Summary

The “Dutch journey” and the French perception of the United Provinces in the first half of the 17th century

This PhD offers an original approach of the French-Dutch relationship in the Early Modern Period. Due to a lack of linguistic skills, the historical literature has become scarce in this field, and the French vision of the Netherlands has been neglected in the past decenniums. Nevertheless, the Dutch Republic and France were allies in this period. The attraction of French culture and language, evoking the Dutch interest for the next centuries, originates in the 17th century. Furthermore, the period of the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648) is of fundamental importance for the history of the Netherlands. The “Dutch journey” and the French perception of the United Provinces in the first half of the 17th century investigates these neglected subjects.

In twelve chapters, multiple aspects of the French side of the mutual attraction are analysed. From different perspectives, the vision of French travellers and observers on the Dutch politics, trade, religion(s), society, and arts are depicted. The examination of the world famous Hall of Mirrors of Versailles as a French pictorial discourse on the Dutch Republic in the context of the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678) is one of the highlights. Each chapter relies on a broad and thorough study of French sources, and on a series of illustrations and maps. All subjects are clearly explained to the reader, who may not be familiar to the peculiarities of the United Provinces.