

Publishers at the Intersection of Cultures

The significance of Italo-Dutch contacts in the creation process of Joan Blaeu's *Theatrum Italiae* (1663)

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In early modern Europe, town atlases provided a means towards discovering cities and regions on paper to both the happy few fortunate enough to travel physically and to those lacking that opportunity. In this way, leafing through Joan Blaeu's *Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae*¹ or series of town atlases of Italy, readers had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with places and monuments spread over the peninsula without having to leave the comforts of home. Today, the particular publication history of the multi-volume atlas allows us to investigate the relevance of cultural exchange in the seventeenth century from a new and intriguing angle. The aim of this article is to shed light on the shape and significance of the collaboration between the Blaeu publishers (both Joan and his son Pieter) and their Italian partners in the process of accumulating material to be included in the *Theatrum Italiae*. As was pointed out by van Veen and Mirto,² intense contacts between the Blaeu family and various individuals closely connected to the Tuscan De' Medici court were important for the international trade in cultural artefacts such as books and paintings; these same bonds played a very important role in managing preparations for the *Theatrum's* intended volume on Tuscany. A closer look at the creation process of the *Theatrum Italiae* series from the perspective of the Blaeus themselves may very well serve as a new starting point for gaining a better understanding of the ties through which Joan and Pieter Blaeu were connected to the Italian peninsula.

The Blaeu's Theatre of Italian Cities

The volumes of the *Theatrum Italiae* are part of the ambitious Grand Atlas project as it was first envisaged by Willem Jansz Blaeu (1571-1638), founder of the Blaeu firm, that was later taken over by his son Joan (1598/99-1673). Willem and Joan both pursued the dream to publish cartographical works treating all elements of

¹ The decision to include the term *theatrum* in the title of this work shows the influence of the Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1528-1598), to whom the Greek definition of theatre - *theatron* - formed the ideological concept underlying the publication of cartographical works. Ortelius considered geography 'the eye of history', a 'theatre of memory' through which events and places of the past could be shown. Cf. J. Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*, New York, Penguin, 2012, p. 10.

² H.Th. van Veen & A. Mirto (eds.), *Pieter Blaeu: Lettere ai Fiorentini Antonio Magliabechi, Leopoldo e Cosimo II de' Medici, e altri, 1660-1705*, Amsterdam-Maarssen, APA, 1993; H.Th. van Veen, 'Pieter Blaeu and Antonio Magliabechi', in: *Quaerendo*, 12 (1982), pp. 130-158; H.Th. van Veen, 'A Tuscan Plan of Action for Joan Blaeu's Book of Italian cities,' in: *Lias*, 18 (1991), p. 223.

geography: chorography, or description of the earth, topography, or description of places, hydrography, or description of the sea, and uranography, or description of the heavens. As this immense task proved simply too large for the two of them, only the first geographical section was completed.³ A part of the topography section, however, was also published, including atlases dedicated to the cities of the Low Countries (published in 1649) and the Italian peninsula,⁴ of which various volumes were published in 1663 and in 1682. As Joan grew older, he wanted to devote more and more of his time to completing his father's atlas project. Combined with the growing competition of other publishers such as the Elzeviers,⁵ this was one of the main reasons behind his decision to give up bookselling in 1662 and concentrate on printing and publishing.⁶ This commercial manoeuvre had a rather positive outcome, for around 1667 the printing shop on the Bloemgracht could no longer keep up with the demand; Joan Blaeu subsequently set up a second printing office in the Gravenstraat. He wanted to inaugurate this new establishment by printing an important historical treatise on the lives of Catholic saints, the fourth volume of the *Acta sanctorum*. When, during the night of 22-23 April 1672, the text for part of this work had been typeset, an all-destroying fire broke out in the printing office. Besides the *Acta sanctorum*, part of the stock of paper, maps, copperplates and books was lost as well, including the Spanish edition of the *Atlas major*.⁷ On 10 September of the same year, another disaster occurred: Joan and his oldest son Willem were removed from the Town Council of Amsterdam on the order of the reinstated stadtholder Willem III.⁸ All this probably contributed to the decline of Joan's health; he died in December 1673.

