

Aernout van Buchel's *Iter Italicum* on-line

Review of: Arnoldus Buchellius (Aernout van Buchel), *Diarium (Commentarius rerum quotidianarum, including Iter Italicum)*. Transcription with preface and annotations of Hs. 798 (parts I and II), in the University Library of Utrecht.

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From the sixteenth century on, an ever increasing number of scholars and artists traveled to Italy to study the monuments of Roman Antiquity and 'modern' culture (which we now would call: the Renaissance). Their travelogues and descriptions offer interesting information on which monuments were – still or not yet – known, which ones were on view and/or accessible, and testimonies of the condition these monuments were in and what was known about them. The Pantheon in Rome, for instance, was – due to the dedication on its pediment – incorrectly believed to be the temple constructed by Marcus Agrippa during his third consulate (c. 27 BCE.), while it is in fact a sanctuary that was newly constructed some 150 years later, during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian. To these sixteenth-century travelogues and descriptions belong those by the German Johann Fichard (1536-1538), the Pole Seyfried Rybisch (1553-1554), the Frenchman Michel de Montaigne (1580-1581) and the Dutchman Jan Martensz. Merens (1600). Their reports were probably not meant to be published and did not appear in print until their authors had been long dead.¹ The same is true for the *Iter Italicum*, an extensive account that Aernout van Buchel from Utrecht (Arnoldus Buchellius, 1565-1641) made of his journey to and through Italy. Van Buchel's stay lasted from 17 October 1587 to 12 April 1588, but he wrote his account several years later (in Latin) and he may have continued afterwards to add occasional notes. It was not until the opening years of the twentieth century that Rodolfo Lanciani published

¹ The original text of Fichard's *Italia* was lost after it had been published by J.K. von Fichard, gen. Baur von Eyseneck, in the *Frankfurtisches Archiv für ältere deutsche Litteratur und Geschichte* 3 (1815), pp. 3-130. Parts of it were later published by August Schmarsow in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 14/2 (1891), pp. 130-139, and 14/5 (1891), pp. 375-383. A recent edition of the part in which Fichard describes Rome, translated into Italian with an extensive commentary, was published by Agnese Fantozzi in 2011: *Roma 1536: le "Observationes" di Johann Fichard*, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 2011.

Michel de Montaigne's *Journal de voyage* from 1581 has been published (and translated) in several editions, amongst which the one by F. Rigolot, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1992.

The travelogue of Seyfried Rybisch has been published recently by Jean Hiernard, *Les voyages de Seyfried Rybisch, étudiant silésien. Itinéraire (1548-1554)*, Pessac, Ausonius Éditions, 2017.

The report by Jan Martensz. Merens was published quite a while ago by A. Merens, 'De reis van Jan Martensz. Merens door Frankrijk, Italië en Duitsland, anno 1600', *Mededelingen van het Nederlandsch Historisch Instituut te Rome*, 2de reeks, 7 (1937), pp. 49-158.

it in three successive issues of the *Archivio della R. Società romana di Storia Patria*.² This made Van Buchel's *Iter Italicum* accessible and better known, but Lanciani's edition is not entirely satisfying, in that the transcription has quite a few mistakes, parts of the text have been left out without any notification, and explanatory notes have been added arbitrarily. For those who wanted to know how Van Buchel's text exactly reads, it remained necessary to go to the University Library of Utrecht and consult the manuscript.

As the result of the (wonderful) work of Kees Smit and Bart Jaski, it is now possible to read a new, complete transcription, and to see the original manuscript on the internet.³ Smit has carefully transcribed all the texts of Van Buchel – not just the *Iter Italicum*, but both volumes of the *Diarium* or *Commentarius rerum quotidianarum* of which it forms a part (Hs. 798, parts I and II; the *Iter*, to be sure, is in part II).⁴ Jaski arranged for the transcriptions to be posted on the site of the Utrecht University Library, together with scans of Van Buchel's manuscript, allowing us to compare all documents side by side. Moreover, Smit has made the text of the *Iter Italicum* more accessible and user-friendly by adding a short but informative introduction, and a list of dates and places Van Buchel visited, enabling us to closely follow his footsteps. More importantly, Smit added indices of the names of persons mentioned in the text and of all the authors whose works Van Buchel consulted in writing his report. Just as most contemporary travelers, Van Buchel made short notes during his trip and did not write his final travel report until several years after his return, using various books to add information on the monuments he had seen – both antique and contemporary – and sometimes even describing monuments he had never seen. He is exceptional, however, in that he carefully recorded his sources, which gives us a good sense of how he obtained his information: not only from contemporary authors, but also from antique and even medieval writers (in total some 200). At times – as appears from his text – he also used information from (inscriptions on) prints or stories from local people. What made Van Buchel stand out as well is that he would not accept the information from his various sources at face value; instead, he considered it critically, and compared it with other sources of information. Sometimes this led to irritation or indignant remarks, for instance when he discovered that (mostly contemporary) monuments presented an overly positive, propagandistic view of the Catholic Church and its clergy. During his trip Van Buchel was still Catholic, but his stay in Italy does not seem to have fostered his Catholic feelings. Not long after his return he became Protestant.

As Van Buchel relied heavily on guidebooks and other literary sources, the amount of 'new' or 'unique' information in his *Iter italicum* is just as modest as it is in contemporary travelogues. The amount of personal observations, impressions and opinions is also limited. Sixteenth-century travel reports were not meant as 'ego-documents' or considered an appropriate place for personal revelations. The special value of Van Buchel's *Iter* is its extensiveness, the large amount of sources it lists, and the author's critical disposition. Hopefully, Smits's perseverance and meticulousness in transcribing and editing the text, and Jaski's energy in making it accessible via the internet will lead to increasing attention for the *Iter Italicum* and awareness of its

² *Archivio della R. Società romana di Storia Patria*, 23 (1900), pp. 1-66; 24 (1901), pp. 49-63; 25 (1902), pp. 103-135. These three articles were published as a separate booklet in 1901: Rodolfo Lanciani (ed.), *A. Buchellius. Iter Italicum*, Rome, Archivio della R. Società romana di Storia Patria, 1901.

³ Kees Smit (ed.), Arnoldus Buchelius, *Commentarius (Diarium)*, deel I en II., 4 November 2020; see: <https://public.yoda.uu.nl/its/UU01/LLH047.html>.

⁴ The *Diarium*, with just a summary of the *Iter Italicum*, has been published in 1907, by G. Brom and L.A. van Langeraad, *Diarium van Arend van Buchell*. Werken uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap, 3e serie, nr. 21, Amsterdam, Johannes Müller, 1907.

value, from both Dutch and Italian scholars, as well as all others who are fascinated by the subject of traveling and travelogues in the sixteenth century.

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