

Royal Historical Commission

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Annual Report 2006

The Commission held its sessions on 11th February, 24th June, 7th October and 16th December. The Committee met on the same dates.

1. Objectives

The mission attributed to the Commission when it was founded in 1834 was confirmed by the Royal Decree of 1st April 1976. Its purpose is to “research, record, edit or analyse written sources which are of interest to the history of Belgium, to publish critical studies concerning these sources and to make work tools available to historians”.

Owing to the evolution of society and progress in historical science, it is currently necessary to meet these objectives in a more diversified manner than before. While continuing to publish the texts on paper, the Commission is turning increasingly towards electronic publication.

The Commission also intends to organise meetings and symposiums relating to its own set of themes. It is also keen to further develop co-operation programmes with Belgian and foreign institutions. Through these various actions and its members’ personal or official contacts, it participates significantly in the development of historical science, both on a national and international level. The various aspects of this active policy are detailed below (2. Publications, 4. Activities and International Relations).

The Commission considers itself to have a particular responsibility in the training of young researchers. In view of its expertise in the domain, it intends to stimulate the editing of texts amongst this community. Indeed, the rules it has established are acknowledged internationally. Furthermore, without its support, very few historians would take on this particularly demanding task which is nevertheless essential to research. This is why it established the Bryce and Mary Lyon Prize (cf. below).

The visibility of the Commission, both in Belgium and abroad, has always retained the particular attention of its members. The existence of its website (www.crhistorie.be or www.kcgeschiedenis.be) has especially contributed to its increased visibility. From May 2005 – when statistics first began to be kept on a regular basis – to December of the same year, 11,685 visits were recorded and 32,234 pages consulted. For 2006, the results are 41,690 and 101,648 respectively. On the basis of the monthly average, the increase is therefore 108 % for visits and 84 % for the pages consulted. The website, hosted on the server of the Royal Library of Belgium, offers a detailed and illustrated presentation of the history, as well as the composition, objectives and achievements of the Commission in French, Dutch and English. The complete catalogue of publications can be found on the website, and it is possible to make a search according to the author’s name, words in the title or keywords. There is also a presentation and summary of the latest volumes and new items.

2. Publications

In its Bulletin and its series of volumes (Collections in-4°, in-8°, Collection of Acts of Belgian Princes, Documents relating to the international status of Belgium since 1830, Sources concerning the history of Belgium during the Second World War, Work tools, the Thesaurus Diplomaticus, etc.) the Commission publishes previously unpublished texts relating to our national past that are kept in Belgium or abroad. These collections currently include more than 220 titles covering all periods of history. The Commission is conscious of the need to increase the part devoted to modern times. Therefore, it intends to develop, through rigorous methodology, the collection and availability of interviews and accounts of key figures who, within the various sectors of society, have left their mark in the last few decades. However, contrary to the other eras, it clearly comes into competition here with the multiple channels – scientific or not – for distributing contemporary history.

The extent of the documentation likely to be published involves choices and priorities. All the more so since it is constantly increasing as regards the present day. Not all archives and manuscripts offer the same degree of interest. Moreover, the increased limitation of the material resources at the disposal of the Commission also imposes constraints. Consequently, the Commission has decided on rigorous selection criteria. Preference is given to types of sources and texts that are relatively unknown or that can serve as a model for the community of researchers. In accordance with the rules, the four commissioners responsible for ensuring the scientific quality of the proposed manuscripts, also take into account the relevance of these documents.

Two volumes were printed in 2006:

- **M.-A. ARNOULD, *Les dénombrements de foyers dans le comté de Hainaut (XIV^e – XVI^e siècles)*, XXIV-771 p., 2 kaarten (verzameling groot in-8°).** To meet a constant demand, the Commission decided to proceed with the anastatic printing of this work – though in a reduced format – which was published in 1956 in the in-4° collection. In the future, the Commission envisages meeting such demands through electronic publications, so that works that are out of print may be consulted on its website.
- ***Recueil de documents relatifs à l'histoire de l'industrie drapière en Flandre. Deuxième partie. Le Sud-Ouest de la Flandre depuis l'époque bourguignonne, t. IV, Tables, par Stijn MEERSSEMAN, XIII-89 p.*** The compilation of this index was essential to allow the optimum use of nearly two thousand pages of documents, rich in patronyms and toponyms, gathered together in the first three volumes. The work was dedicated to the memory of our deeply regretted fellow member, Carlos Wyffels, who, thanks to the patient research of archives, successfully finished the undertaking interrupted by the death of its initiator, Henri-E. de Sagher.
- **Vol. 171, 2005, fasc. 1-4 of the *Bulletin*** with 429 pages, was published in 2006. Besides the administrative part (sessions held in 2004 and report on 2003), the volume includes six scientific contributions.
 - Véronique FLAMMANG, *Le dénombrement de la seigneurie de Hallines (comté d'Artois) en 1440*, p. 5-40. The contents of this parchment, which is 2.65 m in length, scrupulously highlight the incredible complexity of the legal

and agricultural matters that arose in a seignury, even a modest one such as this small place in the Pas-de-Calais. The editing of this sole copy of this text known to exist, is all the more justified since it is currently kept at the town hall of Halluin (an area in Lille), which has decided to part with it.