As had been the case for his father before him, Joan Blaeu's death meant he had to leave the Grand Atlas project – including the town atlases of Italy – unfinished. However, Joan had been especially eager to complete that particular part of the venture because of his own general interest in and love for Italy, where he had travelled a lot and met important business relations and friends.⁹ He had

³ From 1662 onwards, Joan Blaeu, following in his father's footsteps, published his *Atlas major* in Latin (11 vols.), French (12 vols.), Dutch (9 vols.), Spanish (10 vols.) and German (9 vols.; despite the existence of such copies, the c.1670 stock catalogue of Joan Blaeu lists only editions with Latin, French, Dutch and Spanish text). The 9 to 11 volumes that were published are not the complete work as Joan Blaeu had planned it; they include only the geography, Blaeu's intended first part, whereas the second (with maps of the seas) and third (with maps of the heavens) parts were never published. P. van der Krogt, *Koeman's Atlantes Neerlandici New Edition*, II, Houten, Hes & De Graaf Publishers, 2010, pp. 316-317; p. 407.

⁴ The general format of both of these works followed lines established by earlier publishers in the Low Countries, Italy and the rest of Europe; town atlases had originally started to appear alongside city descriptions, travel guides and related cartographical works. Cf. E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier, 'De eerste stadsbeschrijvingen uit de zeventiende eeuw', in: *De zeventiende eeuw*, 9 (1993), pp. 97-111; H. Hendrix, 'City Guides and Urban Identities in Early Modern Italy and the Low Countries,' in: *Incontri*, 29, 1 (2014), pp. 3-13.

⁵ In 1651, Joan Blaeu had for the first time printed several books in collaboration with Louis Elzevier, director of the *Officina Elseviriana* in Amsterdam, and in 1664 they founded a company to publish the *Corpus juris* in various formats. The number of new titles issued by Blaeu from this time onwards was relatively low, and Joan's activities as a scholarly publisher were increasingly taken over by the Amsterdam Elzevier firm. See: H. de la Fontaine Verwey, 'Dr. Joan Blaeu and his Sons,' in: *Quaerendo*, 11, 1 (1981), p. 15.

⁶ *Ivi*, p. 16.

⁷ *Ivi*, p. 18.

⁸ C. Koeman, *Joan Blaeu and his Grand Atlas*, Amsterdam, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970, pp. 10-11.

⁹ H. de la Fontaine Verwey, 'Dr. Joan Blaeu, schepen, en zijn zonen', in *Idem, In en om de "Vergulde Sonneweysen"*, *Uit de wereld van het boek*, III, Amsterdam, Nico Israel, 1979, p. 165.

therefore decided to publish the first volumes of the Italian town atlases series directly after those treating his home country. Joan Blaeu explicitly mentioned his own, personal connection to the peninsula in the introduction to his town atlas of the Low Countries (1649):

Receive then, benevolent reader, this work, and use it, while in the meantime I prepare Italy, also in two parts, in which you will behold the wonders of the past and present. The affection I feel towards this country, since it has for some time been the sweetest sojourn of my youth, obliges me to let it follow my home country directly.¹⁰

The *Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae* would treat the towns and monuments of Italy. In the preface to the series, Joan confessed that his original idea had been to publish two volumes, but that his plans had changed: he now envisaged a multi-volume atlas of Italian towns, consisting of two parts, with five books each.¹¹ The first part, *Civitates Italiae* or ‘the towns of Italy’ would consist of books on the Papal State, on the towns of the Italian dominions of the Habsburg King Philip IV (1605-65, King of Naples and Sicily, Duke of Milan), on the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, on the Duchies of Mantua, Modena and Reggio, Parma and Piacenza, on the Republics of Venice, Genoa and Lucca, and on the Duchy of Piedmont and Savoy. The second part, *Admiranda Urbis Romae*, was wholly devoted to Rome: it would comprise books on places where public spectacles had taken place, on public buildings and on the private palaces and the statues to be found in Rome. During his life, Joan Blaeu succeeded in putting three volumes of the Italy atlas in print, all of which were published in 1663, as follows: the first book of the first part, entitled *Civitates Status Ecclesiastici*, consists of 69 maps and plates; the first book of the second part, entitled *Admiranda Urbis Romae*, on the city of Rome, contains 44 plates of the Roman circuses, obelisks and theatres; and ultimately the preliminary (incomplete) edition of the second book of the first part treats the towns of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily in 33 maps and plates.¹²

