In 1888 Robert Fruin, the famous Dutch nineteenth-century historian, used an important passage in the prologue of the second Dutch chronicle of Jan van Naaldwijk to settle a long standing dispute about the authorship of the so-called Divisiekekroniek which was published in 1517 by the Leiden printer Jan Seversz. In this prologue Naaldwijk came to the conclusion that it was necessary to rewrite the first version of his chronicle and to concentrate more on Dutch history. A recently published historical work had convinced him of just this: ‘Because now a chronicle has appeared, which is printed by Jan Seversz., printer, and made on his costs and request by brother Cornelius van Lopzen, a poet and an intelligent man, ...’. The author was identified as Cornelius Aurelius (ca. 1460-1531), friend of Erasmus (1469-1536) and an Augustinian canon of the Leiden monastery Lopsen. His Cronycle van Hollandt, which was after the middle of the eighteenth century generally known as the Divisiekekroniek because of the striking arrangement in 32 ‘divisies’ or books, has until recently been characterized, in method and content, as the last specimen of medieval Dutch historiography. In this respect, it is considered as a rather unimaginative compilation, mainly based on the Dutch chronicle of a direct predecessor of Aurelius, the Carmelite Johannes a Leydis (ca. 1444-1504).

By identifying Aurelius as the author of the Divisiekekroniek Fruin changed drastically the long accepted opinions about this late fifteenth-and early sixteenth-century Dutch scholar. Since he wrote a number of historians have expressed profound surprise about the fact that this humanist and worthy correspondent of Erasmus dedicated himself to the writing of a chronicle so close to the medieval historiographical tradition. However, a somewhat closer look at the life and career of Aurelius can make it clear that, long before Seversz. took the initiative in publishing a major Dutch history, he was interested in history and in fact practised the writing of history. The first part of this book ‘Aurelius; the life of a humanist scholar’ (p. 15-51) considers his literary career and especially to the role of history in his intellectual aspirations.

Born around 1460 in Gouda as Cornelis Geritsz. (or Gherytsz.), Aurelius was a member of a family with an apparent tradition of learning, many of whose members followed an ecclesiastical vocation. He had a younger brother, Jacob, who like him became an Augustinian canon, and in his letters we find proof of two more learned family members: his nephew Willem Hermans, a son of a brother or sister of Aurelius, also a poet and historian; and Martinus van Gouda, a cousin. Both of these also became Augustinian canons. Aurelius himself, after having been a pupil of the Lebuinuschool in Deventer, studied artes at the University of Cologne from 1477 to 1481, at Louvain in 1482 and at Paris from 1483 to 1485. In Paris in 1485 he acquired the title of magister artium. After his return to Holland, Aurelius took vows as a regular canon of the Augustinian order. As a monk he lived alternately in the monasteries of Sint-Maartensdonk (Hemsdonk or Donk), south of the small Dutch city of Schoonhoven, which monastery belonged to the chapter of Sion, and Sint-Hieronymusdal (Lopsen), just outside the Rijnsburgerpoort of Leiden, which formed part of the chapter of Windesheim. Depending on his residence of the moment, Aurelius added Duncenus or Lopsemus to his name. In both monasteries Aurelius had important tasks: from 1488 to 1493 he was sceptor in Lopsen, in 1494 prior of Sint-Maartensdonk, from 1502
to 1504 prior of Lopsen; in the years 1501, 1502 and 1507 he was also administrator in Lopsen and finally in 1522-1523 we find him as scripitor of Sint-Maartensdonk. Aurelius and five other regular canons were posted to Paris from October 1497 to August 1498 by order of the Congregation of Windesheim, with the mission to reform the famous abbey of Saint-Victor. After the closing of Lopsen because of bankruptcy in January 1526, Aurelius lived till his death on 8 August 1531 in the Windesheim monastery Eemstein near Dordrecht.