- Jean-Marie CAUCHIES, *De la « régence » à l'autonomie. Deux ordonnances de cour et de gouvernement de Maximilien et Philippe le Beau (1495)*, p. 41-88, is a fine example of editing. The two texts describe the formal structure of the entourage of Archduke Philip. They especially reflect a son's desire for independence with regard to his father and the resistance of the latter.
- Monique WEIS, *Du baume diplomatique sur les ravages de la guerre. La correspondance échangée entre le duc d'Albe et le duc de Clèves en 1568*, p. 89-134, Editing of twenty letters in old German kept at the Kingdom's General Archives in Brussels, in the collection of the German Secretary of State. The registers created facilitate an advanced use of the texts despite the difficulties of the language. In spring 1568, during the revolt of the Netherlands, the troops of the Duke of Alba ravaged the Duchy of Cleves and the Bishopric of Munster. In these non-belligerent territories, the damages of war were great and the population was severely tried. William V of Cleves expressed his grievances on this subject to the governor general. The correspondence also mentions the duke's indulgence in consenting to accept refugees, political exiles and agitators. It also illustrates the religious policy supported by William V, which remained ambiguous for a long time.
- Violet SOEN, *Een vredesgezant worstelt met de Pacificatie van Gent. De vreemde wendingen van de vredesmissie in de Nederlanden van Jan van Noircarnes, baron van Selles (1577-1580)*, p. 135-193, is editing ten letters and a memorandum, in French or in Spanish, that come from archives in Brussels and Simancas. These documents allow us to closely follow the progress of the delicate diplomatic mission entrusted to this nobleman from Artois, captain general of the guards at the court of Madrid. The Baron of Selles was entrusted with putting the Netherlands back on the righteous path of political and religious obedience. Confronted with the quest for a suitable solution as regards the protagonists that were difficult to bring together owing to their demands, the improvised diplomat took a series of unfortunate initiatives and found himself alone. His mission was clearly a failure. However, he resurfaced, just as unsuccessfully, owing to the Union of Arras. After the reconciliation of the provinces of Wallonia, his military career was just as unsuccessful and he died in captivity.
- Guy THEWES, *Un territoire indéfendable? L'état des forteresses aux Pays-Bas autrichiens en 1725 d'après un mémoire élaboré sous la direction du comte de Daun*, p. 193-271. Charles VI, determined to keep the Netherlands, had to take suitable measures to defend them. The network of fortresses was a key element. Subsequently, just as there had been a census of military manpower, a survey was ordered on the state of the fortifications that had passed under the authority of the Austrians, therefore excluding the fortresses of the Barrier. The anonymous report that forms the conclusion concerns some thirty installations. The document provides a statement of the strengths and weaknesses of the fortresses in the Netherlands. This edited work is enriched with a very useful glossary containing numerous technical terms and an index of names of people and places.

- A.S. NAMAZOVA, *Guide des documents relatifs à l'histoire de Belgique conservés dans les archives des institutions publiques de Moscou (1778-1940)*, p. 243-370. The text of this guide, which was entirely reviewed by Mrs. Françoise Thomas, scientific collaborator at the Royal Academy of Belgium, differs significantly from the limited edition version published in 2004, under the same title, in Russian and French, by Mrs. Namazova. The inventory provides an overview of the documents relating to Belgium, which are kept in the main archives in Moscow, in the collections of the Central State Museum of Musical Culture, “M.I. Glinka” and the Department of Manuscripts of the State Library of Russia. The contents are extremely varied, with observations by the Russian consul at Ostend on the rise of the Brabant revolution and archives from the “Parquet de l’Auditorat Militaire” from 1866 to 1940. Numerous collections concern Belgian companies in Russia before the Revolution, international or private organisations, the editorial staff of newspapers and reviews, masonic groups, individuals. The great wealth of these archives can be easily assessed from the index of names of people created by Françoise Thomas. Here, there are almost four hundred references relating to the worlds of politics, diplomacy and university life as well as to business, the arts and the press.

Publications undergoing correction or work pending

Proofs:

- Véronique LAMBERT, *De Oorkonden van het Sint-Donatianskapittel te Brugge, 9^{de} eeuw-1300* (verzameling in-4^o) is still in proof. The author, who is working on a voluntary basis and is currently busy with new professional obligations, does not appear to be able to finish the work before the final deadline. The Commission therefore considers entrusting the finalising of this publication to another researcher.

