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## **Io. Grolieri & Amicorum. A Stroll through Leiden's Book History**

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# IO. GROLIERII & AMICORUM

A Stroll through Leiden's Book History



**Universiteit Leiden**

Leiden University Library  
Scaliger Instituut  
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# IO. GROLIERII ET AMICORUM

## A Stroll through Leiden's Book History

Jean Grolier (1479-1565) '[...] showed himself always a zealous protector of the learned, a lover of the good and beautiful books issued by the Giunti and the Aldi, or by the other publishers of the time, and also an ardent collector of coins and of antiquities.' Grolier is considered one of the chief ornaments of the French Renaissance. Nowadays he is remembered foremost for the fact that his books were bound superbly in beautiful and sumptuous bindings. On several books the generous inscription IO. GROLIERII ET AMICORUM was stamped. Grolier's library, now dispersed, still ranks among one of the most precious book collections of all time.

Jean Grolier surely must have loved Leiden with its many libraries and its rich history connected to the production, sale and printing of books. Illustrious names such as Plantijn, Raphelengius, Elzevier and Brill still resonate in the streets of the town. The history of books in Leiden is very much connected with the history of its university. Founded in 1575, Leiden University is the oldest in the Northern Netherlands. Many famous scholars, including Justus Lipsius, Josephus Justus Scaliger and Carolus Clusius, taught and conducted research during the university's first decades. These scholars demanded dissemination of their scholarly work through the printing press. Leiden University therefore appointed a printer to the academy, of which the printer Christoffel Plantijn certainly is the most famous. Leiden was at the pinnacle of its fame in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was known throughout Europe for its outstanding printing of scholarly books. Leiden University Library, with its outstanding collections (in which the oriental collections are a strongpoint without comparison in the Netherlands), also contributed to the fame of Leiden as City of Books. Leiden holds all the things that were so dear to Grolier: beautiful and rare books, workmanship, and a learned community. These attributes are still held in high regard by all the members of the society which so proudly honors the name of Grolier.

This stroll on Leiden's history of the book is an outline of the Dutch book *Langs Leidse Letters. Een boekhistorische wandeling* (Leiden 2008) by P.G. Hoftijzer and K. van Ommen. The members of the Grolier Club, who visited Leiden on April 14, 2010, were invited to walk along the most famous places related to the book trade, book printing and book production in Leiden.

We begin our stroll at the Academy Building on the Rapenburg.



## Academy Square/Rapenburg 71 Christoffel Plantijn, Elzevier family, Pieter van der Aa

In 1583 Christoffel Plantijn (1520-1589) was granted permission by the governors of Leiden University to equip a small shop for selling books in the square behind the Academy building. In 1587 Lodewijk Elzevier (1540-1617), a former employee of Plantijn and beadle of the university, was permitted to begin a small bookshop in the same square. In 1613 these primitive structures were pulled down to make space for the gate to the university, constructed in Renaissance style (some remnants are still visible). The son of Lodewijk Elzevier, Matthijs (ca. 1565-1640) moved the shop to the house at Rapenburg 71, next to the Academy building. Adjacent to the house at Rapenburg 71, Matthijs' son Isaac (1596-1651) would build a gallery and printing office after he was appointed *typographus academiae*. This printing office was in business on this spot for almost a century and was a well-known destination for tourists and visitors. The last of the Elzevier family, Abraham (1655-1712), was a notably bad printer and there were many complaints about the quality of his printed matter. Abraham Elzevier was succeeded after his death by the capable printer and businessman Pieter van der Aa (1659-1733). He renovated the printing and book shop and Elzevier's house in 1713, two years before he was appointed printer to the town of Leiden and to the Academy. In this house Van der Aa not only kept his presses, letters and supplies, but also his vast collection of prints, painted portraits and some 18,000 books.

In 2007 Gerard Unger, a famous Dutch typographer, designed a new font for the interior and exterior of the Academy building. This so-called 'Leidse letter' was commissioned by the Academic Historical Museum. In the sixteenth century one could read the text *Musa coelo beat* (the muse rejoice in heaven) in the pavement in front of the building. The university intends to restore this text in the pavement. The Leiden letter is a modern design, but is inspired by the classical principles of typography. The starting point of this font was the new cursive that was born in Italy and found its way across Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-centuries.