In addition, letters written by Pieter Blaeu (1637-1706), on behalf of his father Joan, to various renowned Italians connected to the Tuscan De’ Medici court, have revealed that while Joan was still alive extensive preparations were carried out for the publication of town atlases on Tuscany, as well as on Piedmont and Savoy.¹³ In 1666, however, even though earlier that year Pieter had received some thirty sketches for the book on Tuscany,¹⁴ it had already become clear that the Blaeus would have to postpone the project for a town atlas of that region.¹⁵ They were forced to halt this project because of their promise to Duke Carlo Emanuele II (1634-1675) of Savoy and Piedmont that the volume devoted to his territory would be finished first. The Piedmont and Savoy atlas, entitled *Theatrum statuum regiae celsitudinis Sabaudiae ducis*, would nevertheless only be published in 1682 by the next generation of Blaeu publishers, because of the previously mentioned setbacks the family had to deal with in the meantime. Despite the fact that the Tuscany

¹⁰ ‘Ontvang dan, gunstige lezer, dit werk, en gebruik het, terwijl ik ondertussen Italië, ook in twee stukken, gereedmaak, waarin u de wonderen van de verleden en tegenwoordige tijd zult aanschouwen. De genegenheid die ik dat land toedraag, omdat het enige tijd de zoetste verblijfplaats mijner jeugd geweest is, verbindt mij dat het terstond op mijn vaderland volg[t].’ Joan Blaeu, *Toonneel der Steden van de Vereenighde Nederlanden*, Amsterdam, Joan Blaeu, 1649, p. 3.

¹¹ Van der Krogt, *Koeman’s Atlantes Neerlandici*, vol. 4-1, cit., p. 365.

¹² *Ivi*, p. 367.

¹³ van Veen, ‘A Tuscan Plan of Action’, cit., p. 223.

¹⁴ van Veen & Mirto (eds.), *Lettere ai Fiorentini*, cit., pp. 135-136; 142-145.

¹⁵ van Veen, ‘A Tuscan Plan of Action’, cit., p. 223.

volume never materialised, the large number of letters preserved in Florence, in which the Blaeus discuss their plans for this part of the venture, does offer unique insights in the strategies and sources that the publishers intended to use for the completion of both this volume and the series in general.¹⁶

Sources and Strategies

In the introduction to the first book of the *Civitates Italiae* (in the first part of the first section, on the Papal State), Joan Blaeu explained his ambitions regarding his atlas of Italy and the, at times difficult, process of completing the work:

Before taking my leave of you, I would like you to know that some learned men's patronage has helped me very much, both with the gathering of precise drawings of the towns and with the descriptions thereof. Amongst them Carlo Emanuele Vizzani deserves the first place. He treated my son [Pieter] in Rome, while he [Vizzani] was still amongst the living, with unusual consideration, and after his return to his country he [Pieter] bestowed this consideration on me as well by supplying several proofs of it when the occasion arose. This is the Vizzani esteemed because of his noble birth, who was famous for his writings, who was consistorial advocate and who because of his versatile erudition was promoted to the dignity of assessor of the Holy Office. I must confess I have gained many things through him, firstly from the Senate of Bologna a very detailed drawing and description of their town [...]. He was to contribute much more, but unfortunately the Fates misgrudged us so great a thing. From Antonio Rota I received [maps of] Ascoli Piceno, and [a description] of Gubbio from Vincenzo Armani. [Maps of] Terni were sent by Francesco Simonetta. I mention their names explicitly to honour and to praise them and to stimulate other people to promote my objectives and above all to avoid the appearance of vanity, as though I would want to gather honour for myself through the efforts of other people.