Texts to be written:

- Bryce LYON, *François Louis Ganshof: Medieval Historian and Friend*.
- Alexis WILKIN, *La datation du Polyptyque dit de 1280 de la cathédrale Saint-Lambert de Liège*.

4. Activities in progress, collaborations on a national level and international relations

- In 2009, the Commission will celebrate the **175th anniversary** of its existence. Two initiatives concerning this event were already mentioned in last year’s report, i.e., the publication of a special volume of the *Bulletin*, recalling the life of the Commission over the past quarter century, and the finalisation of its tables. The immense heritage contained in the 171 volumes will thus be much clearer, therefore benefiting researchers. This cumulative index will be put on our website. Moreover, it will be updated both on a technical level and in terms of its presentation. Furthermore, a decision has been taken to establish a prize bearing the name of

Henri Pirenne, who was not only an internationally renowned historian, but also the active secretary of the Commission. Finally, two international symposiums will be organised. One will relate to the editing of texts, and in particular electronic publications, which falls under the scope of an international collaboration (cf. below). The second one will deal with the chancelleries of the Middle Ages, upon the initiative of Professor Alain Dierkens (ULB).

- The **Bryce and Mary Lyon Prize** was created thanks to the generosity of this American historian who maintained friendly relations with the Commission for many years. Indeed, he entrusted the Commission with the editing of some of his publications. The aim of the prize is to encourage young researchers in the domain of the scientific editing of archive documents and manuscripts. By awarding such a prize, the Commission acknowledges their scientific contribution, undoubtedly a valuable addition to a curriculum vitae. The prize was awarded for the second time in 2006. The winner was Ms. Violet Soen for her article on the mission of Jean de Noircarmes, published in the Bulletin in 2005 (cf. above).

- **Main research projects in progress:**
 - Mevrouw Carol CHATTAWAY, Doctor in History at the University of London, is responsible for editing two inventories of personal property established at the death of Philip the Bold (1404) and that of Marguerite de Male (1405). An online version is envisaged. It will also be accessible on the Royal College of Art site.
 - Mrs. Nicole Haesenne-Peremans and Mrs. Nicole Caulier-Mathy (University of Liège) are preparing the *Journal* (1830 and 1855-1880) of Baron Michel-Edmond de Selys-Longchamps, senator, naturalist and member of the Academy, for publication. This publication will benefit from a subsidy from the Commission communale d'histoire de l'ancien Pays de Liège (municipal commission for the history of the former region of Liège).
 - Miss Stéphanie Lambeau, a history graduate from ULB, is preparing the *Corpus des inscriptions médiévales belges. Époque mérovingienne – 1100* for publication.
 - M. Alain Marchandise, qualified FNRS researcher at the University of Liège, is working on finalising the editing of the cartulary from the Aulne abbey.
 - Mr. Alfred Minke, professor at the Catholic University of Louvain and head of the State Archives section in Eupen, is responsible for editing the *Annales gallo-limbourgeoises, 1794-1814*. This manuscript, written by a noteworthy country person, is particularly interesting as regards the history of attitudes in our regions. However, owing to the professional obligations of the editor, he has had to defer submitting this piece of work.
 - Mrs. Katrien Vandewoude hopes to submit the index of the accounts of the town of Bruges (1302-1319) this summer, edited by our late fellow member, Carlos Wyffels, mentioned above. Significant difficulties in identifying the names explain why the work has slowed down. The financing of this work was facilitated thanks to a subsidy from the local authorities and a subsidy from the Province of West Flanders.

- Professor Jeroom Vercruyssen, Messrs Jacques Logie and Joseph Van Den Broeck have proposed to the Commission to edit the memoirs of Albert de Saxe-Teschén, Governor General of the Austrian Netherlands. Their manuscript could be submitted in September this year.
- Mr. Maurits VAN DURME, author of the series of volumes *Les Archives de Simancas et l'histoire de la Belgique (IX^e-XIX^e siècle)*, has slowly – owing to his advanced age – started, once again, to put the finishing touches to the second volume (letters N-Z) of the alphabetical index of names relating to the four published volumes. Our fellow member Gustaaf Janssens is supervising the state of progress of this table. He is also the scientific guarantor for other works begun by Mr Van Durme, some of them well advanced. He has already checked the first complete proof of the *Inventaire détaillé des copies Gachard et Morel-Fatio prises sur les documents de Simancas et conservées aux Archives générales du Royaume à Bruxelles*.