## Rapenburg 73 Academy Building



The exterior of the Academy building still reveals its original purpose: from 1516-1581, it served as a church for the Dominicans of Maria Magdalena (or White Nuns). In 1581 it became the main building of Leiden University. Classes are still given in the building and it is used for doctoral degrees and other official ceremonies. The building also houses the Academic Historical Museum. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century

an observatory was situated on the roof beside the tower. In the 1580's the library of the university was located in the so-called "vaulted room" on the ground floor. On the occasion of the founding of the university in 1575, William the Silent (1533-1584) presented a copy of the *Biblia Regia*, the polyglot bible printed by the Antwerp printer Christoffel Plantijn in eight volumes between 1569 and 1572, as the first book in the library's collection. After donations by the professors Johannes Holmannus (1523-1586) and Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538-1614), the vaulted room was fitted out 'tot bewaernisse der boucken van de universiteit' ('to keep the books of the university'). In 1595 this room became too small for the growing collection of books and the library was moved across the canal to the first floor of the former church of the Faliede Bagijnkerk (Rapenburg 72).

**Rapenburg 73  Clusius Garden**

The famous botanical garden of Leiden or *Hortus botanicus*, founded by the botanist Carolus Clusius (1526-1609), is situated behind the Academy building. This reconstruction was completed in 2009. Clusius was born in Arras, France and after working in Vienna and Frankfurt he was asked to come to Leiden to set up the botanical garden of Leiden University. Clusius had a vast network of correspondents and received all kind of parcels with precious bulbs and plants from all over Europe and the Orient. He introduced the potato and the tulip in Holland.



**Rapenburg 69  Luchtmans family**



On the right hand side of the Academy building (Rapenburg 69) used to be the printing office, bookshop and private dwellings of the Luchtmans family, the forerunners of the Leiden-based publisher E.J. Brill. The founder of the dynasty was Jordaan Luchtmans (1652-1708) who originally came from Woudrichem. He established his printing office and bookshop in Leiden in 1683. He specialized in books on classical antiquity and theology. His first printed book (1685) was an edition of Pomponius Mela, in the edition by Jacobus and Abraham Gronovius. Jordaan was married

to Sara Musschenbroek, a descendant of Christoffel Plantijn. After the death of Jordaen, his son Samuel (1685-1757) was in charge of the printing office. In 1730 he was appointed printer to the town of Leiden and to the university, as successor of Van der Aa. In 1755 two of his sons, Samuel II (1725-1780) and Johannes (1726-1809), continued the business. In 1802 Johannes and Samuel III (1766-1812) appointed Johannes Brill (1767-1859) as printer to the firm. The son of Johannes Brill, Evert Jan Brill (1811-1871), finally bought the publishing house from the Luchtman family in 1848 and was appointed printer to the town and university some years later. The printing office was moved to Rapenburg 74, 78 and 80 and later to a new address on the Oude Rijn. Nowadays Brill has its offices just outside the old city center of Leiden.



### Rapenburg 56 David and Felix Lopez de Haro, Dirk and Cornelis Haak

The houses across the canal from the Academy building were very popular amongst printers and booksellers during several centuries. This is especially true of Rapenburg 56, on the corner of the Kloksteeg. In 1651 David Lopez de Haro (1602-1670) bought this house from the bookseller Abraham Commelin (1597-ca. 1652). Lopez de Haro was trained at the printer's shop of the Elzeviers and ran a bookshop in the Houtstraat for several years. He specialized in scholarly publishing and organized several actions of scholarly book collections, just as would his son Felix (1642-1694) after he had taken over the business.

In 1721 the house was sold again to a new proprietor: Dirk Haak (1682-1738). He was famous for publishing the *Systema Naturae* (1735) written by the Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the famous academic bookshop of Jac. Hazenberg occupied the building until the firm was liquidated in 1880.