Aurelius tried to combine his life as a monk with a career as a humanist. He was the author of quite a number of religious and historical works which for a large part remain in manuscript. He wrote religious poetry in classical metres, of which his *Marias*, an imitation of the *Partitumce Mariana* of the Italian Baptista Mantuanus, is the most important example. Besides the *Divisiekroniek*, he wrote a biography of the church father Jerome, two historical-geographical pieces on the land of the Batavians or Dutch (‘Hollanders’), two treatises for Charles V on the government of the empire, entitled *Diadema imperatorum* and *Opus Palmarium*, and separate expositions on the state of the Catholic church and of Christian and classical virtues. By corresponding with the leading scholars of his time Aurelius tried to acquire a position in the humanist *republica litteraria*. Of special importance to his humanist education was his second stay in Paris, in 1497-1498, when he became acquainted with Robert Gaguin. His very first publication, a letter and a poem of dedication, in which he formulated his ideas on the character and the use of historical writing, appeared in Gaguin’s *Compendium de origine et gestis Francorum* (Paris, 31 March 1498).

Probably in October 1508 or 1509 Aurelius was laurelled as a poet by the emperor Maximilian. But his lasting importance is due to his role as the historian of Holland. The origin and composition of his vernacular chronicle, characterized as *grandius libellus* by his friend Alardus of Amsterdam, are the main themes in the second part of this thesis (p. 53-120). The authorship of this *nitidum cultunque volumen* was already a mysterious affair during his lifetime. After 1517 Aurelius concealed his collaboration with the obstinate printer Jan Seversz., partly because this printer became more and more pro-Lutheran. Moreover, Aurelius was not mentioned in the book itself, neither on the title page nor in the colophon, because Seversz. alone guaranteed the financing of the edition. In this respect the role of Aurelius was the same as that of the famous Nuremberg doctor-humanist Hartmann Schedel in the realisation of the *Liber Chronicarum*, which appeared in Nuremberg in 1493. Schedel was the originator of the plan; he stimulated the printer, the financiers and the artists to carry out the ambitious project. He also wrote the whole chronicle, but his name did not appear in the edition because he had no financial stake in the enterprise.

In view of this analogy, it would appear that the Dutch got the idea for a printed native chronicle from outside their country. The writing of history and the printing, if any, of historical works were for a large part still separate circuits in Holland before 1500. The most important Dutch historians of that time, Johannes a Leydis and Dirk Frankesz. Pauw, wrote their chronicles in the comparative retirement of their monastery or chapter house. Aurelius and his contemporaries were the first who looked for printers to publish their works and who succeeded in this endeavor. And it was this generation which first came in contact with the rediscovered and printed classical historians and with the recently printed Italian, German and French chronicles. With the spread of these new editions to Holland in the first decade of the sixteenth century there came about some profound changes in the cultural and political climate in Holland which were important for the origin of the *Divisiekroniek*. Not only did the sense of inferiority which the Dutch humanists had in respect of their Italian colleagues gradually disappear, but they also tried to acquire a measure of the status accorded to German humanism. What is more, around 1500 during the rule of Philip the Fair, a sort of Dutch national feeling began to emerge.

In the small circle of Dutch scholars there seems to have been some rivalry to see who would be the first to write and publish a native chronicle. Besides Aurelius, Willem Hermans and Reinier Snoy, both from Gouda, and Jan van Naaldwijk tried their hand at Dutch history. In the midst of this competition it was understandable that Aurelius and Seversz. prepared the edition of the *Divisiekroniek* as secretly as possible. Aurelius, living in a monastery, was in this respect an ideal partner for Seversz.: he could keep the manuscripts with the text of the chronicle in his convent cell. It appears from my reconstruction of the origin of the world map which was destined for the chronicle, that arrangements must have been made for the edition of the chronicle already in 1513. Aurelius had plans for a complete Dutch history already in 1510. This indicates that the preparation for the printing of the *Divisiekroniek*, of which the copy was ready for press on 10 October 1516, took at least three years and at most six years. Of the 243 illustrations in the chronicle (excluding the world map which was a sort of supplementary sheet)
These schemes, which are not always clearly separated, are in the first place the division into three parts after the model of Flavio Biondo's *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romano-rum imperii decades*, second the arrangement in thirty-two *divisies* (divisions) after the model of the second Dutch chronicle of Johannes a Leydis and third the lists of emperors and popes based on the *Liber Chronicarum* of Hartmann Schedel. The complicated structure suggests that the *Divisiekronek* was a very ambitious project, at once comprehensive in conception. A study of the sources which Aurelius used for this work indicates that it can be called eclectic in its leading ideas.