The continuation of certain long-term activities cannot rely solely upon voluntary work. Recourse to paid researchers is essential to guarantee their successful completion. Mr Philippe Demonty, one of the Commission's scientific partners, will thus continue on the period from 1200 to 1250 of the *Thesaurus diplomaticus* (usually known as "Nouveau Wauters". The version up to 1200 was made into a CD-ROM in 1999). This digitised list of charters relating to the former Southern Netherlands, stored in numerous places in Belgium and abroad, completely updates the contents of the volumes elaborated in the 19th century. The project's support committee is composed of our fellow members Thérèse de Hemptinne, Jean-Louis Kupper and Walter Prevenier. The documents for the above-mentioned years currently have 19,785 analyses. This undertaking is the result of a partnership between the Nationaal Comité voor het middeleeuws Latijn (National Committee for medieval Latin), its secretary, Mr Paul Tombeur, professor emeritus at the Catholic University of Louvain, and director of the *Centre Traditio Litterarum Occidentalium*, and our fellow member Walter Prevenier, professor emeritus at the University of Ghent. A geographic extension is envisaged through a collaboration with ARTEM in France. It has been decided to put the results that have already been gathered online as soon as possible.

Mrs. Godelieve de Mey, under the direction of our fellow member Thérèse de Hemptinne, is continuing to work on finalising the third volume of the *Actes de Thierry d'Alsace, Comte de Flandre (1168-1177)*.

The planned toponymic database (Topodex), elaborated by our fellow member Claude de Moreau de Gerbehaye, should make it easier to identify place names and thus facilitate the task of researchers who compile such indexes.

Collaborations on a national level

- The Kingdom's General Archives and the State Archives in the provinces: An agreement was signed in order to specify the terms of reciprocity for the exchanges of publications between the two institutions.

A partnership was concluded to ensure the successful outcome of the digitised indexation plan concerning the diplomatic correspondence between Vienna and Brussels (1740/1748 – 1790).

On 12th April, members of the board met those responsible for the charter digitisation programme, who were seeking their opinions and advice particularly on determining the backup priorities to be established.

- AMSAB (Institute of Social History in Ghent). The co-operation contract concerns the indexation, as well as putting online the minutes of the “Bureau et Conseil général du Parti Ouvrier Belge” for the period 1892 to 1940. The idea of also providing a printed publication was abandoned and the contract had to be renegotiated. It should be signed in the near future following several final minor amendments.
- Federal Centre for the History of the Press (Royal Library of Belgium). The Commission is involved in this project, but the terms of co-operation still need to be specified.
- Committee for the Dictionary of Mediaeval Latin, Professors Paul Tombeur and Walter Prevenier: continuation of the *Thesaurus diplomaticus*. Cf. above.
- Commission communale d’histoire de l’ancien Pays de Liège: a subsidy has been granted for the afore-mentioned publication of the Journal of Baron Michel-Edmond de Selys-Longchamp.
- Province of West Flanders, Bruges: a subsidy has been granted to compile the index of the accounts of the Town of Bruges, as written above.
- University of Ghent: agreement in principle concerning a contract that has to be finalised, with this university, with a view to producing an updated electronic version of the *Narrative Sources* database that lists the narrative sources of the mediaeval Netherlands (Professor Jeroen Deloige).
- Free University of Brussels: editing of the Acts of the Dukes of Brabant (Professor Alain Dierkens and Mr. David Guillardian) is continuing. It is very likely the manuscript will be submitted before the end of 2007.

Collaborations on an international level

The international influence of the Commission is confirmed in different ways. First of all, through its website and the presence of its publications in the main national and university libraries in Europe and America; and secondly, through its audience, whose extent can be measured through its many contributions to the activities of international associations.

On 5th April 2006, the Commission’s board met the representatives of the Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis (ING) who invited the Commission to participate in a European project, *Porta historica. A Network of Editors of Historical Sources*. After this discussion, the Commission decided to collaborate in this project with several of its European counterparts: the Institut für Mittelalterforschung (Vienna), which is part of the Österreichische Akademie für Wissenschaften, the École Nationale des Chartes (Paris), the Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis (The Hague) and the Institute of Historical Research (London). An initial meeting was held in The Hague on 13th and 14th December. The Commission was represented by our Chairman, Ludo Milis, and our fellow colleague, Thérèse de Hemptinne.

On a European level, the Commission is also involved in the vast undertaking of the *Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi*, sponsored by the International Academic Union.

In agreement with Belgium's two Royal Academies, it is responsible for publishing several texts in the *Series Belgica*.

Our chairman, Ludo Milis, is continuing to participate in the progress of the works of the *Repertorium Fontium Historiae Medii Aevi* (Nouveau Potthast).

Our fellow member, Herman Van Goethem, and the administrative secretary, Mr Jean-Luc De Paepe, are representing the Commission on the National Committee of Historical Sciences, affiliated to the International Committee of Historical Sciences.

Our fellow member, Claude Bruneel, is representing the Commission on the Director's Committee of the Belgian Historical Institution in Rome.