### Kloksteeg 4 Thomas and Govert Basson



The Kloksteeg was the main street for bookshops in Leiden. One of the most famous was the English bookseller Thomas Basson (ca. 1555-1613), who had his shop in Kloksteeg 4. He was also a famous book binder, who executed many assignments for the university library. After his death in 1613 he was succeeded by his son Govert

(ca. 1581-1643). The motto on the sign board of the firm of Basson was *Basis auctionum charitas* (Charity is the fundament of all Deeds).

### Pieterskerkhof/Kloksteeg John Robinson, Pilgrim Fathers

The Jean Pesijnhof Almshouse on the Pieterskerk Square has strong ties with the Pilgrim Fathers' stay in Leiden. Built in 1683, it stands on the spot where the Pilgrims' minister John Robinson (1575-1625) lived in the 1610s. The Pilgrims built about a dozen small houses in the garden behind Robinson's house and lived under his guidance for eleven years. Opposite the entrance, in the wall of the baptistry of the Pieterskerk, is a plaque in memory of John Robinson and all the other Pilgrims who were buried in Leiden.



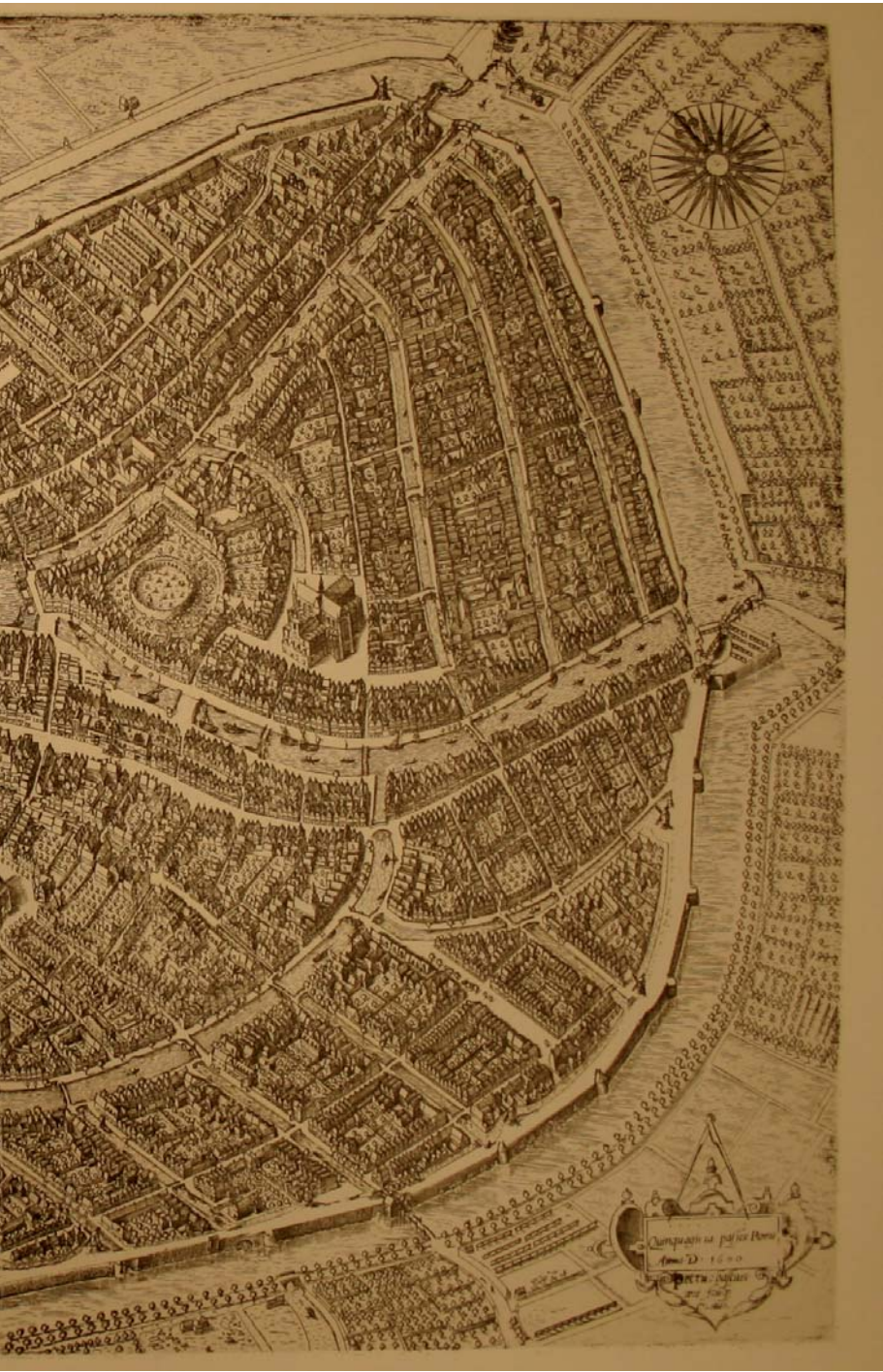
### Nieuwsteeg 1 Templum Salomonis



Books played an important role at this spot for several centuries. Jan Jansz Orlers (1570-1646), the first historian to the city of Leiden, wrote in his *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (1614) that this house was occupied by the so called *Templum Salomonis*: the library of the 14<sup>th</sup> century lawyer Philips van Leyden (ca. 1328-1382). He left 42 manuscripts by testament and ordered them to be kept in a library. *Templum Salomonis*

was also used by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Flemish printer Christoffel Guyot, who incorporated the name and a representation of the temple into his printer's mark. In the 1640s, the bookseller Jan Claesz Bors had his bookshop in the building. The name *Templum Salomonis* was revived again in 1894 by Pieter Johannes Burgersdijk (1867-1915) and George David Niermans (1854-1920), who started an antiquarian bookshop and auction house in that year. Even today, there is still a bookshop and auction house in Nieuwsteeg 1. A commemorative plaque in the façade of the bookshop pays homage to the first occupant, Philips van Leyden.





