A manuscript of van Meteren's Historie

In my essay 'Van Meteren als historicus' I drew attention to a manuscript in the University Library at Leiden which contains the text of the first twelve books of Emanuel van Meteren's historical work. In the following pages I shall subject this manuscript to closer examination.¹

The manuscript in question is a Codex Perizonianus in fol.no. 45. It is named in Geel's catalogue and later, in 1946, it was described in the catalogue of the Codices Perizoniani² as: paper manuscript from seventeenth century, 365 x 230. Fol.439. Binding paper covered with vellum. It contains books 1-12 of van Meteren's work. The catalogue entry also states that the manuscript came from the library of P. Burman II, at the sale of which in 1799 it was bought by Leiden University Library.

The title of the work is Nederlantse Historie ghedurende den tijt vande rege-ringhe Conincks Philips den tweeden Coninck van Spanien, sone van den Keyser Carolus de vijfde der Nederlande(n) Overheere. The catalogue rightly says of this title that it may not have been written by the same hand as the text. To my mind there is no doubt but that it was written by van Meteren himself in the humanists' italic script which he used both when signing and addressing his letters and in those of his contributions to alba amicorum which have survived.³ The words which follow the title, 'Beschreven door Emanuel van Meteren', are in a different hand but not, as the catalogue claims, a later one. It is also found at the end of the second book and elsewhere.

The statement in the description that the text is more concise than that of the Hague edition of 1614 is slightly misleading, because the 1614 edition is the final version of van Meteren's text and differs greatly from that in the first Dutch edition of 1599 (published in Delft by Jacob Cornelisz. Vennecool). Comparison of this latter text with the manuscript reveals a high degree of correspondence, though there are numer-

³ See illus. 1.
ous minor differences, most of which are of a linguistic nature.

The description also informs us that the preface in the manuscript is different from that in the 1614 edition, but a similar result would have followed from comparing it to the edition of 1599. There is no question here of greater or lesser deviations: the prefaces are simply not the same.

Let us finally turn to the hands to be seen in the manuscript. For the most part a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century italic script is employed, but fols. 39r.-63v., which compose the second book, are in a different though somewhat similar hand. The catalogue entry refers to this, and also to a third hand which occurs at the end of some of the books and has certain German characteristics. Besides these, however, there is also a fourth hand which occurs in paragraphs of additional material at the end of the second book and is also that of the words ‘Beschreven door Emanuel van Meteren’ on the title-page. This is not mentioned in the catalogue, nor is the fact that a fair number of corrections have been made to the text in black ink, together with some lemmas, various additional remarks in the margin and, most important, a few quite long inserted passages. These are all in yet another hand which is beyond all doubt that of van Meteren himself.

This last fact adds prodigiously to the manuscript’s importance and gives rise to the question of what part it played in the realization of the Dutch printed editions of van Meteren’s work. We know that even while the German editions of 1593 and 1596 were still being prepared, van Meteren circulated copies of his Memoriën among his friends. He testifies to this in a letter of 2 March 1592 to Daniel van der Meulen, and it is also mentioned in the preface to the Dutch edition of 1599. The obvious conclusion is that the Leiden manuscript is one of these copies, but the text shows that this is impossible. True, the manuscript text translates into a very close parallel of the German editions—which remained unaltered, in the twelve books with which we are concerned here, from 1593 to 1598—but there are also instances of places where the Dutch text of 1599 differs from the German and follows the manuscript. If in the light of these facts the place and function of the manuscript should appear obvious, then it is nevertheless necessary to be wary of jumping to conclusions. We must not forget that the text of the Dutch edition frequently differs not only from the German text but also from that in the manuscript. The next step is therefore to compare the various texts.

---

4 See my article ‘De eerste Nederlandse editie van Van Meteren’s geschiedwerk’, *Twee bollen*, p. 84.