An interesting book was published in 1980 to celebrate the centenary of the library of the Free University in Amsterdam. Entitled simply Een Vrije Universiteitsbibliotheek, it not only describes the library itself and its history but also contains a section called ‘Uit de werkkamer’ [From the study] in which members of the library staff describe important items in their keeping. Among these articles is one by Mrs M. H. G. Clement-van Alkemade on ‘Bijzondere kaarten in de verzameling’ [Unusual maps in the collection]; pp. 341-55. She begins with the well-known Bos library, and the first item in this that she discusses is the ‘Afteckeninge van de Cap S. Augustyn’ (in Brazil), a work published by Jacob Kyns in about 1635 measuring 30 by 35.5 cm. It seems that not one other copy of this work exists in the Netherlands. Mrs Clement writes that she found only one other copy and that was in Paris.

This map, and the fact that Keijns had always lived in the house called ‘The Atlas’, made me turn to Koeman’s Atlantes Neerlandici, where to my surprise I found no reference to this Jacob. Even so, there proved to be quite a lot waiting to be found out about him. His name—I follow his own spelling in the will he made in the presence of notary Jan Warnaerts on 23 July 1635—was spelled in a wide variety of ways, including Kyns, Keyns, Keijns, Keins, Kints and Kintz. His occupation, as he gave it, also varies somewhat: bookseller, paper seller, merchant and bookbinder. But that was less surprising in those days.

Thanks to the many indexes that have been made at the Amsterdam municipal archives over the past few years it is possible to reconstruct the story of his youth quite well. He was born at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Middelburg as the son of Christiaan Keijns and Magdalena Potters, also known as Pottiers, though the first of these two spellings is the one she used in her will signed in the presence of notary Simon Ruttens on 15 December 1636. It seems that she died soon afterwards in her house in the Betaniëstraat in Amsterdam. Her children’s names were Anna, Leonora, Catharina, Christiaan, Magdalena, Jacob and Constantia. When she brought all these children with her from Middelburg to Amsterdam—presumably as a widow—is uncertain. The evidence of a deed executed by notary Bruyningh on 1 October 1610 concerning a policy shows that the father was at that time still working in Middelburg as a mer-
chant and insurer. For the betrothal of the eldest daughter, Anna, on 4 January 1620, the mother accompanied the party from her home in the Pijlsteeg. Anna’s husband, the saddler Heyndrick Hilliger, was already going to the orphan’s court to register his four-year-old son Christiaan’s inheritance of 600 guilders from his mother on 30 December 1625.

The other sisters and the brother Christiaan were all to marry later in life. Catharina was betrothed on 9 November 1635—when on her own evidence she was 34—to the 27-year-old candidate for holy orders Hubertus Berchius of Naarden. He was called to the ministry in Zaandam in 1637 and became well known as an archaeologist and local historian, publishing among other things a work on Gooiland (the area in which Naarden is situated). Christiaan was appointed a broker in 1622 but by 1630 he was already being struck off the register. However, this did not deter him from continuing with his broking activities and that is the occupation he gave on his betrothal on 26 August 1645.

Jacob, the younger brother, stated that he was about 28 on 13 June 1636 when, together with the 25-year-old Abraham de Hertoch, he made a sworn statement in the presence of notary Baddel for the benefit of the merchant Abraham Eschwiller concerning the weighing of the latter’s stuffs, at which they had been present. This would be curious for a bookseller, less so for a paper dealer. Probably also having to do with this field of business are three protests, all drawn in Middelburg, referring to bills of exchange, in all of which Jacob is said to be a merchant. They were executed by notary Jan Warnaerts on 20 December 1635, 2 January 1636, and 23/29 December 1636. The first time an unknown male person received the notary, the second time Jacob himself, and the third time Jacob’s wife. Most interesting of all is the statement of his place of residence in 1635: Jacob Keijns is then settled as a merchant in the ‘Altas’ [sic] in the Pijlsteeg. There is hardly any need to say that this refers to the then still little-known sign of the Atlas.

Jacob Keijns—then spelt Kints—had become a member of the guild of St. Luke as early as 8 December 1629, when his occupation was given as bookseller. He must have been about 21 and has presumably completed a period of apprenticeship, probably, from all the signs, with a member of the Hondius family.

Much has already been written about the Hondius family of publishers, but I will still begin with a brief passage on them here. Jodocus Hondius and Coletta van den Keere came to Amsterdam in about 1593 and things went very well for them there. On 12 July 1604 Jodocus was able to buy the copper plates for Mercator’s maps at a sale, and on 31 December 1605 he became the owner of a house on the east side of the Kalverstraat. In fact the house was so deep that it stretched right back to the Rooleeuwsteeg, later to become the Kromme Elleboogsteeg. Jodocus died in 1612 but his widow