## Pieterkerkhof 40 Bibliothèque Wallonne



From 1889 until 1973 the Bibliothèque Wallonne (the library of the French and Walloon Protestants) was housed in this building. The library was established by Daniel de Chantepie de la Sussaye (1818-1874) in 1852 as a collection for the Walloon occupants of Leiden. The library also houses a famous Salle des Archives, containing some 2000 records concerning the history of families descended from the Walloon refugees, along with a large collection of paintings, coins and manuscripts. Today these materials are part of the Special Collections of Leiden University Library.

## William Brewstersteeg Pilgrim Press

As can be read on the memorial plaque above the entrance, the famous Pilgrim Press was situated in Brewster Alley (or Dwars- or Stinksteeg). This press was named after the Pilgrim Fathers, a community of English religious dissidents who fled England and arrived in Leiden in 1609. The mentor of the group was Minister John Robinson (1575-1625). In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers left Leiden and embarked on the ship *The Speedwell* in Delfshaven for a journey to Southampton, and then further on to Massachusetts, where they founded Plymouth Colony. The printer's shop in Leiden was headed by William Brewster (1567-1644) and his assistant Edward Winslow. They printed some 20 publications attacking the King of England and the Anglican Church. All this was financed by Thomas Brewer. Through pressure exerted by the English ambassador, the Pilgrims' printing activities were eventually suppressed.



## Breestraat 92-104 Town Hall Van Hout

The town hall of Leiden was designed in Renaissance style by the Flemish architect Lieven de Key in 1594. In 1929 a large part of the building was destroyed by fire and only the facade is still original. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a small collection of books donated by Christoffel Plantijn to the city of Leiden was kept in the secretary's office. This collection was moved to the university library in 1595. These books are still being kept in the Special Collections department and can be recognized by the vellum bindings with the word \*LEYDEN\* on the covers. From 1577-1610 there was also a printing office in the town hall. This office was founded by the secretary of Leiden, Jan van Hout (1542-1609), to print resolutions and other documents that were important to the city. In 1602 his *Leyden dienst-bouck* was printed on the 'Raadhuis Pers'.





