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Jacob Bijndop († 1482) from Kampen on the invention of the art of printing*

1 INTRODUCTION

In *De annalibus quaedam nota*, in the part written by Jacob Bijndop, town secretary of Kampen, (henceforth referred to for the sake of brevity as the chronicle), the following reference occurs for the year 1457 (Pl. 1):

‘Inden selven jare is gevonden die prenterije vanden groten kostlicken boeken in beter letteren ende subtilicker gedruckt dan tevoeren je gesyen is.’

Lexicographically this item provides new information. Under the headword ‘prenterie’ (subst.) Verwijs and Verdam give three meanings in the *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*: (1) applying a seal or stamp on pieces of cloth, (2) putting figures or painted images on parchment or paper, and (3) the figures or ornamental foliage applied to a building. Compared with other headwords, few supporting passages are given. For the second meaning it is even noted that the word has not been recorded in this sense in Middle Dutch, ‘doch het is er ongetwijfeld bekend geweest’ (but it was undoubtedly known there at the time). Referring to the three meanings the compilers expressed the supposition that the Middle Dutch word ‘prenterie’ would also have been used in the sense of ‘art of printing’, as had been the case in Germany. A German quotation in support of this contention follows: ‘[Dit bock] heft geprint Peter Schoeffer... in der edele stad Mentz, die eyn anefangh is der prentery, in deme jare na Christi gebort 1482.’ (Peter Schoeffer printed [this book]... in the noble city of Mainz, in which began the art of printing, in the year 1482 after the birth of Christ.) With Jacob Bijndop’s chronicle we now also have an early record in Middle Dutch so Verwijs and Verdam were right in their supposition.

* On 20 January 1999 I presented the main argument of this article in a lecture during a meeting of the Commissie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (Leiden). I would like to acknowledge my debt to the members of the Commissie for their responses and suggestions, which I have used where relevant.

1 *Kampener kronijken*, vol. 1, *De annalibus quaedam nota* (Deventer 1862), p. 15; in quotations from this edition the use of i/j and u/v/w is tacitly adapted to modern usage. Here I am quoting from the manuscript (fo. 256r.). In the right-hand margin it says in a large textualis: ‘prentherie’.

2 E. Verwijs & J. Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, vol. 6, col. 655. Verdam notes that the third meaning was a ‘probable’ meaning.
Apart from this lexicographical detail however, the information is especially important because it has not been used before in the discussion about the invention of the art of printing and its early dissemination, especially in the Netherlands. To call attention to this is therefore the major objective of this article. For a better evaluation of this information it is desirable to have a closer look at the dating of Bijndop’s chronicle and at the way in which the text came to be written. The chronicle itself will therefore be discussed first in toto (section 2), while the information given and its possible interpretation will subsequently be considered (section 3).

2 DATING OF THE CHRONICLE AND THE MENTION OF THE ART OF PRINTING

Bijndop’s chronicle is a town chronicle and, as such, one of the earliest of its kind in the Netherlands. It has come down to us in autograph, in MS Kampen, Gemeentearchief (GA), Oud-archief No. 11. It is an extensive composite volume (‘Liber diversorum’), in which all kinds of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century documents and copies from Kampen have been bound together since the sixteenth century. The text is found on fos. 24 gr.-66 v. On fos. 267 r.-9 r. is a continuation of the years 1483-1502, written by two (anonymous) authors. Then we come to the period 1503-12 (fos. 270 r.-5 v.) and 1542-7 (fos. 283 r.-4 v.), both written by Reinier Bogerman van Dockum, who was secretary – and organist – of Kampen from c. 1498 to 1514 and from 1540-53. He also wrote a poem on Kampen conquering the Guelders in 1510, which landed in the Bijndop part during binding (fo. 261 r.-v.). So there is a gap between 1512 and 1542, which,

3 M. Carasso-Kok, Repertorium van verhalende historische bronnen uit de Middeleeuwen. Heiligenlevens, annalen, kroniken en andere in Nederland geschreven verhalende bronnen (‘s-Gravenhage 1981) [= Bibliografische reeks van het Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, 2], No. 290. The earliest reference is from 1399, the latest from 1553. J. Don, De archieven der gemeente Kampen, vol. 1, Het Oud-archief (Kampen 1963), pp. 132-4 gives an elaborate survey of the contents (cf. also p. 2). Sometimes ‘Foliant I’ is given as its shelf-mark.

4 Whenever MS Kampen, GA, Oud-archief No. 11 is referred to from now on, I use (as I do here) the modern foliation. By their contents as well as their material fo. 261 and fo. 261a do not belong to the chronicle, the leaves have been added later, probably at the time of the binding of the composite volume. Fo. 260 is the last leaf of a regular sextodecimo and forms a pair of conjugate leaves with fo. 249, where the chronicle starts. Fo. 262 belongs to the next quire and is probably connected with fo. 274 (it is difficult to ascertain this; the stub between fo. 274 and fo. 275 seems to be part of the next quire). If this supposed connection is right, fos. 262-74 form another sextodecimo albeit with a single leaf between fo. 263 and fo. 265 (cf. the stub between fo. 272 and fo. 273).

5 Carasso-Kok, op. cit. (n. 3), No. 290. J. Romein, Geschiedenis van de Noord-Nederlandsche geschiedschrijving in de Middeleeuwen. Bijdrage tot de beschavingsgeschiedenis (Haarlem 1932), No. 93 mentions two anonymous town secretaries.

6 Carasso-Kok, op. cit. (n. 3), No. 353. Further biographical details in Kamper kroniken, op. cit. (n. 1), Voorbericht [Foreword], especially the last three pages.

7 Carasso-Kok, op. cit. (n. 3), No. 354. For the binding of fo. 261 see n. 5 above. Don, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 132 presumes Reinier Bogerman van Dockum to have been the compiler of the composite volume.