Forgive me, whoever you are who reads this, if I was wrong in some parts, or if you miss something in my work and smile at my attempt: and so in the execution of my promises I was never afraid of the huge [amount of] work, that I accomplished serving you tirelessly.¹⁷ [...]

November 1662, Your Ioan Blaeu.¹⁸

Joan Blaeu started his introduction by lamenting the fact that he had had to adjust his plans for his atlas of Italy, because the amount of material under consideration seemed to keep on growing and risked overwhelming him. The help of his second son Pieter, his successor as head of the Blaeu publishing firm,¹⁹ was of great importance: Pieter made various journeys throughout Italy which were directly connected to Joan's project of Italian town atlases; he had been instructed by his father to create a series of new markets for the firm.²⁰ First Pieter travelled to southern Italy, where he visited Naples, and in the summer of 1660 he probably went to Rome and then to Florence. From a fellow Amsterdam bookseller, Andries Fries – the Dutch agent of the Venetian booksellers Combi and La Nouè –, Pieter had obtained a letter of

¹⁶ Likewise, preparations for the volume on Piedmont and Savoy left traces in letters preserved in the Archivio di Stato, Torino, of which parts were published in the text accompanying a facsimile edition of the atlas; see L. Firpo et al., *Teatro degli Stati del Duca di Savoia*, Turin, Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, 1984. The letters included in this work were discussed by C. Koeman in 'Atlas Cartography in the Low Countries in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries' in J.A. Wolter & R.E. Grim, *Images of the World: the Atlas through History*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1996, pp. 93-102.

¹⁷ Blaeu probably meant this final passage as an allusion to his printer's mark, *Indefessus agendo*, or 'tirelessly at work'.

¹⁸ A translation of the final part of this introduction in Latin, not included in Van der Krogt, *Koeman's Atlantes Neerlandici*, IV-1, cit., pp. 365-366, was provided by Domiziana Francescon.

¹⁹ 'It is clear in every respect that the one intended by his father to succeed him in the business was not the oldest son, Willem, nor the youngest, Joan, who was still far too young, but the middle one, Pieter.' van Veen & Mirto, *Lettere ai Fiorentini*, cit., p. 51.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 52.

introduction to Grand Ducal librarian Antonio Magliabechi in Florence.²¹ In a letter to a friend the librarian described the young bookseller Pieter as a 'well-mannered youth, polite, beautiful, and very intelligent'.²² Magliabechi made Pieter promise to keep him informed of what was currently being printed in Holland, a promise that was kept.²³ Thanks to his contact with Magliabechi Pieter was able to obtain an *entrée* to the De' Medici court and could make arrangements with Grand Duke Ferdinando II, his brother Leopoldo, and his son Cosimo on the planned production of the town atlas of Tuscany.²⁴ Through Magliabechi, too, Pieter managed to attract various potential customers from cultural and literary circles within Florence. Magliabechi himself, however, remained Pieter's most important client in Florence, as he ordered books both for himself and for the Medici library.²⁵

Pieter's many trips were, as part of his training as bookseller, no exception: the younger members of all great bookselling families were, in this period, usually sent abroad on this kind of travels to acquire the necessary experience in dealing with international trade partners and local circumstances.²⁶ Pieter's travels are remarkable, however, because of the important part Italy, at the time no longer a truly flourishing nor a leading centre for book production in Europe, played in them. During all his journeys in the region, Pieter actively tried to enlarge the number of Italian customers of the Blaeu firm.²⁷

Because of his great knowledge of Italy and the Italian language,²⁸ Pieter became a popular source for information and contacts to Amsterdam men with commercial interests regarding Italy, especially Tuscany and Florence.²⁹ He was the ideal person to ask for letters of introduction to renowned Italians for the sons of Amsterdam city councillors before they went on their Grand Tours. Likewise, his many Italian contacts made Pieter valuable to literary men, scholars and scientists who wished to become better known in Italy.³⁰ In turn, many Italian tourists, including Cosimo De' Medici between the years 1667-69, visited Pieter's shop in Amsterdam.³¹ Because of these varied efforts regarding the relationships between Italy and the Netherlands, Pieter Blaeu can clearly be recognised as a cultural

²¹ Contacts between Magliabechi and Combi and La Noù date back to the beginning of 1657; from that time onwards, a relationship based on reciprocal respect and friendship had grown between them. The ties connecting Andries Fries, half-brother of Joannes or Giovanni La Noù, Pieter Blaeu, the Elzeviers and Magliabechi are treated extensively by A. Mirto, 'Lettere di Andries Fries ad Antonio Magliabechi, 1659-1675', in: *LIAS*, 14, 1 (1987), pp. 61-65.