## Breestraat 111-113 Josephus Justus Scaliger

The famous French humanist Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) lived in the house at Breestraat 11-113 from 1594 till 1607. Scaliger was one of the most learned men of his day. In 1593, he accepted an offer to come and work at the newly-founded Leiden University without any formal teaching obligations, but with the promise of a substantial annual salary. By 1600, he had become the centre of the young university, attracting students and scholars from all over Europe. Among his pupils were promising students such as Daniel Heinsius (1580-1655) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Scaliger left a substantial part of his library to the University Library. His donation still constitutes the core of the Oriental collections of Leiden University Library. The rest of his library was sold in auction by Lodewijk Elzevier in 1609.

## Vrouwensteeg Christoffel Plantijn & Franciscus Raphelengius



This hideously ugly building from the 1960s is the home of the Leiden fraternity Minerva. It once was the location of one of the most beautiful Renaissance buildings in the city. The famous Antwerp printer Christoffel Plantijn had his printing office here from 1582 onwards. Plantijn was the direct successor of Willem Silvius (1520-1580) as printer to the new born university, founded in 1575. Plantijn (ca. 1520-1589) was born in Tours, France. He went to Antwerp in 1549, where his firm grew to be one of the most prestigious printering offices. In 1582 he established a branch office in Leiden, but Plantijn himself only stayed for two years before returning to

Antwerp. He left the business to his son in law Franciscus I Raphelengius (1539-1597), a scholar and an expert in Hebrew. The printing office in Leiden held four presses and a large stock of type, woodblocks, and copper plates. The French ambassador in The Hague wrote that Plantijn was 'la plus belle imprimerie de ces pays.' Raphelengius and his sons ran the printing office until 1618 and many books of famous Leiden scholars--amongst them Josephus Justus Scaliger, Carolus Clusius and Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538-1614)--were published by them. One of the strong points of the printing office was the printing of books in Oriental languages. In 1595 Raphelengius specially ordered



Arabic type in France in order to be able to print in this language. In May 1965 a plaque was unveiled to commemorate Plantijn and Raphelengius and the beautiful books they produced.



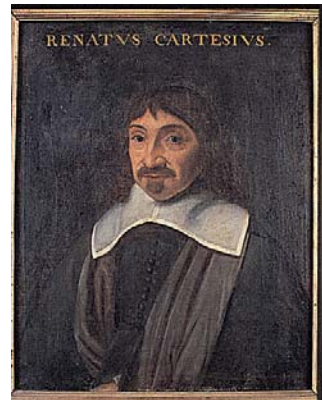
**Breestraat/Schoolsteeg ☞ Thomas Erpenius**



Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624) started with a printing office, the *Typographia Erpeniana linguarum orientalium*, on the corner of the Breestraat and the Schoolsteeg (formerly known as the Varkenssteeg). Erpenius was appointed professor of Arabic at Leiden University in 1613. He was not pleased with the Arabic type used by the *Officina Plantiniana* and decided to produce a new one himself. Erpenius received financial support from the university and started producing his own books. It was a terrible shock when Erpenius suddenly died in 1624. His widow sold all the type to Isaac Elzevier for 8000 Guilders and his manuscripts were sold to the Duke of Buckingham. (Later they were added to the holdings of Cambridge University.) His printer's device is *Assurgo pressa* (I grow under pressure).

**Rapenburg 21 ☞ René Descartes**

Rapenburg 21 is a house with a history: from 1629 to 1650 it was the property of the Huguenot Jean Gillot, who rented rooms to students and scholars. One of his guests was the famous French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), who lived there in 1640. Descartes is the founder of the theory of methodical doubt and lived for the greater part of his life in Holland. In 1637 his book *Discours de la méthode* was published by the Leiden printer Jan Maire. Descartes lived in the castle Endegeest, just outside Leiden, in the period 1641-1642.



**Rapenburg 25/Groenhazengracht ☞ Bibliotheca Thysiana**

One of the most beautiful libraries in Leiden is held in the building on Rapenburg 25. The name can be seen on the facade: *Ioannis. Thysii Bibliotheca M.D.C.LV (=1655). De*

*Bibliotheca Thysiana* was founded by testament by the lawyer Joannes Thysius (1622-1653), son of a rich Amsterdam merchant. Joannes came to Leiden in 1634 and was raised by his uncle and professor in Hebrew Constantin L'Empereur van Opwijck (1591-1648).