A precise analysis of the sources of the *Divisiekronek* is necessary to refute the persistent misconception that Aurelius only copied and translated the chronicle of Johannes a Leydis. Besides its contribution to our insight into the historical erudition of the author, such an investigation also leads to a better definition of his sense of the past. Knowledge of the quantity of the literary sources used, of their division into periods, and of the terminology which the author developed in the confrontation with his sources, makes possible a more carefully balanced appraisal than the common characterization of the book as a 'keystone of medieval Dutch historiography'. Starting-point for my study of the literary sources was the list of works mentioned in the prologue. Among the twenty works mentioned there are five classical authors, three national chronicles, six world chronicles and seven regional chronicles. Eleven of these works are regularly and intensively used: first of all the four classical writers Tacitus (of whom three works are used), Caesar, Pliny the Elder and Orosius; and the seven contemporary chronicles of Gaguin, Schedel, Foresti, Rolevink, Leydis and two anonymous chronicles, of Brabant and Flanders, and of Cologne. The works of Eusebius, Bede, Sigebert of Gembloux, Vincent of Beauvais and Bartholomaeus of Lucca are inaccurately used, or not at all. The *Chronographia* of Johannes de Beke (ca. 1350) was consulted by the author, in a Middle Dutch translation, and also in the versions of the so-called *Gent entendt Lagen Landen* (ca. 1400) and of Dirk Frankensz. Pauw (ca. 1470).

From the prologue we can conclude that Aurelius did not want to break openly with the medieval literary authorities. But in the historical account itself he showed his own literary preference much more clearly. The references in the chronicle itself to works not mentioned in the prologue not only provide insight into Aurelius's conception of his role as an intermediary between the learned and lay cultures, they also illustrate the somewhat hybrid character of his intellectual aspirations and at the same time those of his chronicle. Aurelius the scholar referred
in the text of the Divisie-kroniek to twenty-five classical writers, eight humanist historians, nine church fathers and theologians, and two jurists besides those mentioned in the introduction. Inspired by the ideas of the Modern Devotion, he used additionally seventeen Vitae sanctorum and fifteen biblical citations. As an intermediary between the historical tradition and his own time he mentioned furthermore two world chronicles and five regional chronicles, and to amuse the reader he cited from three popular books. The scholar Aurelius is more in evidence than the Aurelius of the Modern Devotion in the Divisie-kroniek, though this contrast is somewhat artificial. In addition, there is a clear pattern in the placing of the citations. The classical writers and humanists are used mainly in the first part of the chronicle, describing the history of Holland before 863. Most of the biblical citations and the Vitae and descriptions of miracles are found in the second part dealing with the period 863-1433. In the third part, treating the Burgundian-Habsburg history of Holland during the years 1433-1517, the author mentions no source except for two printed works, one on the Turks and one on the voyages of discovery. Apparently he wanted to make the impression of originality in this last part of the book.

Even though the Divisie-kroniek is written in the vernacular, Aurelius addressed himself to the Dutch republica literaria – and not only the Dutch. In this context it is interesting to see that references to contemporary historians of the Northern and Southern Low Countries are missing in his book. We look in vain for the names of Jan van Naaldwijk, Willem Hermans, Reinier Snoy, Willem Heda, Gerardus Geldenhouwer Noviomagus and Martinus Dorpius, all scholars who in one way or another had written Dutch or related history. Whereas Aurelius avoided mention of these, he did refer twice to his own treatise on Batavia; in this way he gave the anonymous Divisie-kroniek implicitly and explicitly a polemical character. Precisely by not identifying himself with the auctor intellectualis of the Batavian prehistory of Holland he gave this designer of the Batavian past more authority and credibility.

