
INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT STUDY OF ISAAC VOSSIUS, or, in Latin, Isaacus Vossius (1618-1689) is not a complete biography. It ends with his taking leave of Queen Christina of Sweden in September 1655, an event which marks a clear caesura in the life of Isaac Vossius and therefore forms a fit conclusion to our story: after a turbulent life of travels he finally finds in his new home in The Hague the tranquility in which to sort through his newly-acquired book treasure and to resume his long since interrupted studies. He retires into his study.

Vossius's library has been housed in the University Library of Leiden since 1690, when it was purchased by Leiden University. His library became the basis on which the international fame of Leiden's University Library rests.¹ One of the topics of this book is the way in which Isaac Vossius acquired his library, the contents of which he would alter to some degree in the course of years through selling and buying.

We should also like to examine in which sense Isaac lived a humanist's life in the period we are about to discuss, for instance in his relations with Claudius Salmasius, his mentor, or with Hugo Grotius, even wider known internationally, to take two great names from the circle of scholars which as a whole shall also be subject of detailed study. Included in this circle, too, is the 'femme savante' Queen Christina of Sweden, who as we shall see in Part four of this book for a while had a devoted friend and loyal servant in Isaac Vossius.

The material on which this book is based consists to a large degree of letters, partly published, partly as yet unpublished. Isaac Vossius's surviving correspondence from the period under discussion is vast. Thanks to this epistolary abundance our story can sometimes be told in great detail. After he had moved to The Hague in 1655, his correspondence gradually diminished.

[1] See Elfriede Hulshoff Pol, 'The library' in *Leiden University in the seventeenth century. An exchange of learning*, Leiden 1975, pp. 442, 444.

Isaac Vossius's correspondence has not been newly discovered, but never before has it been used systematically as a source. His correspondence with his father Gerardus Joannes Vossius, for instance, which contains a wealth of information about his travels, has so far been hardly examined at all.

After his father's death in 1649 the latter's voluminous correspondence and that of his other sons came into Isaac's possession. When Isaac died in 1689 this collection of letters, together with the correspondence of Isaac himself, went to his nephew Gerardus Joannes Vossius jr, his brother Matthaeus's son. Later this Vossius jr donated the entire collection to the Remonstrant Church in Amsterdam, which in turn offered it in permanent loan to the University Library of Amsterdam. The letters we have consulted in this library belong without a single exception to this collection; they are marked with the letters R K, for Remonstrantse Kerk.²

The greater part of the letters addressed to Isaac Vossius in this Amsterdam collection was copied in the eighteenth century by Pieter Burman Secundus and by another, anonymous, copyist. The two volumes containing these copies are housed in the University Library of Leiden.³ The Leiden collection sometimes forms a welcome addition to the Amsterdam one, because it includes a number of copies of which the originals in Amsterdam have been lost. The copies have furthermore been arranged in a chronological order.

Another part of Isaac Vossius's correspondence was also copied at a later date. Scato de Vries, librarian of the University Library of Leiden, at one point intended to publish Vossius's correspondence with Salmasius. To this end he had brought together virtually the entire correspondence between Isaac Vossius and Salmasius in copy, not only from Amsterdam, but particularly from Paris and Vienna. He was not able to carry out his plan. After his death D.J.H. ter Horst sorted and described this collection of copies in *Isaac Vossius en Salmasius. Een episode uit de 17e-eeuwse geleerdengeschiedenis*.⁴ Each time we quote a letter from the correspondence between these two scholars, we shall first give the shelfmark of the original letter, followed by that of the Leiden copy. Occasionally we have made grateful use of the notes which Scato de Vries added to a part of the copies.

The existing literature on Isaac Vossius is not very extensive. J.G. de Chauffepié, who was also acquainted with the largely unpublished correspondence of Isaac Vossius now in the Amsterdam University Library, wrote an excellently documented article about him in his *Nouveau Dictionnaire historique et critique*.⁵ Also noteworthy is Th. Seccombe's article, dating a century later, in the *Dictionary of National*

[2] See C. S. M. Rademaker, *Life and work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577-1649)*, Assen 1981, p. 405.

[3] Burm. F. 11, dl. 1-2. [4] D.J.H. ter Horst, *Isaac Vossius en Salmasius. Een episode uit de 17e-eeuwse geleerdengeschiedenis*, 's-Gravenhage 1938, pp. 1-4; the collection can be found under shelfmark B.P.L. 2366, A-G in the University Library Leiden. [5] J.G. de Chauffepié, *Nouveau Dictionnaire historique et critique*, vol. 4, Amsterdam 1756, pp. 614-631.