After his education at the Latin school, he matriculated at Leiden University to read law. In 1646 he traveled in Europe on a grand tour and after returning to Leiden he received his PhD and was ready



to begin his social career. In 1653 Thysius fell ill and died at the age of 31. In his testament he left his library of some 2000 books 'tot publycque dienst der studie' (for study purpose for the general public) and a large sum of money (14.500 guilders) to build a library on the Rapenburg Canal. The *Bibliotheca Thysiana* is the only example in Holland of a purpose-built library from the seventeenth-century.

### Rapenburg 31 Herman Boerhaave, Franciscus de le Boe Sylvius

The story goes that one could send a letter, addressed only to 'Boerhaave', from any place in the world and it would arrive safely in the hands of the occupant of Rapenburg 31: the famous physician Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738). Boerhaave was not only the most famous physician of the eighteenth century but he also held three of five chairs in the faculty of medicine, was Rector magnificus of the University and director of the botanical gardens in Leiden. His immense oeuvre was published by Leiden printers and was illegally reprinted in several European countries. Boerhaave died on 27 September 1737. His motto 'Simplex veri sigillum' (simplicity is hallmark of truth) can be seen in the facade of the building.

Another former occupant of this house was the German born physician and scientist Franciscus de le Boe Sylvius (1614-1672). He was one of the earliest defenders in the Netherlands of the theory of the circulation of blood, proposed by the physician William Harvey (1578-1657). Sylvius' coat of arms can be seen in the top of the facade.







## Rapenburg 30 Lodewijk and Bonaventure Elzevier



The house on the corner of the Rapenburg and the Houtstraat was for much of the seventeenth century the property of the Elzevier family. Lodewijk Elzevier (ca. 1537-1617) from Leuven bought the house in 1593. He was bookseller, book binder and beadle of the university. After his death he left the house to his son Bonaventura (1583-1652), who was married to the daughter of the law professor Daniel van Ceulen, who lived at Rapenburg 32. The house on Rapenburg 34 and 36 came into the possession of the Elzeviers through other members of the family. In 1652 all the houses were inherited by Daniel (1626-1680), the son of Bonaventura. He left Leiden in 1654 and moved to Amsterdam to join the renowned publishing company of his nephew, Louis Elzevier.

## Witte Singel 27 Leiden University Library

The history of Leiden University's libraries goes back to 1575, when Prince William of Orange donated a copy of the Polyglot Bible. Today the collections comprise millions of books, tens of thousands of magazines and journals, a rich collection of letters, manuscripts, and prints, and access to even more materials via the digital collections. The building on the Witte Singel opened its doors in 1984 and was designed by architect Bart van Kasteel.



## Witte Singel 27 The Scaliger Institute

The Scaliger Institute aims to stimulate and facilitate the use of the Special Collections of Leiden University Library in both teaching and research. To this end, the Institute offers favorable working conditions and expertise, organizes conferences, master classes, special courses and lectures. These include the Scaliger Lectures, given each year by the Scaliger professor (currently prof. dr. Harm Beukers), and other prominent scholars. The Scaliger Institute also hosts a fellowship programme for visiting scholars for 1 or 2 months. The Brill fellowship, sponsored by Brill Academic Publishers, is a special fellowship for senior scholars. The objective is that through teaching, in close co-operation with the Leiden faculty



## Colophon

Text: Kasper van Ommen

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### *Credits:*

- P. 3 The earliest known image of the Academy Building in: Album Amicorum of Johannes ab Amstel a Mijnden (1600-1601). [Collection KB Den Haag].
- P. 11 Catalogue of types of the Stadhuispers. [Collection Regionaal Archief Leiden].
- P. 11 The Town Hall in the seventeenth century. Drawing by C. Hagen. [Collection Regionaal Archief Leiden].
- P. 12 Hendrik van der Burgh, Procession after a promotion. Oli on canvas, ca. 1650. [Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam].
- P. 16/17 View on the Rapenburg. Drawing by P.C. La Fargue (1729-1782). [Collection Regionaal Archief Leiden].

*All other images are taken from the Special Collections of Leiden University Library and the Scaliger Institute.*