

Remco Sleiderink, “Lodewijk van Velthem”,
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Lodewijk van Velthem

ca 1270–after 1326. Brabant (Low Countries). First attested in Paris in 1293/94, parish priest in Zichem from 1304, then from 1312 in Veltem (now Veltem-Beisem, near Leuven). Author of a continuation of → Jacob van Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael*, as well as of Arthurian literature.

Lodewijk van Velthem has been characterized as the executor of Jacob's legacy. Commissioned by a widowed noblewoman, Maria van Berlaar, Lodewijk finished Jacob's adaptation of the fourth (and last) part of → Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*. Like Jacob, Lodewijk simplified his source for a lay audience, slightly updating it with events up to 1270. Then, having finished the adaptation of the Latin chronicle in August 1315, Lodewijk added in the following year a fifth part to the *Spiegel historiael* relating the history from the election of William II of Holland as King of the Romans in 1248 up to his own time (the election of Pope John XXII in August 1316). He used chronicles and other narratives in Latin and Dutch (e.g. → Jan van Heelu's *Slag bij Woeringen*), but also relied on oral history and his own experience. The lengthy and detailed report on the Battle of Courtrai (1302) is still one of the most important sources about this clash between the French royal army and the Flemish insurgents. Scholars have also paid special attention to Lodewijk's portrait of Edward I of England as an Arthurian enthusiast, and to his description of the Great Famine, caused by severe weather conditions in 1315.

After some 23,000 verses of recent history—roughly organized as an imperial chronicle—Lodewijk added some 4,500 verses of eschatological visions. Adapting and manipulating sources in Latin (which included Hildegard

of Bingen's *Speculum futurorum temporum*), Lodewijk argues that in 1300 a period of transition had started which would lead in 1335 to the End of Times. He dedicated this fifth part to Gerard of Voorne, counselor of Count William III of Hainault, Holland and Zeeland.

Lodewijk's version of the *Spiegel historiael* (part 1–5) has not survived intact, but there is one complete manuscript of the fifth part (Leiden, UB, BPL 14 E, dated around 1325), and also a fragment which is considered as a direct copy of Lodewijk's autograph (Büdingen, Fürstlich Ysenburg- und Büdingsche Rentkammer, Hss.-Fragm. 52). Lodewijk's contribution to the fourth part of the *Spiegel* has only partially survived in Middle Dutch, but there are two 15th-century manuscripts offering a literal prose translation into German, which has not yet been edited.

Lodewijk's name is also attached to a large compilation of Arthurian romances (the so-called Lancelot compilation) and a verse translation of the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin*. It is not clear whether Lodewijk considered these texts as history or fiction.

Bibliography

Text: H. VANDER LINDEN et al., *Lodewijk van Velthem's voortzetting van den Spiegel historiael*, 1906–1938.

Literature: B. BESAMUSCA, *The book of Lancelot*, 2003. B. BESAMUSCA & R. SLEDERINK & G. WARNAR, *De boeken van Velthem. Auteur, oeuvre en overlevering*, 2009. J.A.A.M. BIEMANS, *Onsen speghele ystoriale in Vlaemsche*, 1997. M. HAEUSLER, *Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronistik*, 1980, 107–13, 245–47. *Narrative Sources* L028. *RepFont* 7, 336.

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