²² van Veen & Mirto, *Lettere ai Fiorentini*, cit., p. 53.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ van Veen, 'Blaeu and Magliabechi', cit., pp. 134-136; *Idem*, 'A Tuscan Plan of Action', cit., pp. 221-227.

²⁵ van Veen & Mirto, *Lettere ai Fiorentini*, cit., p. 54.

²⁶ A. Mirto, *Stampatori, editori, librai nella seconda metà del Seicento*, Florence, Centro Editoriale Toscano, 1989, p. 26.

²⁷ Cf. van Veen & Mirto, *Lettere ai Fiorentini*, cit., pp. 52, 55.

²⁸ Koeman, *Joan Blaeu and his Grand Atlas*, cit., p. 107.

²⁹ van Veen and Mirto, *Lettere ai Fiorentini*, cit., p. 70.

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 70.

³¹ *Ivi*, pp. 57-58; cf. L. Wagenaar, *Een Toscaanse prins bezoekt Nederland, De twee reizen van Cosimo de' Medici 1667-1669*, Amsterdam, Bas Lubberhuizen, 2014; H.Th. van Veen, 'Cosimo de' Medici's reis naar de Republiek in een nieuw perspectief', in: *Low Countries Historical Review*, 102:1 (1987), pp. 44-52.

mediator between the two European regions; the contacts and knowledge that came with this role were essential for the Blaeus' *Theatrum Italiae* project.

Some of the Italian contacts established through Joan and Pieter's collaboration were mentioned explicitly in Joan's introduction to the *Civitates Italiae*. Whereas Joan Blaeu first referred in general terms to the fact that 'many [...] among those princes' had given him 'drawings and descriptions of their cities',³² towards the end of his introduction he explicitly credited the Italian philosopher and lawyer, Carlo-Emanuele Vizzani (1617-1661) as one of his main sources for images and text. Vizzani was clearly held in high esteem by Blaeu: he was born into a noble family and was recognised by society as a man with remarkable literary qualities. Because of his erudition, Vizzani eventually became assessor to the Congregation of the Universal Inquisition, responsible for matters related to faith, particularly the examination of suspected tenets of persons or books. As assessor, Vizzani held the office next in dignity after the cardinals of the Congregation; it was his duty to write the reports of the Holy Office in all cases treated by its consultors, and to communicate the results of their deliberations directly to the pope. Through the influential network surrounding Vizzani, Blaeu admitted to 'have gained many things,' probably of both a material (images and text to include in his atlases) and immaterial (access to useful contacts and knowledge) nature. The ties between Vizzani and the Blaeus were strengthened by reciprocal support in personal and professional matters; according to the introduction, Vizzani had been especially kind to Joan's son Pieter during his stay in Rome. Joan Blaeu and Vizzani kept in touch for several years and in 1657 Blaeu published a new edition of Vizzani's *De mandatis principum*, followed in 1661 by *De rerum natura*, Vizzani's Latin translation of a work by Ocellus Lukanus, a Pythagorean philosopher from the second century BC.