Biography.⁶ A more recent article by Scato de Vries appeared in the *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*.⁷ In addition we mention Y.H. Rogge's article, 'De reis van Isaac Vossius (1641-1645)',⁸ an article not supported by many sources. Ter Horst's study, *Isaac Vossius en Salmasius*, already mentioned above, contains in addition to the description of the copies of letters left by Scato de Vries (chapter I), a discussion of a possible adaptation of this material (chapter II), and finally a chapter on the relationship between Isaac Vossius and Salmasius. A large number of passages from their correspondence has been included in the appendices. F.S. de Vrieze in her article 'Academic relations between Sweden and Holland'⁹ furthermore provided a brief and sound description of the period when Isaac Vossius, Descartes, Nicolas Heinsius and Salmasius were attached to the court of Christina of Sweden and of their mutual relations, relationships in which Vossius played an important part.

Of the literature on Vossius's library must be mentioned in the first place the excellent catalogues of the manuscripts by K.A. de Meyÿer, *Codices Vossiani Graeci et Miscellanei* and *Codices Vossiani Latini*,¹⁰ and P.C. Boeren's *Codices Vossiani Chymici*.¹¹

As far as the printed works are concerned, we may refer to a recent catalogue in which Astrid C. Balsem has described: '*Libri omissi*' *italiani del cinquecento provenienti dalla biblioteca di Isaac Vossius ora nella biblioteca della Rijksuniversiteit di Leida*.¹² This catalogue is the first part of a projected series of works concerning: *Bibliotheca Vossiana. Books from Isaac Vossius's library now in Leiden University library*.¹³ Finally I wrote a small book entitled *Contributions to the history of Isaac Vossius's library*, Amsterdam 1974.¹⁴

This study offers a portrait of Isaac Vossius. Amongst the illustrations in this book, however, the reader will search in vain for a reproduction of a painted or engraved portrait of Isaac Vossius; such a portrait is not known.

The letters have been dated in the notes according to the new calendar. Dates according to the Roman calendar, as was customary in Latin letters, have been converted. As often as possible the name of the correspondent and that of the addressee is followed by the place of residence, an addition which in view of the

[6] Th. Seccombe, in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 58 (1899), pp. 392-396. [7] Scato de Vries in *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, dl. 1 (1911), kol. 1519-1525. [8] Y.H. Rogge, 'De reis van Isaac Vossius (1641-1645)', in *Oud Holland*, 18 (1900), pp. 3-20. [9] F.S. de Vrieze, 'Academic relations between Sweden and Holland', in *Leiden University in the seventeenth century*, pp. 344-362. [10] K.A. de Meyÿer, *Codices Vossiani Graeci et Miscellanei*, Lugd. Batavorum 1955, and *Codices Vossiani Latini* in 4 vol., Leiden 1973-1984. [11] P.C. Boeren, *Codices Vossiani Chymici*, Leiden 1975. [12] Astrid C. Balsem, '*Libri omissi*' *italiani del cinquecento provenienti dalla biblioteca di Isaac Vossius ora nella biblioteca della Rijksuniversiteit di Leida*, Leiden 1994. [13] *Bibliotheca Vossiana. Books from Isaac Vossius's library now in Leiden University library*, edited by R. Breugelmans. [14] F.F. Blok, *Contributions to the history of Isaac Vossius's library*, Amsterdam 1974.

very frequent changes in abode of Vossius and many of his circle is perhaps not a luxury. The collections containing the unpublished letters which I have consulted are clearly indicated in the notes. I have therefore decided not to include a separate index of these collections.

Of those who have assisted me in various ways I am happy to mention here: Mrs A. A. Duits-Godschalk, A. P. McCormick, W. Nijenhuis, C. Pen, C. S. M. Rademaker, Paul R. Sellin, Mrs A. E. C. Simoni, P. Tuynman, A. R. A. Croiset van Uchelen and J. Wijnhoven. I owe special thanks to Mrs Gerdien C. Kuiper for assisting my work in libraries and for her very useful suggestions, and to D. Schütte. He read the manuscript both chapter by chapter and integrally and supplied valuable critical comments. The cooperation of Mrs Kuiper and Mr Schütte proved to be a strong stimulus to finish what I had begun.

K. van der Horst was of great service to me in word-processing the extensive notes and bibliography, and also putting them into a better and more consistent shape.

Thanks are also due to the translator, Ms Cis van Heertum. Her affinity with the subject enabled her to produce a translation which adequately reflects my own Dutch text. I am also grateful to her for the additions and corrections which she suggested during the translation process. I would furthermore like to thank Mr D. C. G. Horspool who, as native speaker, critically read the English translation and offered useful suggestions for improvement.

Finally I am very grateful to the publisher, Egbert Forsten, for the way in which he has continually encouraged the publication of my book and for the great care with which it finally has been produced.