Aurelius’s view of the Batavian prehistory of Holland distinguished three different episodes in Dutch history. Not only could contemporary history be distinguished from what preceded, but at the same time the traditional linear historical perspective could be replaced by a more cyclical view of history. In an intuitive, un-theoretical and non-reflective way the Divisie-kroniek formulates something like an early-modern historical consciousness, because the author tried to give a literary structure to the historical changeability which he observed. The discussion of the Batavians was of crucial importance for the diffusion of humanist ideas on historiography in Holland. For the beginnings of the polemic on Batavia, the Divisie-kroniek played an essential and so far underestimated role.

In Dutch historiography Aurelius was the creator of the Batavian myth which is the main subject of the third part of this thesis ‘Aurelius and the Batavian myth’ (p. 121-166). With the help of the investigation of historical sources Aurelius tried to give the Dutch their own historical identity by defining a number of quintessential Dutch virtues and values which he proposed as valid for his own time. In his literary preludes on the theme of the Batavian origin of Holland, the chapters on Batavia in the Divisie-kroniek play an important part.

The Batavian myth had a predecessor in the Trojan myth. Already in fifteenth-century Dutch historiography, different efforts were made to give the Dutch their own grand prehistory amidst a growing number of Burgundian regions. The preoccupation with their own Dutch past, which we find in historians like Johannes a Leydis and Dirk Pauw, was manifested in two ways which were new in Dutch historiography and which were used side by side by the historians: the so-called city-foundations and the myth of Trojan descent. In analogy to the foundation of Rome by Romulus and Remus, the historians derived the origin of the Dutch cities from their founders and, inspired by the Aeneid of Virgil, they traced the genealogy of the Dutch counts back to Priamus, king of the Trojans.

By introducing the Batavians as the forefathers of the Dutch, the historians of the generation after Leydis and Pauw seem at first sight simply to be continuing, with modern devices, the trend to give Holland an independent and grand history. But in two respects the new myth was an important change. In the first place it was exactly those modern devices which gave a new dimension to the historiography of Aurelius, Hermans and Snoy. And in the second place, the Batavian history did not add splendour to the dynasty of the Dutch counts or to separate towns: the Dutch people as a whole gained historical importance. From the Aauris Batava of Erasmus, published for the first time in the Adagia edition of 1508, it appears that the Batavians, which Tacitus had described, were identified with the Dutch. Italian humanists had suggested this now and again, but the fact that the most famous Dutch scholar Erasmus published on the question must have given Dutch historians more confidence. This appears from the historical monograph of Willem Hermans, entitled Olandie Gelriique bellum (1508-1509) and from both of Aurelius’s writings on Batavia.
That Aurelius wrote two separate essays on Batavia, entitled Defensorium gloriae Batavinae and Elucidarium scopulorum quaeestionum super Batavina regioine et differentiae, has been overlooked because of the editions of Vulcianus (Antwerp, 1586) and Scriverius (Leiden, 1609) which presented both works as one. Another point of confusion in the literature is the dating of these works. Traditionally they are dated to 1515, because in that year Aurelius received a letter from Louvain in which he was asked by his friend Alardus of Amsterdam to defend his view on the Batavian island against Gerardus Geldenhouwer Noviomagus. In the works themselves we find important evidence for an earlier dating: the Defensorium was drafted before September 1508 and finished in the autumn of 1509 and the Elucidarium was conceived between 30 October 1509 and probably 16 July 1510. This dating is important because the Defensorium, a first version of which Aurelius had sent to Erasmus together with the letter De Hollandiae laudibus of Luigi Marliani, was probably an important source of inspiration of Erasmus’s adagium Auris Batava.

