction catalogues is significant: of private collections he had only one, namely that of Dirk Hillensberg of 1683. This is hardly surprising, since this jurist had left his entire estate to Witsen, as is apparent from Witsen's inventory. Hillensberg's collection of 5228 books and manuscripts (lots) will also have been included to it. It appears, then, that Witsen owned this one auction catalogue, because he himself had ordered its sale. Is it possible, one wonders when comparing both their lists of manuscripts, that from all this, Witsen took over only the *Dictionarum Copticum*?

Witsen's library, then, was a user's library. It contained, almost as a matter of course, beautiful

books, but he was mainly interested in firsthand written information, the only just published work, and books he considered indispensable to the progress of his studies. And if he had any problems getting them, he borrowed them: this much is clear from the correspondence with Gijsbert Cuper. The periodicals, of which there are thirteen on the list (and of which a number seem to be missing), kept him informed, as did his correspondents, booksellers, friends, etc.

(42)

At the auction of 1747, the entire library brought in 3217 guilders and 13 stivers on a total of 2031 lots or 2307 titles (among which are all the duplicates). On 1 September 1761, part of the manuscripts were also brought to the hammer. Without tax deduction, this yielded 699 guilders.

The question as to the place of this book collection in relation to comparable collections, is difficult to answer because of the lack of studies as well as of sources in this field. Of persons who had similar positions and a similar breadth of interest such as the burgomaster Joan Huydecooper van Maarsseveen (1626-1704) a catalogue dating from 1704 is known, listing 5043 lots; the library of Gijsbert Cuper, also burgomaster, which was auctioned in 1717, consisted of 3803 lots (in addition to 67 manuscripts and 10 parcels). The library of François Fagel (1659-1746), clerk of the States-General, comprised about 5000 "items" in 1723. Unaware of the possibility that "the library of Nicolaes Witsen" may have belonged to several relatives, Koeman, in his large-scale research on the ownership of maps and atlases in Dutch collections, is probably right in calling this library a "small" one.

APPENDIX A

CATEGORIES AND NUMBERS OF BOOKS LISTED IN THE AUCTION CATALOGUE OF 1747.

I. THEOLOGY (465):

1. Bibles (27), biblical commentary (22), Old and New Testament (20), catechisms (5)
2. psalms / devotional hymns (15)
3. theological works: general (105), Protestant (169), Catholic (40), anti-Catholic (11)
4. sermons/commentaries (29)
5. dictionaries (1)
6. other (21)

II. LAW (295):

1. legal works general (217); collected works on author (15); classical (3)
2. criminal law (28)
3. law of war and peace (10)
4. navigation (19)
5. dictionaries (3)

III. HISTORY (706):

1. Church history (58), China (6)
2. Ancient history (14), navigation (2); Antiquity / commentaries (31)
3. Modern history:
 - A. general (10); textbooks (3); dictionaries (1)
 - B. history of Europe:
 - a. countries (29); politics (32); statesmen/memoirs, etc. (7)
 - b. towns (10)
 - c. wars (18), the Netherlands (14)
 - C. history of the Netherlands:
 - a. politics (40); navigation (1)
 - b. provinces (19)
 - c. towns (15); Amsterdam (7), guidebooks (2)
4. Geography:
 - a. classical (2); general (7); textbooks (2)
 - b. travel accounts (91), embassies (8); works on countries and their peoples (66), Europe (4)

c. separate peoples (6)

d. maps/nautical charts (13); guidebooks (1)

e. dictionaries (2)

1. Auxiliary branches of knowledge:

5. Auxiliary branches of knowledge:

a. monuments/sculptures (22), dictionaries (1)

b. epigraphy (6)

c. numismatics (28), dictionaries (1)

d. chronology (12)

e. genealogies/chronicles (10)

f. biographies (47), William III (4), memoirs (4); funeralia, "entrées" (7)

g. bibliographies (24)

6. Other (43)

IV. ARTS AND SCIENCES (390):

A. Medicine:

1. Classical authors (9)

2. Contemporary: a. general (24)

b. descriptions of diseases/remedies(5)

c. anatomy (14)

d. pharmacy (7)

B. Natural history:

1. Classical authors (3)

2. Contemporary: a. general (12)

b. botany (21)

c. zoology (1), insects (4), fish (1)

d. mineralogy (5)

e. shellfish (3)

C. Philosophy:

1. General (27)

2. Logic (6)

3. Ethics (14)

D. Mathematics:

1. Astronomy (16), astrology (2)

2. Geometry, algebra, etc. (48), dictionaries (1), classical (4)

3. Surveying (3)

4. Fortification (4); architecture (6)

5. Mechanics (5); Navigation (23), dictionaries (1)

6. Optics (7)

E. Physics (19), classical (2); Chemistry (2)

F. Various:

Economics (13); Military (17), hunting (4), sports (2); Drawing (4); Agriculture (2), gardening (1); Music (1); Periodicals (13); Dissertations (4); Other (20)

V. LITERATURE (286):

1. Grammars / philology (40),

2. Dictionaries (42), navigation (2)
3. Orations / disputes (19), rhetoric (2); Letters (14), classical (1)
4. Classical literature (72)
5. Poetry (23), navigation (2)
6. Divertissement (28), anthologies/collected works (18), sayings (11), emblems (2), epigrams (3), theatre (2)
7. Other (5)

OTHER: "24 Volumes and a Parcel of various Political/ Legal/Poetic/Theological and other treatises"; 5 volumes of "rare Treatises"; "a small parcel of English books"

(46)

APPENDIX B

LETTER FROM NICOLAES WITSEN TO ISAAC VOSSIUS (1618-1689), CONCERNING THE BORROWING OF BOOKS FOR HIS STUDY SCHEEPSBOUW EN BESTIER (1671). UNDATED, BEFORE 1670 (UBA B102).

The Very Learned Gentleman. Mr. Isaac Vossius. Lives at the end of the Kleine Houtstraat on the canal. The Hague. With a small parcel.

Very Learned Gentleman,

I hereby send back to You the three books which You had lent me and allowed me the use of for some time, thanking You exceedingly for that favour and kindness, and I wish I may return the favour, as I will always show myself prepared to do, and I will try to prove that I am not ungrateful for all the friendship You have shown me many times. I Pray then, have no scruples, and put me to work if You consider me worthy of returning the favour.

I have made use of the figures in Furtenbach and of a small number of pages from the manuscript where they refer to shipbuilding. That Italian book turned out to be of little use since it deals more with the art itself than with the building of ships. Sir, I seem to recall that You told me that You had in Your possession several Greek manuscript treatises, concerning the work presently on my hands, which were never published. If You would be so kind to send these to me, I would be very much obliged. I will have them translated and I will refer to them in my book, when I publish it, and I will gratefully commemorate Your name, as I do also elsewhere. If You should have in your library any other works that have bearing on my forthcoming work, I beg You to send these to me in the interest

of the Republic of Letters.

I recently spoke to Mr. Hudde, who sends his regards and says to wish no more than to continue his friendship with You. Far be it from him that he should have spoken badly of You to anyone, which I heard rumoured of him. Herewith, Sir, I conclude, saying that I am Your

Servant

Nicolaes Witsen

(47)

APPENDIX C

EXTRACT FROM THE FAMILY TREE OF

CORNELIS JACOBZ WITSEN & CATHARINA OPSY