In his introduction, Blaeu mentioned several other people active in ecclesiastical and public administration, including the renowned intellectual Vincenzo Armanni (1608-1684),³³ who all provided him with maps of specific places. As a young man, Armanni had studied law in Naples, where he eventually became member of the *Accademia degli Oziosi*. In 1631 Armanni had left the city for Rome, where in 1639 he was selected secretary to Carlo Rossetti (1614-1681), a papal diplomat sent to London as a secret *nuncio* by Pope Urban VIII (1631-1685). In London, Armanni and Rossetti collaborated in their defence of the Catholic Church. In 1642, when Rossetti had left England after having suffered severe violations, Armanni decided to follow him, fleeing first to Rome and then to Cologne. In 1644 both Armanni and Rossetti hurried back to Rome, after they had heard about the fatal illness of Urban VIII. Instead of serving the new Pope, Innocenzo X (1574-1655), Armanni, who had become blind by that time, preferred moving back to his native Gubbio, where he entered a new and very productive phase of research and literary activity. With the help of numerous scholars in monasteries, churches and private libraries, he was able to collect great quantities of documents related to the history of the municipality.³⁴ Armanni had thus gained access to an enormous amount of source material, which meant he was in an ideal position to help Blaeu in his quest for information on the towns of the Papal State.

³² Van der Krogt, *Koeman's Atlantes Neerlandici*, IV-1, cit., pp. 365-366.

³³ Umberto Coldagelli in *Dizionario Biografico degli italiani Treccani (DBI)*, IV (1962) on Vincenzo Armanni:

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vincenzo-armanni_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vincenzo-armanni_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (September 3, 2015).

³⁴ *Ivi*.

Armani sent a description of Gubbio, ‘drawn from various historical works’,³⁵ as a supplement to a letter in which he introduced himself to Joan, after ‘he had returned from travels and heard about the Dutchman’s noble occupations.’³⁶ In the letter, Armani explicitly stated how he provided the material so Blaeu could ‘place it amongst [information on] many other cities competing to find immortality in your [Blaeu’s] precious Volumes’.³⁷ Apart from the textual material mentioned in the letter, Armani’s contribution consisted of a map of Gubbio that he had obtained through another Italian party. According to a small text block at the top right corner of the map, Ignatio Casetta, active around the 1650s as *priore* of the spiritual community of Coletta di Santa Cristina di Gubbio,³⁸ had produced this map so it could be sent to Blaeu in Holland.³⁹ No further information has come to light on how Vincenzo Armani and Joan Blaeu got to know each other; some sort of link, however, could have existed between them through Vincenzo’s uncle Giacomo Armani, a well-known astronomer,⁴⁰ who might have been an acquaintance of both Willem and Joan Blaeu.⁴¹

Blaeu was not the first to provide an atlas based on the help of contemporaries; he chose not to mention, however, that for towns on which he was unable to gather new sources, he copied parts from older works, such as the *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (1572) of the engraver Frans Hogenberg (1535-1590), or the atlas that had been brought out by Hogenberg and Georg Braun (1541-1622).⁴² Originally, Braun and Hogenberg planned to publish their town atlas in one volume, but its success made them change their minds. They decided to produce a second volume, this time adding a special request to their readers, asking them to provide material on the cities in which they lived if these were still missing. This resulted in so much material that various other volumes followed in the years to come; the sixth and final one appeared in 1617. The Braun and Hogenberg atlas contains a large variety of city depictions, maps and panoramas. Each time the compilers received new depictions of cities, these were added to the already existing material. This explains why several cities - including Rome and Jerusalem - are presented more than once. The depicted cities are mostly those of the Netherlands, the Papal State, central Italy and Andalusia; in comparison, only little space was dedicated to the

³⁵ V. Armani, *Delle lettere del Signor Vincenzo Armani scritte a Nome proprio e disposte sotto diversi capi*, Roma, Iacomo Dragondelli, 1663, I, pp. 289-290.

³⁶ *Ibidem*; the travels Armani mentions in this letter probably refer to his return from Cologne to Rome, and later to Gubbio.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ Cf. M. Gualandi (ed.), ‘Ricordo (2) del Priore Ignatio Casetta sopra un Quadro del suddetto Michelini’, in: *Idem, Memorie originali italiane risguardanti le belle arti*, IV, Bologna, Tipografia Sassi nelle Spaderie, 1843, p. 66.