In the ideas of Aurelius on Batavia we can distinguish three main elements. He was the first to defend the thesis that Batavia — a term used on the analogy of the Germania of Tacitus — had nothing to do with the Guelders region of the Betuw. The Batavian island, and this was his second thesis, began at the castle of Loewestein, located at the confluence of the Maas and the Waal. From these two theses followed for Aurelius beyond any doubt a third, namely that the Batavians, the brave and faithful allies of the Romans, were the direct ancestors of the Dutch. The arguments which Aurelius used to prove these theses were literary, historical-geographical and archeological. With the help of his classical erudition Aurelius created a Batavian myth with a contemporary political meaning, which was to be the foundation of a new form of political and military unity, of tranquillity and peace, of prosperity and civilisation in his beloved Holland. For the realization of this aim outside the limited circle of Dutch humanists who could read Aurelius’s Latin works, the Batavian prehistory had to be known. A translation and revision of his two writings were made for the Divisiekroniek. These pages dedicated to the Batavian past can be considered an answer to the letter of Alardus of Amsterdam, written from Louvain in 1515.

In the chapters of the Divisiekroniek describing the manners and customs, the way of living and the economics of the Batavians in ancient times and in his own time, it becomes clear how Aurelius wanted to make the behaviour of the Batavians an example for his fellow-countrymen. Holland or Batavia had become rich and prosperous as a society of free, brave and virtuous fishermen and farmers. Aurelius ignored the growing importance of the industry of the towns in his own time, and he idealized the agrarian Batavia as an arcadian society of originally free and equal farmer-soldiers and virtuous women. The way, however, in which Aurelius wanted to improve Dutch society, was more nostalgic than systematic, and certainly not very practical. The future belonged to the towns, and it is not surprising that the rustic humanism of Aurelius had little impact on Dutch politics.

Aurelius’s Batavia had direct influence on the historical writing of his friend, the medical doctor and town magistrate Reinier Snoy, and on that of his Guelders rival, Gerardus Geldenhouwer Noviomagus. In the long term the Batavian myth was of great importance for the strengthening of the self-confidence of the Dutch and of the Dutch national consciousness. In history the identity of the Dutch nati (nation) was gradually formed and with the Batavian myth this identity was given a concrete character. Without hesitation Aurelius placed the Batavians, the Dutch, above other people. He saw Holland no longer exclusively in feudal terms, as the possession of the ruler of the country. Next to and in a way opposite to the sovereign authority stood the Dutch people as a collective unity, as a free nation. The Divisiekroniek was meant not for the prince, but for the Dutch citizens. In two separate treatises for the prince, entitled Diadema imperatorum and Opus Palmarium, both from 1520, Aurelius formulated the guidelines for the proper education and for the proper activity of the prince. In these books we can see the historian Aurelius at work sketching the picture of the humanist princeps optimus with the use of arguments from the Divisiekroniek and with an emphasis on the importance of historical education.

If we can state that Aurelius, in many of his Latin writings, showed himself an epigone of Erasmus — rather than his praecceptor —, he still deserves his own place in the development of Dutch humanism. His lasting significance as a humanist scholar rests on his historical works, which were inspired by a profound Dutch patriotism. Though it emerged gradually, the lasting success of the attractively edited Divisiekroniek, reprinted many times integrally as well as abridged (see p. 167-185 of this book) determined for an important part the spread of the Batavian myth. Up to the end of the eighteenth century the Batavian forefathers were cited when the character of the Dutch was discussed. The role of the Batavian myth during the Republic is well known. But the notion that the Batavian myth became politically significant only with the Revolt, as the legitimation of the resistance
against the Spanish king Philip II, has overshadowed its original function. For the Dutch historians of the early sixteenth century the Batavian myth was a means of criticism, not only of historical traditions like the Trojan myth and the town-foundations but also of the politics of the central government. In the Diuisiekroneke we see thus the starting point of a secularized Renaissance historiography, meant as a means of orientation for the individual and the nation.

In his religious ideas Aurelius stayed closer to the ideals of the Modern Devotion than did Erasmus. His piety was enriched with a humanist intellectualism. Perhaps Aurelius had some of the mental make-up necessary to become a protestant, but at the same time he was a man of compromises, moderate and afraid of criticism, as a result of which he was unable to draw conclusions from certain standpoints. With Erasmus he shared the incessant preaching and moralizing of the Northern humanists. But it has been said quite rightly that Aurelius was 'less fortunate' than his friend Erasmus. His greatest tragedy, at least in our eyes, was that his magnum opus in which the intentions of his typically Northern early-humanism are expressed, was published anonymously.