³⁹ The text on the Gubbio map, found directly after a six page textual description of the city, in Blaeu’s volume on the Papal State, reads: ‘Al sig.[no]r Vincenzo Armani; Il Priore Ignatio Casetta [,] Per servire V.S. ho fatta la presente pianta della città di Gubbio, acciò ch’ella possa mandarla in Olanda al sig[no]r Blaeu che vuole stamparla col suo discorso. Ho in essa distinto i luoghi pub[bli]ci per alfabeto, e per numeri le Chiese’. Curiously enough, this text does not appear on the same map in the later Mortier edition (The Hague, 1704-1705) of Blaeu’s *Theatrum Italiae*. Joan Blaeu, *Civitates Status Ecclesiastici*, in *Idem, Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae*, Amsterdam, Joan Blaeu, 1663, p. 85.

⁴⁰ Armani, *Delle lettere del Signor Vincenzo Armani*, cit., pp. 110-111.

⁴¹ Willem Jansz had been destined to become a herring merchant like his father and grandfather, but preferred studying mathematics and spent some time as an apprentice to the famous Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), before he started trading in globes, seaman’s instruments and maps. Cf. D. van Netten, *Koopman in kennis: De uitgever Willem Jansz Blaeu (1571-1638) in de geleerde wereld van zijn tijd*, Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 2014, pp. 27-48; pp. 213-252.

⁴² Van der Krogt, *Koeman’s Atlantes Neerlandici*, IV-1, cit., p. 366.

British Isles, France and the rest of Spain. For each of the treated cities a text on its history, etymology, special buildings and famous inhabitants, was provided.⁴³

No further indications were given in Blaeu's introduction on the strategies underlying the process of gathering new material. A document published by van Veen,⁴⁴ however, does partly reveal the approach adopted by the Blaeus. Van Veen has cautiously identified the document as a draft memorandum for the De' Medici court, written by an unknown author, probably shortly after Pieter Blaeu's visit to Florence following urgent requests for drawings which Pieter wrote on behalf of his father.⁴⁵ In the text, which is clearly related to the ill-fated atlas on Tuscany, Joan Blaeu's plans for this volume are mentioned, together with the need for the Tuscans to provide relevant material. The information on the geography and history of the Grand Duchy should be gathered orderly; prospective collectors of the material therefore should work methodically, in accordance with a system described meticulously.⁴⁶ According to the document, the book on Tuscany should contain 'all that can be put together relating to the ancient and modern writings' on this region, meaning that '[its] plants should be selected, panoramas, reliefs and drawings of the principal villages and cities, together with extensive commentaries by the writer on these places'.⁴⁷ Since the work would have to contribute positively to the honourable reputation of the Grand Duchy, the compilers of the volume should preferably rely on inhabitants of the places to be described, because of their attachment to and knowledge of their birthplace.⁴⁸

Firstly, 'the name of each place, its origins and etymology' should be examined, followed by a concise description of the town and the surrounding countryside.⁴⁹ What follows is a minute description of all the details to be included on the selected places: first aspects such as 'the quality of its location' and 'air'; its 'width and the distance to the most important city' should be treated, together with descriptions of public buildings and their architectural style; after accounts of these, and many other details, the history of the place should be discussed.

After a few general considerations on the quality of the sources to be used, the author of the text explicitly mentions the types of material he considers most trustworthy and how their contents should be elaborated in the Tuscany volume. If printed works are lacking, manuscripts can be used; chronicles, papal bulls, imperial and juridical texts, public announcements and the like should be consulted, 'always adding their date, the period related to the [used] script type, whether they are original or copies and by whom they are being conserved'.⁵⁰ For printed books,

⁴³ P. van der Krogt, 'Wereldsteden uit de zestiende eeuw: de "Civitates orbis terrarum" van Braun en Hogenberg (T fol 212 Rar)', in: M. van Egmond, B. Jaski & H. Mulder (eds.), *Bijzonder onderzoek: Een ontdekkingsreis door de Bijzondere Collecties van de Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht*, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 2009, pp. 148-155.

⁴⁴ The memorandum is preserved in the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, MS. 2122, f. 392r-397v.; van Veen, 'A Tuscan Plan of Action', cit., p. 224.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ivi*, pp. 221; p. 223.

⁴⁶ *Ivi*, p. 221.

⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 224.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

however, only the author and place needed to be cited.⁵¹ The author then adds that it is necessary to treat the renowned inhabitants of each place.⁵²

Since the details mentioned in the document are so closely related to the volume on Tuscany, it is of course difficult to draw more general conclusions on how the information on the other parts of the Italy atlas was collected based on this source. It is reasonable to assume, though, that if the Blaeus adopted a roughly similar approach in the process of gathering information for all the intended volumes of the atlas, their design would have been just as well thought out and organised. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the very systematic structure found in the *Admiranda Urbis Romae*,⁵³ the *Civitates Status Ecclesiastici* and the *Theatrum statuum regiae celsitudinis Sabaudiae ducis*. This is evidenced, for instance, by the fact that the general introduction on *Roma Vetust*, or 'Ancient Rome,' provided in the *Admiranda Urbis Romae* roughly follows the format outlined above, starting with a treatise on the city's name, after which various parts of ancient Rome and their main monuments are described.

Conclusions

Departing from their predecessors, the Blaeus thus structured the process of gathering material, taking it to a new, more elaborate stage. The publishers wished to provide their readers with a wealth of information on the Italian peninsula, through both text and images that were to the largest possible extent newly gathered and sent to them by erudite collectors in Italy. Inhabitants of the towns themselves were regarded the most appropriate sources of information, implying the wish to provide readers with a perspective on the region that was as authentic as possible, showing Italy, as it were, through the eyes of those that knew her best. Joan and Pieter Blaeu were only able to add modern material to the information that was already circulating, in works such as the Braun and Hogenberg atlas, thanks to numerous individuals, spread across the Italian peninsula, who contributed to the project by submitting material, as is illustrated by the case of Armani and Casetta in Gubbio, or by bringing the Blaeus in contact with relevant other parties, for instance in the case of Fries, the Amsterdam-based agent of Venetian booksellers Combi and La Nou.

The cases treated above show once again that much still remains to be discovered on the creation of what De la Fontaine Verwey has called the most beautiful, but also least known of Joan Blaeu's works.⁵⁴ Further study on the individuals mentioned explicitly by Blaeu in his atlases and on parties whose contributions are revealed through other types of source material could certainly lead to new insights into this intriguing process; in turn, this would help appreciate more fully the importance of international collaboration in seventeenth century publishing.

Keywords

Blaeu firm, History of the book, publishing, town atlases of Italy, cartography

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ On this particular volume in the Blaeu series of town atlases of Italy, see G. Moorman, 'A Changing Perspective on the Eternal City Revealed: Blaeu's *Admiranda Urbis Romae* (1663) Compared to Later Editions of the Town Atlas of Rome', in: *Quaerendo*, 45, 1-2 (2015), pp. 112-116.

⁵⁴ De la Fontaine Verwey, 'Dr. Joan Blaeu and his Sons', cit., p. 17.

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RIASSUNTO

Editori all'incrocio di culture

L'importanza di contatti italo-olandesi per la creazione del *Theatrum Italiae* (Joan Blaeu, 1663)

Sfogliando le pagine di atlanti urbani come il *Theatrum Italiae*, pubblicato per la prima volta nel 1663 dalla casa editrice Blaeu di Amsterdam, si è sempre potuto fare un viaggio mentale alla scoperta della penisola italiana. Focalizzando la nostra attenzione sul processo editoriale sottostante la creazione dell'atlante, analizziamo che tipo di contatti esistevano tra i Blaeu e i loro partner italiani. Il ruolo di Pieter Blaeu, figlio di Joan, fu essenziale per la fortuna dell'atlante urbano, in particolare per gli interventi culturali da lui svolti tra le parti italiane e olandesi coinvolte nel progetto. I Blaeu hanno voluto offrire ai loro lettori informazioni approfondite sulla penisola italiana attraverso testi e immagini che avevano – per quanto possibile – collezionato e ricevuto dai loro corrispondenti italiani. È stato grazie ai vari contributi offerti da contatti internazionali come lo scrittore Vincenzo Armani, o il libraio Andries Fries, attivo tra Amsterdam e Venezia, che Joan e Pieter Blaeu hanno potuto ampliare il materiale già pubblicato in precedenza, in special modo il *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (Braun e Hogenberg, 1572).